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Addressing the challenge of a “common” Future: The French contemporary mobilizations against injustice in face of the ecological and social emergencies

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ABSTRACT

In face of the ecological and social emergencies, how the French contemporary mobilizations against injustices does address the issue of a fair and sustainable future? We will answer this question from a qualitative survey conducted in 2019–2020 of 130 association officials and activists on social and environmental justice, fight against racism, sexism, and /or speciesism. These mobilisations combine a radical denunciation of inequalities that goes back to their root causes with an attachment to fluidity concerning the “who”, the “what”, the “how” and the “when” of emancipation. We will examine in particular the way in which the emancipated common is part of a radical and fluid renewal of the relation to utopia by promoting both the diversity of tactics (advocacy, civil disobedience, border violence/non-violence) and the making (in) common. The activists interviewed address the link between local alternatives and the advent of a new global order in an elliptical, even enigmatic way, through metaphorical statements – “no big night, but shared gardens”, “the islets will make the archipelagos”.

1. Introduction

1.1. Thinking about the future in a critical period

Faced with a multitude of interwoven dangers and upheavals – climate change, wars, pandemics, famine, as well as political, social and economic crises – we are in a critical phase in terms of our diagnoses, analyses and responses. The polysemous nature of the word ‘critical’ makes it particularly well-suited for describing the global and profound state of crisis characterizing contemporary French society, in which what is important in life is viewed in the light of what is vital. Critical in the sense that the situation is life-threatening, as highlighted in particular in the reports of the IPCC. Critical also because in order to survive, we are going to have to think about how to live both collectively and individually, both within and beyond national borders. This implies increased attention to our political and economic systems, our modes of production and consumption, our perceptions of success and happiness, what links us and what divides us.

The Covid-19 crisis constituted a major ‘event’ (Badiou, 1997) at this critical time. The shock it caused calls for a process of truth regarding what constitutes humankind, our interdependence with the non-human, the relevance and role of boundaries based on identity and geopolitics. This event has provoked a crisis because it has forced us to weigh judgement on the meaning and legitimacy of the categories, hierarchies and objectives that structure our world and condition, our interactions and choices. It did not start with and

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cannot be reduced solely to the pandemic and how it was managed; it expresses a broader experience of shared vulnerability and the need to address it (Butler, 2022; Worms, 2020).

A renewal in national and transnational activism is shaking up our relationship with political categories and boundaries via the recovery of a democratic ideal that is distrustful of mediation and partisan affiliation, taking the form of a ‘movement of general contestation against ruling politicians and their tricks, in the name of the people’ (Hayat, 2018). It is in this perspective that movements to occupy public places (Pleyers & Glasius, 2013) and spaces (Nuit Debout, Extinction Rebellion, the Yellow Vests – ‘les Gilets Jaunes’, collage against femicide, etc.), as well as freedom of speech and awareness campaigns (#MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter and #WeWantToBreathe) contribute to a reappropriation of democracy, understood as both a ‘regime’ and as a ‘form of life’ (Klimis, 2019).

In contemporary French society, movements against injustice are part of a critique of political elites and institutions, qualified of anti-politics (Burnham, 2017; Clarke et al., 2018; Humphrys, 2018; Stoker, 2006) understood as the growing mood of public disaffection towards contemporary politics and politicians. The criticism and rejection of representative democracy and elites are often analysed as a depoliticization on three interlocking levels: mistrust of traditional methods of political engagement, including voting (Norris, 2011; Abdelzadeh & Ekman, 2012) and partisan affiliation; the importance of the expression of emotions – including anger – in the struggles; and a division or even an individualization of demands via the multiplication of causes.

These movements are thus associated with the fragmentation and even the atomization of collective forms of action, above and beyond the social body (Chabanet, 2020) and with revolts presenting a constant feature distinguishing them from past revolutionary utopias: rebellion *against* something rather than mobilization *for* something (Wolf, 2018: 16). Interpretations of these movements as depoliticizing have gone so far as to criticize them for risking the fragilization and even the jeopardization of the republican political system and its foundations, in particular universalism (Matonti, 2021; Mahoudeau, 2022).

When analyzed as a form of opposition that criticizes representative democracy and the French republic, these movements are seen to represent a negative side of criticism. However, this negative side is nested with a positive one (Cain et al., 2003; Pélabay & Sénac, 2019) in its ability to provoke discussion and the development of alternatives rather than being merely a denunciation of what already exists. The qualification of ‘positive’ is not a measure of what is desirable or not, but rather the introduction of another possibility.

Addressing the reconfiguration of social struggles by examining the positive aspects of their critical dimension makes it possible to consider the future in terms of building a ‘common path’ of emancipation. The aim of this research is to examine the manner in which contemporary movements position themselves not only *against* a common enemy but also *for* a common horizon. This involves examining and perhaps even resolving the contemporary expression of aporia constituting the declaration of a universal (Balibar, 2016; Butler, 2005) through the importance attributed to equality in the elaboration of a ‘common path’ of emancipatory struggles. The hypothesis under discussion is whether the principle of equality, despite its past and present ambivalences, can form the basis of a common language and project in the future.

Alongside the analysis of the historical ruptures and continuities at play in Occupy movement as “Nuit Debout” (Guichoux, 2016) and the Yellow Vests (Bantigny & Hayat, 2019; Bourmeau, 2019), as well as a quantitative approach to movements for social and ecological justice,¹ I researched the place of the liberal and republican principle of equality in the vocabulary and discourse of association leaders and activists. Echoing the analysis by the sociologist Irène Pereira of the grammars of contestation, in the sense of the philosophical logic underlying controversies within the radical left, this involved asking whether it is possible to consider the demands of minorities while pursuing the global emancipation project, i.e. to consider both the rights of minorities and the universality of political and economic emancipation (Pereira, 2010, 24–25).

As explained in particular in *Feminism for the 99%. A Manifesto*, ‘the differences, inequalities, and hierarchies that inhere in capitalist social relations do give rise to conflicts of interest among the oppressed and exploited’ (Arruzza et al., 2019, 84). This manifesto ends by setting out a challenge riddled with dilemmas: to take these divergences into account while fighting against their exacerbation and instrumentalization, bringing forth a universalism ‘always in formation, always open to transformation and contestation, and always establishing itself anew through solidarity’ (*op.cit.*, 85). The proposal of a new ‘universalism that acquires its form and content from the multiplicity of struggles from below’ is presented as a response to the failure of the proliferation of fragmentary struggles to give birth to ‘the sort of robust, broad-based alliances needed to transform society’ (*op.cit.*, 84).

While conscious of the global aspect of the issues posed by the invitation to consider an emancipatory future, we will focus on the manner in which such issues present themselves in the French case. I have analysed the modes of expression of this shared emancipatory horizon in the French case (Sénac, 2021) based on a qualitative survey conducted in 2019–2020 of 130 heads of feminist, antiracist, ecological, antispeciesist, and/or anti-poverty and pro-social justice movements and associations, as well as social entrepreneurs and activists claiming multiple and ‘fluid’ affiliations.

