

— Mathias Hein Jessen, »The practico-inertia of institutional practices«

— A B S T R A C T —

In this article I seek to give an account of what I *call the practico-inertia of institutional practices or the ideology of institutional practices*. In the everyday functioning of our institutional, organizational and administrative practices there exists what Slavoj Žižek has termed objective violence, in the »often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems«. This objective violence is often not questioned fundamentally because it is deeply embedded in our practices and thereby treated as something given, something natural, as something necessary and beyond the control of human beings – it is *ideology*. In this article I examine the violence inherent in this 'normal' state of things and highlight the power that is inherent in institutional practices and the difficulty of changing it.

— Mathias Hein Jessen is a PhD student in History of Ideas from the Department of Culture and Society, Aarhus University. His PhD dissertation concerns political and economic thought in the 17th century, particularly in late 17th century England where the emergence of the modern state and the modern corporation is combined with a new way of thinking politics and economics.

— Keywords: ideology, violence, Marx, Žižek, Foucault, Agamben

— <http://lir.gu.se/LIRJ>



■—Mathias Hein Jessen—■

■—THE PRACTICO-INERTIA OF INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES—■

■—The key test of every radical emancipatory movement is [...] to what extent it transforms on a daily basis the practico-inert institutional practices which gain the upper hand once the fervor of the struggle is over and people return to business as usual.¹

Why do we do what we do without thinking about why we do what we do? Why do we act the way we do, and why does the way we act seem natural and unproblematic? Why does it seem that nothing changes fundamentally in the way we act and approach questions in the everyday-functioning of our political, social and economic life? For instance, after the financial crisis which hit in 2008, seemingly revealing fundamental flaws in our political and economic system, why does nothing seem to have been fundamentally changed, and why does it seem that we have continued on more or less the same path?

In this article, I examine and give an (not the) answer to these questions through what we can call the »practico-inertia of institutional practices« or the »ideology of institutional practices«. To do so I will draw on the concept of ideology as developed by Karl Marx, understood as practices reified as natural and necessary; Giorgio Agamben's (and Michel Foucault's) analysis of administrative practices to understand how power works in the west; Slavoj Žižek's conception of objective violence; and Henrik Jøker Bjerre's concepts of 'almost-already' and 'almost-always', as well as a number of others.

I examine the ideology inherent in our everyday practices and, more importantly, in our institutional practices (understood as formal and informal laws, norms, morals, organizations, administrative practices, and so on). Over the course of history, these practices have become ever more deeply entrenched within governmental, administrative and organizational practices. They have become what Slavoj Žižek, in the opening quote, terms »practico-inert institutional practices«.² The practices inherent in our institutions, which allows them to function smoothly, are also so firmly in place that it is difficult if not impossible to change them fundamentally. This is perhaps the biggest strength and the biggest weakness of our present system and predicament.

These practico-inert practices in many cases also entail what Žižek, in his book on *Violence*, calls »systemic violence«; an

objective violence where we can identify no clear agent, but which consists in the »often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems«.³ This »systemic violence« is exactly »the violence inherent to this 'normal' state of things«,⁴ the state in which we live and which we take for granted and treat as natural.⁵ Treating such a state – a man-made, historically contingent state of affairs – as something 'natural', therefore exempting it from fundamental enquiry, is, in the marxian sense, *ideological*. A state of affairs is created (and can therefore be changed) by (the) people, but is treated as something beyond the control of (the) people (i.e. it is reified). Ideology is then, in itself, natural and reasonable, and perhaps a necessary way of existing and being in the world, given that it would be very difficult to live in a world where one constantly had to question the givenness and naturalness of one's surroundings.

For this investigation it is important that the central component in the »often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems« are the administrative, organizational and governmental systems, which have become deeply sedimented within ordinary, everyday practice, and which therefore seem natural to us. It is *ideology*. So let us start by taking a closer look at the concept of ideology.

