

# PROFANATORY UTOPIAS: THE CASE OF THE NO TAV MOVEMENT IN THE SUSA VALLEY

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## Abstract

In contemporary political thought, the concept of utopia is generally seen as implying either a regression to transcendence, or a retreat from actual reality, or else a denial of direct engagement. By discussing the notion of concrete critical utopias, my paper aims at re-framing in a materialist and immanent way the question concerning utopia and its impacts on forms of sociality to come.

To do so, I will define the utopian critical role as the process of subjective self-constitution of conflicting social movements. To further develop this provisional definition, I will introduce and theoretically link the notions of *struggle for subjectivation* (Foucault) and *profanation* (Agamben). The hypothesis of *profanatory utopia* emerges at this philosophical intersection: it simultaneously possesses a *deconstructive* component, whose aim is to criticize actually existing apparatuses and forms of sociality, and a *constructive-creative* element, whose goal is to establish new and directly concrete organizational configurations, irreducible to the regime of truth centred around capitalist economic competition.

To give empirical consistency to this hypothesis I will report and discuss the strikingly long (over 20 years) and so far totally successful environmental struggle that took place (and still takes place) in Susa Valley (North-West of Italy). For social, environmental, and economic reasons, the population of this valley is strongly opposing the project of TAV (*Treno ad Alta Velocità* – High Speed Train), proposed both by central and local governments. My analysis will focus both on the resistance exercised by the movement with regard to capitalist imperatives of economic development and on the new forms of sociality that the unfolding of struggle brought to light. In the interviews I collected the awareness of this new social density is profound and usually accompanied by a clear recognition of improvements in the collective *Lebenswelt*. Nonetheless, the question concerning how to institutionalize, how to provide temporal as well as political consistency to this unprecedented social relationality, is constantly discussed amongst activists. A brief reflection about the tension between the *emergence of the new* and its *institutionalization* will conclude my paper.

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