
FEDA

The Imaginary Republic

Edited by: Brandon LaBelle
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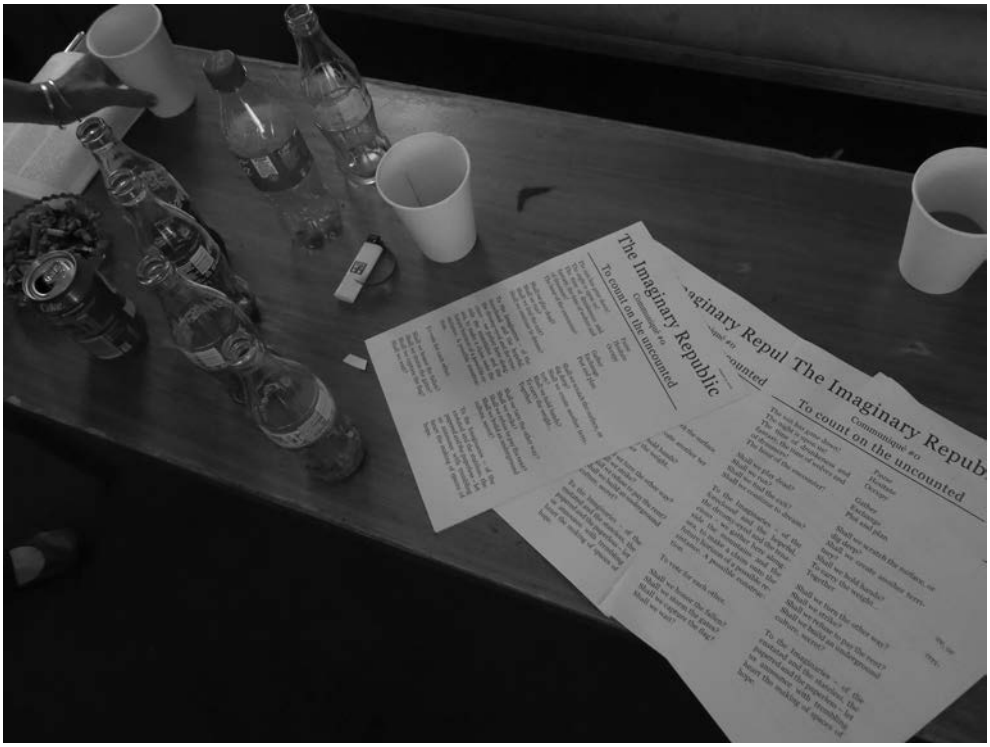
what of the world outside
what of the time it takes
what of the shelters holding against all this
what of the conflicts and the clashes the tender words
what of the figures that steal into the night
        what of the lonely the persistent
        what of the disappearing community
what of the memories they share like a music
what of the frustrated conversations the loving discourses
what of the trials and the accounts the stories
what of the barred entrances the sudden cracks and the isolation
what of the hand that passes a hat
what of the declarations made broken turned inside out
what of the listening in the dark
what of the stones marked with mysterious messages
what of the angry crowds those that capture the flags of the nation
and those that paint over them


The Imaginary Republic
To count on the uncounted
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Imagination and the Impossible Community

Brandon LaBelle

At a seminar held at the Bergen Art Academy in 2017, I participated in a discussion on questions of art and politics. One of the presenters, a Kurdish artist living in Bergen, shared a video work in which he documents the daily life of Kurdish fighters in Rojava. Attending the seminar were also a group of local Kurdish residents, who participated by offering critical questions and reflections on the Kurdish situation. I recall one particular audience member asking, why artists would be interested in Rojava and the Kurdish political struggle? I remember being taken aback by the person's fascination and near bewilderment at the fact that artists would find Rojava of interest; and further, I became curious about my own sense of astonishment at her question – why, in fact, did I find her bewilderment bewildering?

