

5TH, 6TH AND 7TH OF APRIL, 2024

WATER, NOT CHIPS!

PROTESTS AGAINST RESOURCES APPROPRIATION BY ELECTRONICS COMPANIES AND THE 'CONNECTED LIFE'

On the 1st of April 2023, there were a thousand of us demonstrating in Crolles against the cornering of resources by electronics companies, and in particular against the extension of the giant company producing electronic chips: STMicroelectronics. **Today its neighbour company Soitec announces its extension plan to make semiconductors for electric car batteries.**

These extension projects will obviously be disastrous to the environment: these appropriation of water in times of more and more frequent droughts, contamination of water with chemical substances, enormous electricity consumption serve to produce connected objects and weapons.

Unbelievable drinking water consumption

The microelectronics sector is a heavy drinker: you need 1700 litres of water to rinse a single silicon wafer. In summer, when residents are prohibited from watering their garden, ST and Soitec keep on gobbling the drinking water of the public network. Their consumption grows continuously. With its extension, ST plans to use 21,500 m³ of drinking water a day (i.e. 249 litres a second), namely a 190% growth since 2021.

The digital sector contaminates our rivers

STMicroelectronics claims it recycles 60% of its water, which is false: STMicroelectronics does not recycle water, it merely 'reuse' its air conditioning water, that is to say 25% of its consumption. The other 75% contain ammonia, chlorine, hexafluoride, phosphorus, nitrogen, copper... the company uses 20,000 tons a year of these chemicals. This dirty water goes to its treatment plant and is discharged into the Isère River. For example, ST is legally allowed to discharge a quantity of nitrogen equivalent to the non-treated emissions of a city of 53,000 inhabitants. ST and Soitec must stop contaminating the Isère River!

Democracy denial

These company extensions are decided without real democratic procedures. The public inquiry on the Crolles premises exploitation was launched when the first stage of works was almost completed. The police noted all the car license plates of the people attending the second public inquiry meeting. As usual in our industrial societies, the more complex the technology, the less power people have on their life.

Electronics for the Army

STMicroelectronics chips equip KUB-BLA kamikaze drones of the Russian army. More generally ST is a major supplier of chips for the army. This is also true of Soitec, which has long been an army supplier. The SOI technology was created by the CEA to have available parts adapted to the military nuclear sector. Our 'death.augmented' champions, ST and Soitec, are accomplices of wars and nuclear threat. Their activities rest upon death and destruction: they are immoral.

Gadget making companies

The chips made in Gresivaudan are used in automatic lawnmowers, connected water bottles, Elon Musk's Starlink network, smartphones (e.g. Google Pixel 7)... Electric car batteries use a lot of chips too. But do we really need all this stuff? We do not want to live in this connected world, we do not want the 'internet of things' or a 'life.augmented'. We want a society more human, humane and less digital, a society where you don't need to use these highly sophisticated gadgets for any daily activity.

Public subsidies and private benefits

STMicroelectronics is a 'Franco-Italian' company which has its headquarters in Switzerland and pays its taxes in the Netherlands (the fourth tax haven in the world). But the French state is financing the extension with 2.9 billion euros (that is 2.9 million euros for each created job). This budget line is planned in the section of France 2030 on chips (5.5 billion euros) of the European Chips Act, a European plan to dramatically increase the chip production in Europe.

The 'Industrial Sovereignty' is a lie

The new ST and Soitec plants are claimed to be part of a project to ensure European sovereignty in electronic chips. In fact, as we use more and more chips (a 15% a year growth), the Gresivaudan plants will not replace Asian plants, they will add to them. We also can wonder what 'sovereignty' means when 95% of the rare metals used for the chips production come from China. The best way to avoid being dependent on Asian plants is to use less electronic devices. We will do it by regaining our autonomy against the industrial way of life being forced on us, and against the power of multinational corporations.

Digital cannot be environmentally friendly

We often hear that digitalising is the way to avoid using oil and to build a 'low-carbon' world. The truth is that we never extracted more oil than today: the digital sector increases the fossil fuel consumption. We are taught that digitalising is the way to 'dematerialise' activities but each connected object depends on an enormous technological infrastructure. Digitalisation has a huge and concrete impact on natural environments (mines, electrical consumption, river contamination...) Increasing chips production does not ease off the destruction of our planet, it reinforces it.

We do not need a connected world

Are electronic chips indispensable to life? Contrary to water, which is a real need, chips are neither necessary nor inevitable: they depend on a political choice, that of a connected way of life. For a few decades, we seem to have forgotten that other ways to live in this world are possible, and surely more desirable than the on-screen life, permanent connection and overconsumption of resources (water, electricity, rare metals).

Innovation rush is a historical aberration

The project of transforming Gresivaudan into a microelectronics pole does not respond to local needs or wishes. These are geopolitical, economic and military choices. The point is that Taiwan is the chip world leader, European institutions want to go after them, to finance the CEA and its start-ups, even if that means exploiting even more the Global South countries. The competitiveness imperative is pushing us to a deadly innovation rush at the risk of environmental, animal and planetary destruction. As the climate is changing, as the species are extinguishing, we promote desertion. Let's abandon this disaster rush, let's abandon this innovation world race and let's stop the money quest at all costs!

LET'S STOP ST AND SOITEC EXTENSIONS

**APRIL 5, 6 AND 7
IN GRENOBLE (FRANCE) AND AROUND**

**DEMONSTRATION
LECTURES
& ACTIONS**

Collectif STopMicro
stopmicro@riseup.net
<https://stopmicro38.noblogs.org>
Come, join us!