We will address the question of the ‘common path’ of emancipation firstly by examining how the association leaders and activists interviewed are reappropriating politics by means of social struggles through the question of alliances and synergies. The convergence of struggle triggers distrust, as it is associated with the victory of a single struggle, therefore potentially exclusive of others. The key issue is to consider the specific demands of different movements. Secondly, we will examine how utopias in action embody the reappropriation of politics by groups and/or individuals by means of real projects they work on together, thus building “here and now” shared spaces. Given the general sense of powerlessness and distrust in classical political frameworks, the politics of the close and the local have both become both particularly valued.

¹ See in particular works on ‘Critical Quantity’ and works of the CEVIPOF: <https://reporterre.net/Qui-manifeste-pour-le-climat-Des-sociologues-repondent>

2. Context and previous research

In contemporary mobilizations, past, present, and future are linked to the extent that they take the form of a reappropriation of inherited collective forms of action and principles, as well as the invention of alternatives.

Felix Butzlaff structures his analysis of the reconfiguration of the relationship with emancipation since the nineteenth century based on the examination of the manifestations of three conceptual ambiguities concerning a reading and understanding of the emancipatory process: the role of self-liberation in the ‘who?’ of the emancipation, that of a positive goal (utopia, ideology, etc.) in the ‘to what end?’ and the respective role of the individual and collective dimensions of engagement in the ‘in what way?’. In his opinion, the contemporary reconfiguration of political parties and social movements based on an increasingly individualist, self-centred and procedural approach explains the difficulty in the political organization of emancipation. He associates this with a post-functionalist approach in which movements ‘are not guided by pre-defined goals but arenas for symbolic experimentation and alternative in the Foucauldian sense (Swain, 2017; Yates, 2015)’ (Butzlaff, 2021, 15).

In a context characterized by the discrediting of the reformist approach, deemed insufficiently effective and even misleading, ‘real utopias’ are held up (Laville & Riot-Sarcey, 2020) as a necessary repoliticization and even – paradoxically – as the only pragmatism in a time of ecological and social emergencies. Considering ‘traditional’ forms of action, such as protests and advocacy, as insufficient and any revolutionary breakthrough as neither realistic nor desirable, the construction of ‘emancipatory alternatives in the spaces and cracks’ (Wright, 2017) within the existing system is presented as an attempt to achieve cohesiveness in the here and now. The question of whether or not they prefigure an ideal world is rarely asked and where it is, is done so prudently, in terms of experimentation rather than generalization. These alternatives take the form of a collective reappropriation of the space and discourse by performances, such as collages, flash mobs and occupations, even going as far as the creation of ZADs (Zones to Defend) and places challenging as far as possible and even suspending relationships of domination (Bulle, 2020). This militant relationship with the political use of local experimentation which is criticized as “a form of *organized irresponsibility*” via “experimental governance” (Haderer, 2023, 10) needs to be explained. The presentation of social movement-based and civil society-driven experimental politics as “the most promising strategy and site for inducting a structural transformation toward sustainability” (Blühdorn, 2023, 47) is challenged “as the edge of the abyss”. Ingolfur Blühdorn, political sociologist, proposes the expression “*recreational experimentalism*” to describe experimental politics as “providing social spaces and practices that help to cope with the traumatic experience of late-modern societies’ transition to a social order and a phase of modernity beyond the ideal of the open society.” (*idem*).

My research into the ‘common path’ of emancipation examines futures prospects through the paradoxical coexistence of an awareness of the need to form alliances in order to be effective and a sense of mistrust with regard to a ‘convergence of struggles’ (Groux & Robert, 2020). In effect, the convergence of struggles is seen as potentially concealing divergences between militants and their demands in the reconstruction of hierarchies. This mistrust stems both from lessons learned from the history of movements, characterized by the temptation to rank the various struggles, and from the realization of the difficulties and even the impossibility of exchanges between militants, despite them opposing the same injustices and defending the same principles. For example, if feminists have in common the defense of the fight against violence and the right to dispose of one’s own body, they are divided on concrete applications of these principles notably through the debates around wearing a veil, on prostitution or on transidentity.

The potential alliances as practices to employ in the present context of engagement echoes Leon Trotsky’s defence of a common front combining the spontaneous expression of demands and the organization of an alliance not determined a priori by partisan apparatus. The metaphor ‘march separately, strike together’ expresses the aim, still relevant today, of combining the preservation of freedom and the specific nature of demands and struggles with the strength of an alliance against the common enemy. He explains this by asserting that ‘the block’ is only created for practical action en masse; transactions at the top with no basis in principle lead to nothing but confusion (Trotsky, 1993 [1932]).

Through analysis of the French case, we shall examine the question of whether contemporary mobilizations against injustices prove this theory of the common front. If this should be the case, the challenge will be to understand how attachment to the specific nature of each cause becomes compatible with alliances and/or synergies between them.

3. Methodology

In this research into the ‘common path’ of contemporary movements against injustice, the epistemology is based on and indicates a critical approach. This approach does not only refer to data and their collection and analysis but also to the interweaving of a method (‘techniques for gathering evidence’), a methodology (‘a theory and analysis of how research should proceed’) and an epistemology (‘a theory of knowledge’) (Harding, 1986).

With regard to the qualitative survey, it does not claim to map contemporary mobilizations, but rather to approach them through a particular questioning at a particular time: the ‘common path’ of emancipation in French society in periods of social, ecological and sanitary emergencies.

3.1. A critical approach

Dysfunction in purported academic neutrality is considered, in particular by Sandra Harding, as a reinforcement of objectivity that makes it possible to get more information, including about the natural and social order, if we start thinking from the perspective of women from oppressed and devalued cultures, classes or races (Harding, 1986, 179–180). In *Force of Circumstance*, Simone de Beauvoir’s claim that through her research on women she chooses to have a limited but sound grasp of the world rather than to ‘float in

the universal' can be construed as an assertion of her strong objectivity (Espínola, 2012).

My research on the 'common path' of types of emancipation is in line with the epistemology of the *bandita* (Singer, 1993; Young, 1994). Indeed, the blind spots of traditional concepts must be reappropriated in order to move past the purported neutrality of political liberalism and republicanism. The aim is to consider the conditions that make it possible to address emancipation based on a theoretical corpus that, until now, has contributed to the neutralization and normalization of categories of domination and hierarchies.

My solution is to adopt a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). What distinguishes this approach regarding its understanding of the relationship between theory and empirical data is that it is simultaneously built and validated based on a constant comparison between the observed reality and the emerging analysis (Paillé, 1994; 150). The difference between grounded theory and theory-guided qualitative approaches, such as content analysis, is that it is not so much a process of codification of an existing corpus, but rather a process of questioning (152).

The logic of analysis is iterative and the data collection instruments evolve throughout the research process. Thus, the interview matrix and the choice of the sample² evolve according to feedback from the ground and what is produced by comparing the reality on the ground with the theoretical issues raised. Themes can be added and the theoretical sample evolves, in particular as the aim is to sample a diverse range of situations, events and phenomena and not individuals.