— IDEOLOGY —

Roughly speaking, Karl Marx has two different conceptions of ideology. Or to be more accurate, there are two sides to the concept of ideology in Marx.⁶

The first is the one we find in *The German Ideology* in the characterization of how economic power is transferred or translated into other types of power and especially cultural supremacy. The existing relations of power are thus upheld by the fact that the existing public discourses are keeping them hidden or legitimizing them.⁷

The other conception of ideology is the (in)famous one found in chapter 1.4 of *Capital* on »The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof«. Here Marx analyzes the characteristics of a commodity-producing capitalist society, in which the high degree of the division of labor entails that human beings do not themselves produce all the necessities of life, but exchange commodities through and by the common equivalent money. When human beings (as producers of commodities) are for the most part in connection with each other through this relationship of exchange, the relationship comes to appear as *the* societal relationship between them. This means that »It is the definite social relation between men, that here in their imagination assumes the form of a relation between things.«⁸ What Marx denotes as *fetishism* is exactly the fact that the products

that human beings produce, and the relation they have to other human beings through the exchange of commodities, appear to them as something reified, as a thing independent and outside of themselves. This means that the societal character of work – the material conditions, the fact that the capitalist production of commodities functions the way it does – appears to human beings not as an inter-subjective, inter-human social relationship, but as a relation between things, and as qualities of the products themselves. The paradox is that the products only have the qualities that they have because they are produced by the human beings in the specific way that they are. This means that the producers' »social interaction takes the form of the interaction of objects, which rule the producers instead of being ruled by them«. ⁹ The paradox is moreover that human beings think that they are governed by these relations, and that these relations are 'real', but are themselves constantly creating and recreating this relationship of dominance without them knowing it. Marx's conception of ideology has therefore often been abbreviated with his own formulation, »they don't know it, but they do it« (*Sie wissen das nicht, aber sie tun es*). ¹⁰

This concept of ideology has been further expanded by Slavoj Žižek, with the help of Peter Sloterdijk's »they know perfectly well what they are doing, but they do it anyway«. This was most explicitly formulated in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, but is a (if not *the*) theme running through Žižek's entire *oeuvre*. The point is that even though people realize and know how the system works (they know capitalism has catastrophic consequences), they keep on acting exactly the way they do. Whether they know it or not, a central part of the Marxian conception of ideology (stressed the most in its Horkheimer/Frankfurt school variation) is that social forms and the existing situation will always be reified and appear to human beings as something natural, as something given and beyond their control. There will therefore always be ideology to some degree, and ideology is a necessary social tool to be able to exist normally (in your everyday life, you have to accept that things are the way they are without thinking too much about it). The point is that certain institutional practices support and uphold different forms of action and behavior. People act within given institutions and generally do what these institutions encourage them to do. They are what in Foucauldian terms can be called 'conditions of possibility', the field within which people can act. However, as Žižek has pointed out, there are »often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems«. ¹¹ Such consequences also appear as something that cannot be avoided or changed. That which is contingent and could be otherwise, which could be changed, is treated as something natural and reasonable, and therefore not

fundamentally questioned. This 'natural' and smooth functioning is incorporated into the organizational, administrative and governmental system of the western world, and is often extremely violent.

— THE POWER OF INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES —

Giorgio Agamben's 2007 book, *Il regno e la gloria* (The kingdom and the glory) is, as the preface states, a study that inquires »into the paths by which and the reasons why power in the West has assumed the form of an *oikonomia*, that is, a government of men.«¹² The main body of the book revolves around a revisiting of church fathers from the second to the fifth centuries AD, investigating their explanation of how God could at the same time be one (as he is almighty and indivisible) and three (in The Holy Trinity of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit). He could be this, according to these writers, in the form of an *oikonomia*, of a government of the world. God is naturally one in being, in essence, but he governs the world, administers the world, through the Holy Trinity. According to Agamben, a distinction thereby arises between theology and economy, between the being of God and his activity.¹³ What is solved through the conceptualization of The Holy Trinity as *oikonomia*, as government of the world, is that God can still be one while at the same time governing the world through other agents; that is, this »heterogeneity does not concern being and ontology, but rather action and praxis. [...] the Trinity is not an articulation of the divine being, but of its praxis.«¹⁴ It is in the figure of the distinction between the essence and the ways of being, or of being and the ways of being, that is at the heart of Western politics, according to Agamben. The origin of the state, of power, of government is not to be found in theology (as Carl Schmitt claimed), with its focus on one supreme being (with its secular counterpart the sovereign) as the center of power, but in the *oikonomia*, the administration, the management. The center of power is empty, existing only in its ways of being, acting, administering and governing, meaning that »the center of the governmental machine is empty.«¹⁵ In his text »What is an apparatus?«, originally written as an introduction to *The Kingdom and the Glory*, Agamben writes: »Action (economy, but also politics) has no foundation in being: this is the schizophrenia that the theological doctrine of *oikonomia* left as its legacy to western culture.«¹⁶

