

# France: NUPES coalition must bring the social movements into parliament

Friday 24 February 2023, by [DURAND Cédric](#), [KEUCHEYAN Razmig](#) (Date first published: 29 June 2022).

**The coalition, NUPES, now comprises 150 deputies in French parliament - a force of power for the French Left. But how can they avoid the pitfalls of what Nicos Poulantzas called 'statism'? The answer, Cédric Durand and Razmig Keucheyan argue, is that NUPES must work with extra-parliamentary groups.**



*Nupes\_blogpic-*

*The economist Cédric Durand and the sociologist Razmig Keucheyan, members of the NUPES group in parliament, call for the creation of a body to liaise with social movements, in order to combine the parliamentary fight with mobilisations carried out on the ground.*

A parliamentary group of 150 NUPES deputies: we have entered a new world. This intrusion of a combative left into the heart of representative democracy is not a first in Europe: parliamentary groups including anti-liberal and even anti-capitalist MPs have sat on the benches of parliaments in Spain (Podemos) and the UK (with Corbyn's Labour) in recent years.

But it is new in that NUPES's centre of gravity is much further to the left. Its 'shared programme', largely derived from the Union Populaire's 'Avenir en Commun', has the planning of the economy as its cornerstone. In other words, a radical challenge to forty years of neoliberal policies.

Yet this parliamentary group carries a risk: what the Marxist philosopher Nicos Poulantzas, shortly before the left came to power in 1981, called 'statism'. That is, the tendency often observed in the history of social and political movements to lose vitality when they get institutionalised. Their leaders become deputies or parliamentary advisers, and the centre of gravity of the struggle shifts to the institutions. However, these institutions impose a political tempo on them, that of permanent emergency - and cause a growing disconnection from extra-parliamentary politics.

This risk is all the greater in the current context: the absence of an absolute majority, and therefore of stability, requires constant attention on the part of left-wing MPs to counter the attempts of the Macron presidency to divide them or take advantage of gaps to advance its own proposals.

However, not occupying the institutions is not an option. Our states are full of contradictions: they contain conservative institutions, such as the police, but also progressive ones, such as social security. The cause of emancipation advances when the struggle is carried to the heart of the state and manages to take advantage of these contradictions.

The challenge, therefore, can be summed up as follows, in Poulantzas's words: How to achieve 'a radical transformation of the state by articulating the broadening and deepening of the institutions of representative democracy... with the deployment of forms of direct democracy at the grassroots'.

How can we implement a mixed strategy, which combines mobilisation within and outside the state? On the one hand the unions, the ZADs, street demonstrations, the NGOs, and farmers' associations; on the other the parliamentary struggle, taking on capitalism in a coordinated way. This is the challenge that the NUPES must meet if it wants to avoid 'statism'.

### **Intellectual refoundation of the lefts**

For this to happen, a permanent forum for liaison with the social movements is needed. This should be the role of the Parlement de la Nupes, chaired by Aurélie Trouvé, which has assembled 500 social movement figures and personalities. After playing a role in bringing people together at the grassroots level during the presidential and legislative campaigns, this assembly must reinvent itself in order to sustain the five-year term. A term that promises to be turbulent, but in which it will be all the more useful.

It has two priority tasks: to be a place where struggles converge, where their leaders can come and discuss strategy, share their experiences, and solicit support from other movements, as well as from NUPES deputies. The political crisis we are going through promises to bring about many such struggles this autumn, if not before. In order to be successful, it is important that they are projected into a political perspective and linked to parliamentary activity.

It must also continue the work of intellectual refoundation of the lefts, by stimulating the activity of the myriad of people and institutes that have contributed over the years to making l'Avenir en Commun, a programme whose sophistication is recognised by all.

The creation of a training school, where activists from the different components of NUPES could come to learn and debate, would help to create a common political culture. The courses could be both theoretical and practical, with a view to training political staff capable of leading the social movement as well as exercising power.

**Cédric Durand, Razmig Keucheyan**

---

### **P.S.**

- Verso. Blog. 08 February 2023:  
<https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/5552-nupes-must-bring-the-social-movements-into-parliament>

This article was originally published by Libération on 24 June 2022.

- Translated by David Fernbach.