This grounded theory is based on the belief that analysis of social reality requires the construction of abstract and general categories (Chapoulié, 1984). The evolution from categories of common meaning to categories of analysis is achieved by comparing situations enabling 'the discovery of structural homologies between different processes involving the same theoretical category' (Demazière & Dubar, 1997, 53). Without entering into the details of the specific contributions of each author, in particular Strauss and Glaser with regard to their understanding of what constitutes grounded theory (Walker & Myrick, 2006; Heath & Cowley, 2004), I would point out that my relationship to theorization is situated somewhere between that defended by Hughes, for whom the conceptualization of 'sensitizing concepts' must always be temporary and subject to (re)construction in conjunction with empirical analysis, and that of Glaser and Strauss, which involves producing a 'formal theory'.

3.2. A qualitative survey of association leaders and activists combating injustices

I therefore compared the theoretical questioning of a 'common path' of emancipation with the analysis of my qualitative survey conducted between June 2019 and August 2020, i.e. before and during the Covid-19 health crisis, of 130 association and collective leaders, social entrepreneurs and activists engaged in the fight for social and ecological justice and against racism, sexism and/or speciesism. The inclusion of anti-speciesist movements in this analysis is justified by the radical and cross-cutting nature of their questioning of political, legal, economic and social systems in terms of domination, injustices and therefore emancipation. The first question asked addresses the place and role of the principle of equality in their engagement. The interview then proceeds to address a number of key themes: the 'why/to what end', the 'who', the 'in what way', the relationship with engagement and the boundaries of politics and the specific nature of contemporary movements. As regards the choice of the people interviewed, the sample can be qualified as theoretical in the sense that, unlike statistical sampling in which the subjects are chosen according to the criterion of representativeness and statistical saturation, which is a saturation of the statistical variable, where the sample is theoretical, the samples are not first and foremost samples of populations or of subjects, but rather samples of situations in which the researcher can collect 'theorizable' data, i.e. data that makes it possible to better understand the phenomenon rather than simply document it (Guillemette, 2006, 40–41). In a grounded theory approach, interview excerpts are cited not to illustrate a theoretical demonstration, but to contribute towards it. It is for this reason that the stance in relation to the theoretical discussions is essential both to explain our research question and to analyse the interviews in light of the issues it raises. As the qualitative survey progressed, we therefore modified our interview matrix, in particular concerning the explanation of the key relationship regarding the principle of equality and the convergence of struggles. The themed transcription of the interview also led us to modify our theoretical questioning to take into account the importance of the polysemous nature of democracy, in particular.

Regarding the construction of the sample, we used two types of recruitment. On the one hand, we asked feminist, anti-racist, environmentalist, anti-speciesist, and social justice NGOs to interview one of their representatives. We diversified the profile of associations contacted according to their repertoire of action: from advocacy such as the League of Human Rights to civil disobedience such as Extinction Rebellion and a number of associations such as L214 that use both. We also solicited activists for their action and visibility whether they were affiliated with several associations or collectives, or with none. We can for example quote Kyémis, an Afro-feminist blogger, who intervenes on ZADs ("ZONES TO DEFEND") or an academic such as Malcom Ferdinand. One of the differences between these two types of actors is that presidents and directors are spokespersons of their NGO, except when they specify, and the autonomous activists or fluid between several commitments are spokespersons of themselves. The fact that these interviewees speak from different places brings additional insights.

The interviews, lasting one to two hours, took place face-to-face or by phone, particularly during Covid. They were thematically transcribed, and their analysis took the point of view of the interviewees into account: an elected activist such as the President of an association, an employee such as the director of the association, or an academic whose research is used by associations.

The interviewees were chosen for their position as president, director of an association or a collective or for their position in the public arena, making it impossible for them to remain anonymous. For this reason, I asked the interviewees to validate all the excerpts

² The interview matrix and an overview of the interviewees can be found in [Appendix 1 and 2](#).

quoted.

In order to deal with possible bias, the point of view needed to be taken seriously, recognising in particular the fact that my identification with certain categories (Hekman, 1997) determines my relationship to the field, both in conducting and analysing the research. Being a researcher at Sciences Po, a high school training the political and economic elite, means that I am likely to be associated with the elite and with the powers that be. Such identification facilitates access to certain types of actors but may also explain why certain interlocutors were reluctant to be part of this survey. In addition to my academic status, the fact that I am not the object of many types of discrimination - including those based on actual or alleged membership of an ethno-racial group, religion, place of residence or physical appearance - I am part of a number of dominant communities. Such identifications could be seen to legitimize my ability to carry out this research, but also to question my ability to analyze inequalities, and the type of injustices that I do not personally experience. While my origins are not visible, the fact that I come from a working-class and rural area and that I have immigrant origins allows me to understand such reticence and alerts me to the temptation to pose as an objective scientific voice, in a neutral position, and thus reproduce relations of domination and their occultations.

4. Result and discussion

In a context of combined end of the world and end of the month emergencies, despite divergences of diagnosis and analysis, the sense of being subject to a common international peril leads to a convergence of social and ecological justice agendas.

We will begin by examining how the association leaders and activists interviewed promote alliances and synergies. We will then continue by analysing how the local level is presented as the place for “working in common to make common”.³

4.1. Spontaneous synergies between movements: convergence of social and ecological justice agendas

“End of the world, end of the month, same fight.” This slogan, chanted both in the Climate and the Yellow Vests demonstrations, the first of which was held on Friday, November 17, 2018, is at the heart of ecological transition. The challenge is to determine the means needed to build a society that does not deny divergence of interests, but which allows for the emancipated cohabitation of individuals, regardless of the identity categories assigned to them.

The synergy of movements against injustices is considered as spontaneous on a number of levels. It is distinguished from a convergence of struggles, rejected as homogenizing and too rigid. It results from the logical alignment, not always systematically desired or constructed, of the agendas of, for example, the Yellow Vests and ecological militants, Friends of the Earth (“les Amis de la Terre”) and ANV-COP21, all of whom found themselves protesting in front of Amazon warehouses in February 2019. Apart from opposition to a common enemy – neoliberalism – this synergy is perceived as a complex challenge when it consists in converging towards a shared goal and shared methods. This is exacerbated by the radical nature of movements against injustices in terms of approach, the visibility of their causes and their modes of action.

With regard to the spontaneous convergence of movements’ agendas, Véronique Andrieux, chief executive officer of the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) France, who has worked for Oxfam France and other organizations, both in business and at governmental level, shares the diagnosis that the poorest and most vulnerable populations are the least responsible for the ecological and climate crisis but are the most affected by its effects. She points out that the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated this pre-existing situation and aggravated inequalities. In this context, in her opinion, there is a real convergence of themed agendas between social justice and environmental justice, as they are intrinsically linked. This is also true in France, with the over-representation of low-income households in zones most exposed to air pollution, and a prevalence of higher levels of obesity among people in precarious situations. To illustrate the lack of conflict between social and environmental justice, she takes the example of a reduction in meat consumption and an increase in the consumption of plant protein, which is better for one’s health and for the environment, with no impact on the cost of living.

In terms of state aids for large companies, WWF France asserts the importance of ensuring that the investments being made and that will be made coming out of the crisis are subject to social and environmental eco-conditions. Véronique Andrieux considers more broadly that given the gravity and complexity of the situation, the response must result from dialogue between mobilized actors. In her opinion, there is no single actor or sector capable of having or providing all the right answers. We must therefore adopt an outlook involving multiple players, for a much more systemic and holistic approach that will enable us to come up with answers for the future.