Agamben's sometimes radical statements and bizarre choices of subjects aside, the (essentially Foucauldian) point is nonetheless clear: the central aspect of how power works in the West is not to be found in the formal center of power, but in the forms of concrete governmental practices, epitomized in the slogan *le roi regne, mais il ne gouverne pas* (the king rules, but

he does not govern). This means that the seat of power, the seat of sovereignty, the state, is nothing other than an empty spot around which there revolve a number of practices, organizations, administrations. When looking at and examining such practices, it is therefore important – and this is what Agamben (with his radicalization of Foucault¹⁷) reminds us – not to be fixated on the fixed entities of ‘state’, ‘sovereignty’, or ‘politics’, but to be aware of the power (and the inherent violence) within the governmental and institutional practices.

— THE VIOLENCE OF PRACTICES —

In his book on *Violence*, Slavoj Žižek distinguishes between *subjective violence* – what we normally term violence, such as crime, terror, war, fights, murder, etc., which has a clearly identifiable agent – and *objective violence*. Objective violence is divided into ‘symbolic’ and ‘systemic’ violence. Symbolic violence is the violence embodied in language and its forms, while the systemic violence is what I have already, with Žižek, characterized as the catastrophic consequences of our existing systems. The point is that objective violence, or »the violence inherent to this ‘normal’ state of things«,¹⁸ comprises both systemic practices and language. In this way they also in some way correspond to the two senses of ideology in Marx. Through their everyday practices, people constantly uphold, create and re-create the existing state of things (and act naturally within it). But it is also important that the language with which we treat this ‘normal’ state of things continually supports and upholds it. It is within language that certain practices and actions are either condemned or supported. This very well summed up by the economist Joseph Stiglitz in *Freefall*, his book on the financial crisis. Stiglitz warns about putting the blame of the crisis on individuals:

— We have to be wary of too facile explanations: too many begin with the excessive greed of the bankers. That may be true, but it doesn’t provide much of a basis for reform. Bankers acted greedily because they had incentives and opportunities to do so, and that is what has to be changed. Besides, the basis for capitalism is the pursuit of profit: should we blame the bankers for doing (perhaps a little better) what everyone in the market economy is supposed to be doing?¹⁹ (Stiglitz 2009: 6).

The point is clear: bankers and financial speculators acted the way they did because they had incentives to do so. The institutions supported them in the way they acted. There was no moral vocabulary telling them that what they did was bad. What they were doing was socially, morally and institutionally acceptable. There was (and perhaps still is) no language with

which to condemn such actions. The institutions and the language (and lack of language) in this way become mutually supporting. More recently, at the beginning of November 2012, it was noted that Danish pension funds were investing in companies that supplied technology vital for drones, which in the recent years have been used more and more frequently in combating terrorism (sometimes operating on the borders or in the shadows of international law). Most of the companies which the pension funds were investing in were big corporations where only a part of the technology they developed was used in drones. But the interesting part is the answer given by the CEO of one of the funds, PensionDanmark:

— It is something that we are aware of and which we are thinking about. But we also have to say that there are neither UN- nor EU-sanctions against drones. In the end our business is about creating the highest return on investments for our clients, and when it is not illegal, when the politicians do not sanction against it, and it is not against our guidelines to invest in these companies, we see no reason not to do it.²⁰

The point is not to discuss what certain corporations and funds can and should invest in or produce, but to note that within certain guidelines and institutions, a certain way of acting is accepted, even though this entails investing in companies that produce technology operating on the borders of international law and that is used to kill people.²¹ The point is that this is 'objective violence'. The companies are not doing anything violent. The Danish pensioners are not doing anything violent. Nonetheless, they help to support not only acts of subjective violence (the concrete drone attacks), but also the relations of systemic violence and the existing institutional practices.

As a highly exemplary case of how the systemic violence of the practico-inertia of institutional practices works, we can turn to the American TV-series *The Wire*. In the third and fourth seasons we follow the politician Thomas 'Tommy' Carcetti on his way to becoming the mayor of Baltimore. Carcetti is in many ways an idealist who wants to and believes that he can make real changes. He knows that, in order to do something about the crime- and drug-problems in Baltimore, police work has to change its methods. Instead of constantly arresting the middle- and low-level dealers on the street (the supply of which from the ghettos of Baltimore is seemingly endless²²), the police have to hit the bosses and the suppliers – to catch the problem at the root. This requires longer, more thorough investigations. However, focusing on long-term operations moves the resources away from street-level arrests,

causing the level of 'criminality' to go up, which is a problem for a politician who wants to get re-elected. Forced to go back to 'playing the numbers game' and making the statistics look nice in order to get re-elected, Carcetti abandons the method by which the problem really could be solved and something could actually be changed. In order to make a difference and to do what he really wanted to do, he has to play the game, and never gets to do what he wanted to do and what he knows is necessary (in this way *The Wire* was perhaps a premonition of the Obama presidency, and perhaps of modern politics in general).