The link between the heightened perception of social and ecological emergencies at international level and awareness of the need to form synergies and even alliances is also addressed by Emmanuel Poilane, general secretary of the Danielle-Mitterrand Foundation and president of the CRID, a network of international solidarity and citizen mobilization organizations. He states that the ‘collapse’ is no longer perceived as ‘virtual’ and ‘a long way off’, but as a ‘common peril’. In his opinion, while there may be disagreements about how to avoid this risk, there is such a degree of awareness of the real nature of this peril that many organizations are taking the view that mass action is nevertheless necessary. In his opinion, the Yellow Vest movement played a key role in creating new spaces and bridges between militants, making it possible to mobilize a population that had not previously been engaged and bring social justice movements together with those acting in the interests of urban neighbourhoods and international solidarity. He cites in particular the Yellow Vests’ condemnation of police violence as having contributed to creating bridges and pathways bringing different worlds together,

³ Translation of the French “faire (en) commun”.

notably deprived urban neighbourhoods (*les banlieues*), which had already been suffering and condemning such violence for a long time.

Priscilla Ludovsky, one of the instigators of the Yellow Vest movement through the petition of 29 May 2018 combining social and ecological emergencies, describes the links between the Yellow Vests and the Green Vests as a 'collective effort' rather than a convergence. She supported her petition and her views in debates with reference to the works of environmental protection organizations. She also points to 'joint actions', either organized or simply due to the fact that the targets were the same for both movements. She cites the example of the demonstrations against Amazon, explaining that Yellow Vests and ecologists both found themselves protesting outside the same warehouses because, in her opinion, those responsible for inequalities and for social and environmental violence are one and the same, a fact that was clear on the ground, without the need for any concerted decision. Without denying the divergences within this movement, she highlights that the Yellow Vests helped to make causes previously defended solely by ecological militants more visible and more popular.

Condemnation of the use of chlordecone in the Antilles, despite it being recognized as hazardous and illegal in mainland France, and of its effects on the health of inhabitants and on their environment, is a concrete example of the interwoven nature of issues concerning social and ecological justice and the condemnation of racism. Priscilla Ludovsky got involved in this movement through her work with the international movement for reparation, where what goes on in the DROM-TOMs⁴ is particularly criticized. The anti-chlordecone movement is often cited as an example of how different struggles are interwoven. Ghislain Vedeux, president of the CRAN, a federation of associations defending black rights, offers this movement as a good example of organization and partnership between local associations, led by those primarily concerned in Martinique and Guadeloupe, and national organizations like the CRAN, providing the movement with legal and media support. He considers it is a good example because it has made it possible to mobilize legal entities, through associations, as well as individuals, to take collective and individual action.

Malcom Ferdinand, a researcher, is also a key player in this movement, thanks both to his scientific publications (Ferdinand, 2019) and his engagement at the interface between institutions and the populations concerned. In his interview, he highlights the need to overcome the twofold fracture that modernity has created between nature and culture and between ecological, feminist and antiracist issues, in order to break down what he terms as 'the invisible slavery aspect of modernity'. He criticizes the racist blind spots of an ecological movement that has for a long time ignored the fact that natural destruction has been conditioned by imperialism and colonialism. He remarks that the link between the exploitation and appropriation of resources and violence towards native people, which has existed for a long time in the DROM-TOMs, was not really discussed until recently in social movements at national level. This is the case of Extinction Rebellion, which has created a group for decolonial ecology, and the Adama Committee, which addresses the link between racist violence and violence against natural resources and the environment. Malcom Ferdinand highlights the impossibility of thinking about and understanding the environmental emergency without taking into account the 'colonial genealogy of modernity'. He condemns the falsehood that consists in acknowledging an end of the world emergency without acknowledging the end of the world for some peoples throughout its very existence. In his opinion, while climate and health-related events, in particular the Covid-19 pandemic, are giving rise to greater recognition of the interwoven nature of social and ecological emergencies, this has had no effect on the responses to them. On the contrary, this crisis context can give rise to 'the sordid opportunism of capitalism', to the detriment of the most vulnerable, in particular migrants, resulting in deeper inequalities and the undermining of fundamental rights and particularly freedoms. He calls for vigilance with regard to an optimistic teleological vision of the 'world after', claiming that what happens will depend on the struggles and concluding that 'this is an opportune moment'.

Where they address potential alliances, often indirectly or enigmatically, the association leaders and activists interviewed do not make the link between local alternatives and a horizon of alliance based on the metaphor of a common front, but instead refer often to 'islands' that will join to form 'archipelagos'. The metaphor of the archipelago is primarily associated with libertarian municipalism (Bookchin, 1991) and with the works of the philosophers and writers Édouard Glissant and Patrick Chamoiseau on the identity-relationship.

In the interviews, the association leaders and activists refer to concrete utopias, both radical and fluid: radical insofar as they are based on the global diagnosis of an interdependence of sexist, racist, social and ecological dominations, and fluid insofar as they constitute a response by reappropriation at local level through alliances, a synergy of an emancipation through action in common. The categories and their opposition to each other, in particular the reason/emotion and universalism/particularity binaries, are perceived as inherited concepts to be overcome, and the modernity of a society is measured by its ability to self-transform and not only to reproduce itself (Muller, 2015).

4.2. Reappropriation of politics by real utopias in the here and now: working together

Promoted as an opportunity to reframe politics, the local level has been reappropriated as a means of creating alternative spaces within a project to radicalize democracy, by bringing it back to its roots and to its basic premise – the exercise of power by the people – which is translated as 'the demand for deeper democratic participation' (Norval, 2001: 334; Vitiello, 2019, 66). The local level is, in particular, perceived as making it possible to set up interindividual relationships of trust built on the basis of real projects to work together and build shared spaces. "Working in common to make common" contributes to the desire to be effective here and now, without any longer believing in a better future (Frère and Jacquemain, 2013, 254). The local level is therefore associated with the

⁴ The departments, overseas regions and overseas collectivities, also called overseas France, correspond to the territories of the French Republic distant from metropolitan France, situated on the European continent

forging of interindividual relationships of trust, based on real projects enabling experimentation in the interests of the common good and not on a predefined and rigid model. In order to underline their attachment to an emancipation the terms of which are not dictated by any authority or orthodox views, many association leaders interviewed, particularly feminists, cited the response of the anarchist Emma Goldman to a (male) comrade reproaching her for her behaviour one night: 'If I can't dance to it, it's not my revolution'.

Creating spaces and moments of conviviality and trust, whether in permanent form like the *Maison des Femmes Thérèse Clerc* in Montreuil, the actions of the association *Genre et Ville* or like the digital technology apprenticeship get-togethers with *Reset*, a queer and feminist hackerspace, at the *Bar Mutinerie*, queer feminist bar since 2012, create a 'common path' based on sharing and exchanging. These experiences are described and considered by the militants involved, with the greatest degree of horizontality possible, as both vectors of emancipation for those who experience them and experiments constituting 'prefigurative policies' (Vitiello, 2019). As analysed by the philosopher Diane Lamoureux in discussing Hannah Arendt, 'acting together' therefore contributes to a process of autonomy through concrete action making it possible to overcome identity politics by exercising a liberating power of action through which women, as well as all those belonging to 'vulnerable groups' (Garrau & Le Goff, 2009), become actors and not merely 'issues/objects of public policies' (Lamoureux, 2010). The interweaving of private lives and politics is asserted in terms of diagnosis and response, insofar as lived experience is positioned as key to an awareness and condemnation of the systemic and global aspects of injustices.

This approach to the future as the fact of assuming the implementation of alternatives in the present is advocated by many of the association leaders and activists interviewed. This is in particular how the historian Ludivine Bantigny (2021) interprets contemporary movements against injustices in her interview, as moving beyond the 'no alternative' approach due to an awareness of the urgent need to reappropriate politics. Municipalism can therefore be understood as a response to the problem, which she qualifies as structural, of 'finding places to live together in harmony' and where to set up not only defence and resistance but also alternatives. She does not see the 'traditional' side of political movements and the reappropriation of the common through action as in opposition, but rather as interwoven. In her opinion, the 'against' is expressed through reactions, whereas retaliation, particular by groups opposed to police violence or against social and tax injustices in the case of the Yellow Vests, promote a 'for', a vision of the world. These movements offer a different idea as to what a democracy could be, through concrete proposals and an alternative project. She points out that the *Nuit Debout* movement was formed 'in opposition to the *Loi Travail* employment law and the world it represents'. She views as historic the raising of the question of the abandonment of capitalism as an alternative. She explains her participation in the *Faire Commune* collective by the fact that she considers municipalism as a system that does not disconnect citizen reappropriation from reflection on the social, economic and institutional conditions of a real democracy. Conscious of the risks of depoliticization if municipalism is only considered as local citizen reappropriation, she stresses the importance of 'a return to politics in the real sense of the term by activating an alternative political way of thinking that can become powerful and whose corollary is the conflictuality at the root of democracy'. Her words can be compared with the works of Claude Lefort rehabilitating conflict and presenting disorder as the basis of democracy (Cervera-Marzal, 2020). These alternatives can therefore be understood as cracks in which new relationships can be forged, the question of their power to abolish the old order of hierarchy in social matters (Cervera-Marzal, 2020: 20) remaining in suspense and undeterminable.

In her interview, Laurie Debove, editor in chief of *La Relève et la Peste*, an independent and engaged publisher, underlines the key role of the media in this citizen reappropriation of politics, defending the emancipatory power of shared access to information. The challenge for the media is to awaken consciences without fuelling a reproduction of the system by creating a 'buzz', but by opening up 'windows of acceptance', particularly through scientific opinion pieces on social and ecological justice topics, accompanied by rallying articles and pressure. She also positions herself in the 'let's do everything' team, from small actions to structural changes, according to the principle that justifiable battles are legitimate with no prioritization between them. This valorization of tactical diversity is associated with radicalism in the sense of getting to "the roots of the ills by addressing the structural problems underlying them, as opposed to the government's use of the term to imply angry people who want to destroy everything". The rehabilitation of a type of political radicalism understood as an attempt to work on the causes of inequalities is in direct opposition to the stigmatization of activists addressing these inequalities as structural. Successive governments since 2017 and President Emmanuel Macron have denounced a radicalisation of social movements, including ecological ones. More broadly, in the 21st century, radical approaches have almost been equated with the danger of radicalism understood as the violent seizure of power by religious authoritarianism particularly linked to the jihadist phenomenon. This, while the radical dimension of engagement is clearly distinct from the explanatory paradigm of radicalization "encompassing both individual drifts, the passage to the terrorist act or the use of political violence." (Le Pape, 2020, 485) It is in this perspective that Laurie Debove, in a context of ecological meltdown, argues, in her interview, that the challenge is to stop finding compromise solutions for ten or fifteen years down the line and to start asking the question of effectiveness and ineffectiveness not just in a stance of opposition, but also with regard to alternatives. These alternatives take the form of creating links and solidarity through shared activities, both in terms of resisting 'useless and ecocidal' projects, like *EuropaCity*, a megacomplex project in Gonesse (Val-d'Oise) and creating 'shared gardens', 'fertile places' to change our relationship with the world by treating nature no longer as a resource but by taking care of it as a part of ourselves. This means less opposition and more constructive solutions, not by defending nature, but by 'being nature defending itself'. She cites the case of the town of *Mouans-Sartoux* (Alpes-Maritimes), a municipality that has decided to recover land and employ market gardeners in an effort to achieve self-subsistence. She associates the transition from local initiatives to global movements with a metaphor inspired by ecological thinkers like Corinne Morel-Darleux, according to whom all the local islands of resistance will eventually join up to form archipelagos. Her diagnosis is that the capitalist system will hold out to the bitter end and only ecological collapse will put an end to it. In her opinion, with regards to the 'explosion' coming, the question is not when but what. She analyses the Covid-19 pandemic as one of the symptoms demonstrating to what extent current western civilization is leading us to a dead end, reminding us that a profound transformation of our modes of

production and consumption is of the utmost importance.

The interweaving of private lives and politics is asserted by the association leaders and activists interviewed in the elaboration of diagnoses and responses, insofar as lived experience, either as the primary individual concerned or as an ally, is key to an awareness and condemnation of the systemic and global aspects of injustices. Does this imply a form of depoliticization in the individualization of demands, or a different relationship to politics, based on lived experience and on the present as a political temporality in itself? In her critical analysis of the Arendtian distinction between private and public, particular with regard to the figure of Antigone (Arendt, 1972 [1970]), Judith Butler (2000) invites us not to close ourselves off by depoliticizing lived experiences and private life, asserting that experience is common and even a necessity for 'excluded persons'. She asks the following question: how can the excluded act according to the modes of action and in the language of the political domain from the outset, while being refused this language and these modes of action (Di Croce, 2018: 138)?

Municipalist and ecofeminist alternatives are thus considered as real utopias and as drivers to restore a secularized political space through an encounter with nature and the non-human (Newman, 2021: 186). They are associated with the construction and sharing of living spaces governed by the implementation of coherent and respectful relationships, whether between humans or between humans and other living organisms. The significance of the garden reflects the key role of our relationship with the land as a vital fertile space to be treated with sobriety and humility through localized sharing. Foucault's analysis of the central role of our relationship with space in contemporary life, and in particular with emplacement, leads him to compare utopias, i.e. 'fundamentally unreal spaces' (Foucault, 2004, 15), with heterotopias, i.e. 'real places, places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society, which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted' (Foucault, 2004, 15). Heterotopias are very diverse places – from cemeteries and brothels to museums and libraries – that participate in social life by fulfilling certain functions and that all share a point in common: they lie outside of the time and/or social norms in which they have a place, a space.

In our qualitative survey, municipalist and ecofeminist alternatives are not considered, asserted and experienced as heterotopias in the Foucauldian sense, insofar as they constitute real utopias not only outside of but, above all, emancipated from norms and institutions. Their aim is not to coexist in a logic of complementarity but to propose another relationship to autonomy. They contribute to a temporality of engagement that is not that of the generalization of experimentation at the national or international level, but a form of spontaneous collapse by economic and political fragilization in interwoven condemnations of an unjust order (the 'against') and the shared experience of alternatives (the 'for').