— ALWAYS - ALREADY - ALMOST —

People thus act within given (objective) institutions consisting of both systems and language, which then to a large degree structure the possibilities of actions and behavior. Ideology in this sense functions as what could be termed *always-already*, in the terms of Danish philosopher Henrik Jøker Bjerre. Ideology in this sense is always there, it is already there, as that which structures our actions.

However, as Bjerre has also noted, ideology (also) functions as an *always-almost*.²³ Again the case of *The Wire* is exemplary. In order to make the change, we have to play the existing game just a little bit longer. In order to *really* do something radically new, in order to *really* change things, I have to get re-elected, which means playing the game by the existing rules and not doing something radically new. We are *almost* at the point where something new is happening, where a real change could happen, and therefore we have to remain within the existing order just a little bit longer. In order to end world poverty, for instance, or to get us out of the current financial crisis, we need to continue on the path that we are already on. In order to solve the problems that the banks have created, we have to save the banks. The answer to the capitalist crisis is more capitalism. We know that it has some bad consequences (inequality, poverty, global warming, etc.), and we know that there is something fundamentally unstable and unjust about the existing order (inequality, poverty, global warming, etc.), but the way to get out of it is more of the same. In his book *The year of dreaming dangerously* Žižek also ponders this paradox: »We are told again and again that we live in critical times of deficit and debt and will all have to share the burden and accept a lower standard of living – *all, that is, with the exception of the (very) rich*. The idea of taxing them more is an absolute taboo: if we do this, so we are told, the rich will lose any incentive to invest and thereby create new jobs, and we will all suffer the consequences.«²⁴

Another part of this argument of not taxing the super-rich, the hesitation of introducing a tax on financial speculation, or

the need of downsizing social welfare programs and the austerity measures in general, is the view of the economy as dictating these actions. The economy dictates that we do this and that, and there is thus nothing we can do. In this way, the existing practices become exactly ideology. The way we do business now appears as the only possible way to do it. The economy is something outside of us, beyond the reach of human action, something natural and eternal that dictates what we should and must do. In this way, the ideological statement *par excellence* was uttered by the Danish vice-prime minister with reference to the economy and the need to cut down on unemployment benefits: »That's just the way it is« (which is reminiscent of Margaret Thatcher's, »There is no alternative«).²⁵

We thus act within such given institutions which to a certain degree makes real change impossible. In order to do something radically different there are some fundamental structures, institutions and practices that need to change. It is exactly these »practico-inert institutional practices which gain the upper hand once the fervor of the struggle is over and people return to business as usual«, to again refer to Žižek's quote at the beginning of this article. The quote continues as follows: »The success of a revolution should not be measured by the sublime awe of its ecstatic moments, but by the changes the big Event leaves at the level of the everyday, the day after the insurrection.«²⁶

Much of Žižek's present disappointment and self-proclaimed pessimism²⁷ also stems from the fact that the practico-inert institutional practices once again gained the upper hand when we returned to business as usual. After the financial crisis, which revealed the flaws of the capitalist system, and the rise of several popular movements such as the Arab Spring, the Occupy movement, and Democracia Real Ya! and Los Indignados, it seems as if nothing has fundamentally changed. There was a moment, there was an opportunity, but nothing happened. The system keeps on functioning as it did before. And this is precisely because of the deep structural embeddedness of our institutional, administrative, organizational, bureaucratic systems – their *practico-inertia*. It is also perhaps both the biggest strength and the biggest weakness of our present system and predicament – it is hard (if not nearly impossible) to change fundamentally.