To take the expression of the writer Alain Damasio, the approach is that of a 'volution' (Damasio, 2009) promoting initiatives already situated in the 'world after', without waiting for the 'world before' to be overthrown. Hence, this disorder via the margins spontaneously contributes to a weakening of the established order. The common horizon therefore corresponds to the logic of the spontaneous movement which, as analysed by Ivan Sainsaulieu, is "the antithesis of the individual heroic act". For him, "far from plunging society into civil war, as partisan logic would have us believe, the spontaneous movement implies, on the contrary, the collapse of the old world like a house of cards, in an atmosphere of unanimity" (Sainsaulieu, 2020: 52). The association between spontaneous movement and an atmosphere of unanimity can be questioned and discussed, and not only in term of efficiency. In my research, the spontaneous nature of the struggles and alliances was asserted without denying or sacrificing their ideological and conflictual dimension.

5. Conclusions: towards an emancipated common

Our research highlights that the principle of equality forms part of the 'damaged words' (Bensaïd, 2000) of the twentieth century and that the injunction for struggles to converge is associated with an entry into doctrine reintroducing verticality and unity into movements claiming their attachment to horizontality and plurality. Politics is considered as a process of co-construction by the sharing of action in common and the relationship to spontaneity is therefore key. This spontaneity in terms of the approach to the future is not contradictory but, on the contrary, consubstantial with the rehabilitation of political radicalism both in terms of diagnosis and responses.

Contemporary movements against injustices, combining social and ecological emergencies, therefore apply the grammars of contestation discussed by Irène Pereira. 'Nietzschean grammar' first, as they deconstruct the belief in the established narrative of the universal emancipation of humanity, that of a theology of history leading either to a United States of humanity or to a communist revolution (Pereira, 2010: 21). Their mistrust of any form of sanctification or generalization, either by established narratives or 'big nights', is positively expressed by a defence of each individual's participation in democratic life. In concrete terms, this redefinition with regard to politics is expressed by engagements and actions demanding fluidity, in particular with regard to types of action, through an attachment to a diversity of tactics – between advocacy and civil disobedience, despite disagreements concerning the definition and role of violence – at both the individual and collective level. An association, collective or activist can combine these approaches or consider that synergy is based on complementary tactics between activists and collectives, according to the specific characteristics and capacity of each. As regards the 'republican grammar', the activists and association leaders interviewed take different positions. While some consider that it is too flawed to be reappropriated, others defend the importance both of setting up 'microprojects' and freeing up 'ephemeral spaces' (Pereira, 2010: 21) and demanding that the Republic apply the principles it proclaims, in particular the principle of equality, to everyone. Lastly, by their condemnation of a common enemy in the form of a sexist, racist and ecocidal capitalism, the association leaders and activists interviewed represent a form of continuity of the 'socialist grammar'. In effect, they express their attachment to a global transformation of society through multiple challenges causing cracks to appear in the political and economic system. Engagement against injustices is thus associated with a movement opening up breaches in

traditional politics, both with regard to the agenda and more broadly with regard to the definition of the ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘when’ of politics. In front of the big question of how to resist and carry another world, the answer is to refuse to put in competition repertoires of actions, claiming their complementarity. The force of non-violence (Butler, 2020) and the effectiveness of the radical blank (Haines, 1988; Malm, 2021) are not perceived as contradictory, but come together in a process of weakening the system of domination.

This position echoes the abandonment of the ‘big night’ model in our survey. Through the metaphor of ‘shared gardens’, the aim is to express the importance of participation in the end of one world and the creation of another, more just, world by the combined effect of condemnations, multiple and non-concerted attacks against the system, and by the blossoming of alternative initiatives. Living coherently in the here and now is held up as a response in itself, without the need to include it in a logic of desirable or even possible generalization. The aim is not to bring about a revolution to take down the system, but to build alternatives in the margins of the system.

One future avenue of research would be to address the way in which these alternatives lead to transformations not only on the individual or local level but also on the systemic level. Such an approach would be particularly interesting with regard to the possibility of overcoming, and not only modernizing, the anthropocentric dimension.

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CRedit authorship contribution statement

Réjane Sénac: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft.

Declaration of Competing Interest

I declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in the following manuscript “Addressing the challenge of a “common” Future: the French contemporary mobilizations against injustice in face of the ecological and social emergencies” which I wish to submit for publication on the Special Issue “Environnemental Justice Futures” co-edited by Valérie Deldreuve and Céline Granjou.

Data Availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

Annexes. : List of interviewees and interview matrix

Annexe 1. List of interviewees and their role or type of engagement on the date of the interview.

A total of 130 interviews were carried out between June 2019 and August 2020, 37 of which took place during or after the first Covid-19 lockdown in France.

Association Leaders and Feminist Activists: 45 individuals.

Jocelyne Adriant Metboul, President of the *Coordination française du lobby européen des femmes* (CLEF), 19 December 2019.

Rebecca Amsellem, feminist activist and founder of the feminist newsletter *Les Glorieuses*, 5 February 2020.

Marilyn Baldeck, Delegate General of the *Association européenne contre les Violences faites aux Femmes au Travail* (AVFT), 11 October 2019.

Marie-Noëlle Bas, President of *Les Chiennes de garde*, 19 July 2019.

Louiza Belhamici, feminist, anti-racist, anti-imperialist militant, 12 February 2020.

Souad Benani Schweizer, Teacher of French and Philosophy and founder of the *Nanas beurs*, 8 January 2020.

Fatima Benomar, founder of *Les Effrontés*, 17 July 2019.

Chris Blache, Leader of the *La Barbe* collective – a feminist action group, co-founder of *Genre et le ville*, 16 July 2019.

Danièle Bouchoule, co-President of the *Elles aussi* network, 21 November 2019.

Nadia Chabaane, member of the *Collectif national pour les droits des femmes*, 31 July 2019.

Alice Coffin, Paris city councillor, co-founder of *l'Association des journalistes LGBT (AJL)*, 27 August 2020.

Caroline De Haas, militant feminist, co-founder of *#NousToutes*, 15 January 2020.

Irene, feminist activist, blogger, 20 January 2020.

Monique Dental, founding President of *Le Collectif de pratique et de réflexions féministes Ruptures*, 20 September 2019.

Pascale d’Erm, ecofeminist, journalist, documentary filmmaker, and author, 5 September 2019.

Myriam Bahaffou, founder of an ecofeminist group in Paris, 16 October 2019.

Aurore Foursy, co-President of *l'Inter LGBT*, 27 November 2019.

Géraldine Franck, founder of *Le Collectif anti-CRASSE "Classisme, Racisme, cApacitisme, Sexisme, Specisme - Pour l'Égalité contre toutes les dominations"*, 1 April 2020.

Rachida Hamdan, founding President of *Les Résilientes*, 24 September 2019.

- Alice Jehan and Solène Ducrétot, co-founders of *Les Engraineuses*, 11 September 2019;
- K., co-founder of an ecofeminist organisation inspired by the *Reclaiming* tradition that brings together militantism and pagan spirituality, 18 December 2019.
- Kiyémis, afro-feminist, author and poetess, presenter of the " *Quoi de neuf* " podcast, 18 March 2020.
- Ophélie Latil, founder of *Les Georgette Sand*, 10 October 2019.
- Christine Le Doaré and Arlette Zilberg, co-founders of *Les VigilantEs*, 4 November 2019.
- Gwendoline Lefebvre, President of the *Lobby européen des femmes*, 7 November 2019.
- Léa Lejeune, co-founder and President of *Prenons la une*, 16 July 2019.
- Anais Leleux, member of the steering committee of #NousToutes, leader at Agitprop, 25 November 2019.
- Anne-Cécile Maylfert, founding President of *La Fondation des femmes*, 18 July 2019.
- Loren Noordman, Vice-President of Humans for Women and Founder of *La Féministhèque*, 6 November 2019.
- Emmanuelle Piet, President of the *Collectif féministe contre le viol*, 16 December 2019.
- Céline Piques, *Osez le féminisme!*, 26 September 2019.
- Tatyana Razafindrakoto, founder of the festival *Les Aliennes*, 8 October 2019.
- Caroline Rebhi and Sarah Durocher, co-Presidents of *Planning familial*, 11 December 2019.
- Raphaëlle Rémy-Leleu, Spokesperson *Osez le féminisme!*, 25 July 2019.
- Suzy Rojzman, spokesperson for the *Collectif national pour les droits des femmes*, 24 June 2019.
- Roselyne Rollier, President of the *Maison des femmes Thérèse-Clerc de Montreuil*, 27 March 2020.
- Laurence Rossignol, President of the *Assemblée des femmes*, Senator, former Minister, 24 October 2019.
- Rosalie Salaiün, Leader of the feminist commission of *Europe écologie-Les Verts (EELV)*, 24 October 2019.
- Sam and Anne, co-facilitators of *Reset, hackerspace queer and feminist*, 9 January 2020.
- Julia Schindler, alias Miss Permaculture, consultant and trainer in permaculture, member of *Les Gentils Virus - Graines de démocratie*, 31 March 2020.
- Inna Shevchenko, co-founder of *Les Femen*, 4 December 2019.
- Marguerite Stern, originator of *Les collages contre les féminicides*, 23 October 2019.
- Olga Trostiansky, founding President of the *Laboratoire de l'égalité*, former President of *la Coordination française du lobby européen des femmes (CLEF)*, 16 July 2019.
- Typhaine D, artist and feminist trainer, 10 December 2019.
- Sarah Zouak and Justine Devillaine, co-founders of *Lallab*, 10 March 2020.
- Association leaders, activists, academics, ecologists: 21 individuals.**
- Véronique Andrieux, Director General of WorldWide Fund for Nature (WWF) France, 13 May 2020.
- Isabelle Attard, former Deputy *Europe écologie-Les Verts (EELV)*, author of *Comment je suis devenue anarchiste*, 27 February 2020.
- Delphine Batho, President of *Génération écologie*, Deputy, former Minister, 17 December 2019.
- Clotilde Bato, President of *Notre affaire à tous* and Director of *SOL - Alternatives agroécologiques et solidaires*, 13 January 2020.
- Julien Bayou, co-founder of *Génération précaire* and of the *Jeudi noir* collective, national secretary of *Europe écologie-Les Verts (EELV)*, 23 April 2020.
- Pauline Boyer, spokesperson for *Alternatiba and Action non-violente COP21 (ANV-COP21)*, 19 November 2019.
- Valérie Cabanès, co-founder of *Notre affaire à tous*, international lawyer, 10 October 2019.
- Angelina Casademont, member of *Youth for Climate Paris region*, 9 January 2020.
- Laurie Debove, ecology journalist, Executive Editor of *La Relève et la Peste*, 5 February 2020.
- Malcom Ferdinand, CNRS (*Centre national de la recherche scientifique*) researcher, author of *L'Écologie décoloniale*, 19 March 2020.
- Khaled Gaiji, President of *Les Amis de la Terre*, 24 August 2020.
- Garibaldi, member of *Extinction rébellion*, 22 November 2019.
- Jean-François Julliard, Director General of Greenpeace France, 19 March 2020.
- Corinne Morel-Darleux, formerly coordinator of the foundation for eco-socialism within the *Parti de gauche* and member of the steering committee of the *Fondation Copernic* and *Le Mouvement Utopia*, regional advisor for the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, 12 March 2020.
- Cécile Ostria, Director General of the *Nicolas-Hulot foundation for nature and mankind*, 12 March 2020.
- Jessica Oublié, author of the comic book against the use of chlordecone in Guadeloupe, 30 April 2020.
- Pierre Rabhi, Founder of the *Colibris* movement and of *Terre et humanisme*, 11 December 2019.
- Maxime de Rostolan, originator of *La Bascule*, 10 October 2019.
- Sophia Sabine, co-founder of the *Zéro chlordécone zéro poison* collective, 2 April 2020.
- Hélène De Vestele, Founder of Edeni, an organisation that offers training on the issues at stake for ecological transition, 24 July 2019.
- Vipulan, militant within *Youth for Climate*, 17 January 2020.
- Association leaders and activists involved in the struggle against racism: 14 individuals.**
- Jawad Bachare, Executive Director of the *Collectif contre l'islamophobie en France*, 20 March 2020.
- Saïd Bouamama, sociologist, co-founder and coordinator of the *Front uni des immigrations et des quartiers populaires (FUIQP)*, 9 March 2020.
- Guillaume Capelle, co-founder of *SINGA*, 26 March 2020.
- Rokhaya Diallo, writer, journalist and filmmaker, co-founder of *Les Indivisibles*, 15 May 2020.

Emmanuel Gordien, President of *Le Comité marche du 23 Mai 1998* (CM98), 31 March 2020.

Majdelil, activist within the *Front uni des immigrations et des quartiers populaires* (FUIQP), 20 January 2020.

Violaine Husson, national leader on questions of gender and protection at *La Cimade*, 25 July 2019.

Danièle Lochak, former President (1985–2000) member of the *Groupe d'information et de soutien des immigrés* (Gisti), 20 March 2020.

Pierre Mayrat, co President of the *Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples* (MRAP), 21 January 2020.

Mohamed Mechmache, founder and President of the *Pas sans nous* collective, founder member and spokesperson for *l'Association collectif libertéégalité fraternité ensemble unis* (ACLeFeu), 24 February 2020.

Malik Salemkour, President of the *Ligue des droits de l'homme* (LDH), 22 November 2019.

Dominique Sopo, President of *SOS Racisme*, 23 October 2019.

Ghislain Vedeux, administrator and President of the *Conseil représentatif des associations noires* (CRAN), 3 April 2020.

Buon Tan, Honorary President of the *Haut Conseil des Asiatiques de France* (HCAF), Paris Deputy for *La République en marche* (LRM), 23 April 2020.

Association leaders and activists anti-specists and animalists: 15 individuals.

Amandine Sanviers, co-founder of *Paris animaux zoopolis* (PAZ), 18 March 2020.

William Birkhandt and Léa Dubost, founders of *DxE France/Red Pill*, 9 December 2019.

Yves Bonnardel, theorist and field activist for anti-speciesism and adult domination, 7 January 2020.