— DISCOVERING THE DRIED BLOOD —

In the first lecture of *Society must be defended* from 1976, Michel Foucault inverts Carl von Clausewitz's famous dictum of »war as the continuation of politics by other means« to »politics as the continuation of war by other means«. This entails

— that power relations, as they function in a society like ours, are essentially anchored in a certain relationship of force that was established in and through war at a given historical moment [and that] the role of political power is perpetually to use a sort of silent war to reinscribe that relationship of force, and to reinscribe it in institutions, economic inequalities, language, and even the bodies of individuals. [...] Politics, in other words, sanctions and reproduces the disequilibrium of forces manifested in war.²⁸

According to Foucault, the role of a genealogical analysis is to discover how these relationships of force came to be and what they continue to inscribe in our institutions and in our practices. To discover, in other words, how the systemic violence inscribed in the practices and institutions came about and thereby to discover how it works and functions. An investigation such as this is »interested in defining and discovering, beneath the forms of justice that have been instituted, the order that has been imposed, the forgotten past of real struggles, actual victories, and defeats which may have been disguised but which remain profoundly inscribed. It is interested in discovering the blood that has dried in the codes«. ²⁹ But why is it that we need history to do this? According to Foucault, it is »quite simply because historical contents alone allow us to see the dividing lines in the confrontations and struggles that functional arrangements or systematic organizations are designed to mask«. ³⁰ History gives us the remedies to understand how this 'natural' state of things came about; how the existing ideology was formed; how this systemic violence appeared; how this inherent violence was formed and how it became naturalized. Such an approach means first of all that our 'natural', existing state of things is born in violence and war, and more importantly that such relations are inscribed in the institutional practices. But this violence is precisely »the blood that has dried in the codes«; it is systemic violence without any identifiable agent, and this existing state of things is generally accepted as natural, as something beyond the control of human beings, as ideology.

The first part of a critique of such a state is the constant 'denaturalization' of these things that appear to us as natural, as ideology, as all social forms to a certain degree always will. But perhaps we need to be more aggressive and claim that we seek this understanding for more than just 'denaturalization'. The whole point of Žižek's use of Sloterdijk and the phrase »they know perfectly well what they are doing, but they do it anyway«, was to point out that even if we know that what we do is ideology, that it is contingent and could be otherwise, we do it anyway. Much of this can be ascribed to the ideology of

institutional practices. To investigate the ideology of the practico-inertia of institutional practices is thus an attempt to (historically) investigate it and its consequences, in order to understand how it came about and how it functions.

Meanwhile we can find comfort in the words of Žižek (which in some ways can function as legitimization – or ideology – for academics):

— A critical analysis of the present global constellation – one which offers no clear solution, no ‘practical’ advice on what to do, and provides no light at the end of the tunnel, since one is well aware that this light might belong to a train crashing towards us – usually meets with reproach: ‘Do you mean we should do *nothing*? Just sit and wait?’ One should gather the courage to answer: ‘YES, precisely that!’ There are situations where the only truly ‘practical’ thing to do is to resist the temptation to engage immediately and to ‘wait and see’ by means of a patient, critical analysis. [...] We need to ‘learn, learn and learn’ what causes this violence.³¹

— CONCLUDING REMARKS —

I have tried here to give an account of the ideology inherent in the practico-inertia of institutional practices. In the institutional practices of our everyday life, in the normal functioning of our system, a great deal of violence exists, but violence as ‘objective violence’ without a clear identifiable agent. This violence is often not fundamentally questioned because it first of all is inherent in the way our system works and this system appears to us as something given, natural, something that cannot be changed. In that sense it is ideology. The point to be made here is that much of the way power works is embedded within institutional and administrative practices and thereby hard to change – because it is also treated as natural. Ideology in this sense functions as an ‘always-already’ – it is always there as something that structures our reality – but also as an ‘always-almost’: we have to continue what we are doing in order to do something else than what we are doing. So seems to be the logic of our present economical and political system and predicament. What, then, is to be done? First of all, realizing that real change does not come from formal politics since it is deeply embedded in the institutional and administrative practices which, to a large degree, is where real power lies. Second, to realize the violence which is inherent in this everyday functioning of our system and to realize that the way we live our lives, the way our political and economical system functions, is not natural; that this is not ‘how it is’, but that it is contingent and it could be otherwise – that ‘there is an alternative’. Perhaps one way of doing this is through history, through a genealogical

tracing of the blood that has dried in the codes. In this way we may be able to understand how our institutional practices came about and how they function, and thereby perhaps not only to understand how the blood dried in the codes, but also give us the remedies with which to unclot it. ───────────────────■