Adrian Debord, member of *Chrysalide* and co-founder of *l'Université d'été de la libération animale* (UELA), 3 April 2020.

Mathilde Dorbessan, spokesperson for *Pour une éthique dans le traitement des animaux* (PETA) France, in charge of corporate relations, 10 October 2019.

Melvin Josse Nicolas Bureau, Director and leader of public affairs at *La Convergence animaux politique*, 11 December 2019.

Brigitte Gothière, spokesperson and co-founder of *L214*, 13 November 2019.

Solveig Halloin, founder and spokesperson of *Boucherie abolition*, 12 November 2019.

David Olivier, militant anti-speciesist, founder of *Les Cahiers antispécistes* and of *Veggie Pride*, 28 January 2020.

Willène Pilate, intersectional feminist egalitarian activist, organiser of *Veggie Pride*, 6 March 2020.

Axelle Playoust-Braure, co-organiser of *Les Estivales de la question animale*, and co-editor in chief of *L'Amorce. Revue contre le spécisme*, 8 February 2020.

Mata'i Souchon anti-speciesist activist and co-organiser of *Les Estivales de la question animale*, 29 January 2020.

Pia Shezar, spokesperson for *Pour l'égalité animale* (PEA), 3 March 2020.

Morgan Zoberman, co-founder of *l'Université d'été de la libération animale* (UELA), 9 April 2020.

Leaders of associations and collectives involved in the struggle against poverty and for social justice: 10 individuals.

Jérôme Bar, co-founder of *Aequitaz - Artisans de justice sociale*, 24 March 2020.

Emmanuel Bodinier, co-founder of *Aequitaz - Artisans de justice sociale*, 25 March 2020.

Camille Clochon, co-founder of *L'Ébullition à Romans-sur-Isère* (Drôme), 1 April 2020.

Cécile Dufлот, Director General of Oxfam France, 12 February 2020.

Marie-France Eprinard, President of *Emmaüs solidarité*, 17 March 2020.

Félix, founder of *CapaCités - La ville pour tous et par tous*, 27 March 2020.

Claire Hédon, President of *ATD Quart monde*, 20 March 2020.

Adrien Roux, member of the Alinsky Institute, founder of *L'Alliance citoyenne et du Réseau pour l'action collective transnationale* (ReAct), 1 April 2020.

Inès Seddiki, President-Founder of *Ghett'up*, 25 August 2020.

Stéphane Vincent, Delegate General of *La 27^e Région*, administrator of *Les Halles civiques*, 2 April 2020.

Association leaders within anti-globalisation, citizen alternatives and social entrepreneur movements and collectives: 18 individuals.

Ludvine Bantigny, historian, co-founder of *Faire commune*, 26 March 2020.

Sarah Durieux, Head of *Change.org France*, 23 July 2020.

Jean-Marc Gancille, co-founder of the *La Suite du monde* co-operative, of the anti-captivity collective *Rewild* and Director General of *l'écosystème Darwin*, 7 April 2020.

Nicolas Girod, spokesperson for the *Confédération paysanne*, 24 April 2020.

Samuel Grzybowski, founder of *Coexister*, 30 July 2020.

Augustin Legrand, activist for the right to housing, co-founder of the association *Les Enfants de Don Quichote*, 6 March 2020.

Elliot Lepers, Director of the NGO, *Le Mouvement*, 5 February 2020.

Priscillia Ludosky, one of the originators of the Yellow Vests movement, 27 November 2019.

Gustave Massiah, member of the scientific committee of the *Association pour la taxation des transactions financières et pour l'action citoyenne* (Attac) France and of the international council of the *Forum social mondial* (FSM), 22 January 2020.

Vincent Mignerot, Honorary President and founder of *Adrastia*, 14 April 2020.

Pascal Pavageau, spokesperson for the citizens' lobby, *Modèle universel social émancipateur et solidaire* (Muses), 5 novembre 2019.

Emmanuel Poilane, President of the *Centre de recherche et d'information pour le développement* (CRID), Secretary General of *France Libertés*, 16 April 2020.

Renard, activist and resident of *La Dune* (ZAD), 5 March 2020.

Juliette Rousseau, coordinator and spokesperson for the *Coalition climat 21* during the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) in Paris

and member of *Initiatives pour un autre monde* (IPAM), 4 March 2020.

Pablo Servigne, speaker and author of several works on collapsology and collective resilience, 10 April 2020.

Sophie Tissier, founder of the Yellow Vests collective *Decla ta manif* and subsequently of the *Force jaune* association, 22 January 2020.

Aurélie Trouvé, spokesperson for the Association pour la taxation des transactions financières et pour l'action citoyenne (Attac), 7 February 2020.

Quitterie de Villepin, activist in the field of democratic innovation, founder of the #MaVoix movement, 10 February 2020.

Patrick Viveret, co-founder of the *Roosevelt 2012* collective and member of the citizen collective, *Osons les jours heureux*, 5 May 2020.

Nicolas Voisin, co-founder of *Les Communes imaginées* and of *La Suite du monde*, 14 November 2019.

Annexe 2. Interview matrix.

Key question:

With respect to your activism and in particular your position as leader or activist in ..., could you tell me about the role and significance you attach to the principle of equality? Is it the driving force of your engagement(s)? How would you define your activism? How does it intertwine with other principles and/or motivations?

Key themes:

1. The "Why/ to what end":

- Link between objectives and motivations: what terminology/expressions seem to you to be the most relevant? The struggle against injustice/inequality, equality, justice, etc.
- Articulation between equality and liberty, the political and the moral, collective emancipation and individual liberty.
- Continuity in the coherence of a universalist heritage, or overcoming a heritage denounced as being intertwined with a constitutive sexism, racism and speciesism.
- Convergence between different struggles.

1. The " Who ":

- One or several publics concerned by the struggle: the role of those in the front line and of their allies
- Debate on intersectional approach: intersection or intertwining of identifications and domination, gender/race/class, etc.)?
- Competition between interests, or between inequalities, or fraternity/solidarity: alliances/divisions?

2. The " How ":

- Diversity of tactics: advocacy, civil disobedience, revisiting the frontier between violence/non-violence
- Reform/revolution: acting on/using the law or outside of existing institutions and imposed rules
- Acting on the ground, taking action / sharing and remaining ideologically coherent
- Can/must the scope of reflection be individual, local, national or international?
- Positioning on specific controversies: keeping different causes separate from each other, affirmative action policies, reappropriation or questioning of existing categorisations (in particular, gendered), strategies for prioritising - or not prioritising - struggles/sectors.

3. The relationship to engagement and the limits of the political

- Connections between the "who", the "what" and the "that which is" political: what demands are being made and how do their political/moral/economic/cultural dimensions intersect?
- The process of politicisation/depoliticisation and engagement and its relationship to representative/deliberative/participative democracy, the designing of public policies and controversies/ ideological positioning
- Relationship to radicality: what does a radical engagement or demand signify?

4. Specific features of contemporary mobilisations:

- Modernity, post-modernity or a-modernity: positioning on dichotomies such as reason/emotion, nature/culture, individual/collective.
- Current specific issues: awareness of ecological and social emergencies, the vital interlocking of the human and the living world, the relationship between Utopia and realism.
- The role of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The role of digital and social networks.

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