■ ─── E N D N O T E S ───────────────────

- 1 Slavoj Žižek: *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce* (London, 2009), 154.
- 2 Žižek: *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*, 154.
- 3 Slavoj Žižek: *Violence. Six Sideways Reflections* (London, 2008), 1.
- 4 Žižek: *Violence*, 2.
- 5 Examples of this can be multinational corporations not paying taxes in developing countries, where they make a lot of money through transfer pricing; subsidiary systems and global finance flows reproducing existing relations of dependence between first- and third-world countries; the consequences of global warming and climate change affecting more seriously those who already have less; western states making profit on weapons and the war- and security industries, etc.
- 6 Andreas Beck Holm: »Karl Marx. Fra Marx til Marxismen« (Karl Marx. From Marx to Marxism) in Mathias Hein Jessen et al. (ed.): *Marxismen efter Marx. 12 strømninger i det 20. århundrede* (Marxism after Marx. 12 currents in the 20th century) (København, 2013), 21–22.
- 7 Karl Marx: *Die deutsche Ideologie* in *MEW*, vol. 3 (Berlin, 1962 [1845/46], 46.
- 8 Karl Marx: *Das Kapital*, vol. 1, in *MEW*, vol. 23 (Berlin, 1966 [1867]), 86.
- 9 Marx: *Das Kapital*, 89.
- 10 Marx: *Das Kapital*, 88.
- 11 Žižek: *Violence*, 1.
- 12 Giorgio Agamben: *The Kingdom and the Glory. For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government (Homo sacer II,2)* (Stanford, 2011 [2007], xi.
- 13 Agamben: *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 5.
- 14 Agamben: *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 41.
- 15 Agamben: *The Kingdom and the Glory*, xiii.
- 16 Giorgio Agamben: »What is an apparatus?« in Giorgio Agamben: *What is an Apparatus, And Other Essays* (Stanford, 2009 [2006], 10.
- 17 For a closer treatment of Foucault and his way of examining the state (as governmentality), as well as Foucault's influence on Agamben, see Mathias Hein Jessen & Nicolai von Eggers: »Kongen hersker, men regerer ikke. Guvernamentalitet, statificering og statspraksis hos Michel Foucault« (The king rules, but he does not govern. Governmentality, stratification and statepraxis in Michel Foucault) in *Slagmark – Tidsskrift*

for idéhistorie (Battlefield. Danish journal for the history of ideas, nr. 66, Michel Foucault (2013), 89–107.

18 Žižek: *Violence*, 2.

19 Joseph E. Stiglitz: *Freefall. America, Free Markets, and the Sinking of the World Economy* (London, 2009), 6.

20 Dagladet Information, 12.11.12, »Danske pensionspenge investeres i kampdroner«, <http://www.information.dk/316847>. The original quote is: »Det er en sag, vi er opmærksomme på og gør os overvejelser omkring. Men vi må også konstatere, at der hverken er FN- eller EU-sanktioner mod droner. I sidste ende handler vores forretning om at skabe det højeste afkast til vores kunder, og når det ikke er ulovligt, politikerne ikke sanktionerer, og det ikke er imod vores retningslinjer at investere i disse selskaber, ser vi ingen årsag til ikke at gøre det.«

21 Other examples from the peace-loving, democratic Nordic welfare states could be the fact that Norway makes a huge amount of money with its weapons industry: see the case of the Swedish Totalförsvarets Forskningsinstitut (FOI), who helped Saudi Arabia build an advanced weapons factory; or revelations that shortly before Denmark (with a unanimous decision in parliament) entered the war effort in Libya, a Danish company had completed the sale of military equipment to Colonel Gaddafi.

22 Another point to be made is how the focus from politicians, the police, and public opinion lies on the subjective violence of the drug-dealers, on robbing, violence, murder etc., and not on the objective, systemic violence forcing young poor black people into a life of crime.

23 Henrik Jøker Bjerre: »The Jealous Husband. Or, why conspiracy theorists are always wrong – even when they are right« in Gry Ardal & Jakob Bock: *Spheres of Exemption, Figures of Exclusion. Analyses of Power, Order and Exclusion* (Malmö, 2010), 296–98.

24 Slavoj Žižek: *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* (London & New York, 2012), 23.

25 Danish: »Sådan er det jo« (uttered by Margrethe Vestager).

26 Žižek: *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*, 154.

27 This is expressed throughout *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* and can also be seen more explicitly in the talk »Communist absconditus« given at The European Graduate School in Switzerland in 2012. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N02DgDVxAgw>.

28 Michel Foucault: *Society Must be Defended. Lectures as the Collège de France 1975–76* (London, 2004 [1997]), 15–16.

29 Foucault: *Society Must be Defended*, 56.

30 Foucault: *Society Must be Defended*, 7.

31 Žižek: *Violence*, 6–7.