I remember trying to offer an answer to the person's question, emphasizing how artists, by nature, are engaged in work that is fundamentally related to questions of "social organization" – that aesthetics is essentially about contending with the way things are in the world, inserting within the field of meaning and representation other possible worlds, or how artists work at creating forms that prefigure other modes of living. I don't think I was successful in convincing her that the Kurdish struggles and experiment of Rojava were extremely relevant for artists, and especially for art education. Yet, I find myself going back to this incident while editing this publication on The Imaginary Republic.

The Imaginary Republic as a project is motivated by similar lines of questioning and thinking, and aims at capturing a perspective on "art and politics" that stays close to the imagination – to the imaginary as what gives way to expressive form. The imagination, in fact, emerges as key to the discussion, as I find it such a fundamental matter and concept, and something art mobilizes in terms of approaching everyday experiences and greater questions of justice work. The capacity to "imagine otherwise" might be the very currency art has to offer, a currency that often acts to intervene into other economies: of power, of social relations, of knowledge production. A currency that underpins the aesthetic forms, processes, and manifestations defining art making. As a currency, the

imagination is also unwieldy, and from my perspective should remain so; in this sense, its unwieldiness is essential to its value, offering a generative curiosity, drive, courage and restlessness to the project of politics and social organizing. I might say, forms of societal organization – from art education institutions to the democratic experiment of Rojava – are expressions of imagination. The imagination as a capacity is key to the making of structures and systems by which forms of life may take shape. In this sense, I am curious to pose The Imaginary Republic as a framework for reflecting upon the relation between art and politics that would also stay unwieldy, not aiming for conclusions or instrumentality as to the necessity for art to be political, but rather, to follow the more emergent forms of shared experimentation. And to draw links, networks, and opportunities for playing out imaginary republics together – for if the imagination supports the expression of forms of life, staying close to its unwieldy nature is to aim for a diversity of forms, even those we may not recognize. This has led to the conviction that while we may tend towards a certain "social engagement" within art, it seems equally necessary to keep art as an "anti-social" thing: as something that also resists social capture, legibility, purposefulness. In this sense, is not art the very thing that tends toward unrecognizability even while prefiguring ways of being in the world? I might suggest that what we understand as "the social" becomes productively unsettled and stretched by way of art. So there is an inherent contradiction or instablity to the notion of an "imaginary republic," an incompleteness, a tension, one that may allow for embracing the social as creative and emergent.

The Imaginary Republic as a project has been active since the summer of 2015 when I organized a first workshop with four fellow artists and researchers, including: Lisa Skou, Hélène Frichot, Georgia Kotretsos, and Diego Rotman. For the workshop, I was curious to discuss and share understandings of art and politics, learning from each other's practices and experiences. The workshop became an extremely lively, pleasurable, and rich exchange, leading to a collaborative presentation at the Bergen Kunsthall during our final evening. The event was a loosely structured showing of various materials related to our individual practices, composed through a rather soft form of VJ-ing that intentionally sought to confuse rather than enlighten, to play rather than perform. Throwing confetti, tossing balloons, rearranging the space with objects and trash found in the backrooms of

the Kunsthall, and planting a mysterious voting ballot on the tables and chairs, the scene was presented as if one had arrived after the party: an election party? A graduation of sorts? This was reinforced by a looped audio track of applause, emphasizing that the show was definitely over even while visitors were just entering.

The playful, dramaturgical, intentionally and beautifully unclear event for me signaled that something had opened up with this first meeting which needed to be held onto and nurtured. The Imaginary Republic has continued not so much as a fully mapped out, funded and articulated project with a beginning date and projected end; rather, it has appeared over the years in fits and starts, and through the possibilities offered by other institutions, mostly in Bergen, where I am working at the Art Academy. This has included a subsequent collaboration with freethought and their curatorial program at the Bergen Assembly in 2016, including two presentation events at the Partisan café, a project initiated by Nora Sternfeld, and involving the artists Marysia Lewandowska, Lise Skou, Diego Rotman (Sala-Manca Group), Marianne Heier and myself. In parallel, an exhibition was held at Tag Team, a local gallery, presenting works by Marysia Lewandowska, Lise Skou, Diego Rotman, Marianne Heier, myself, as well as Georgia Kotretsos and Luis Guerra.

Following these activities, I proposed a more extensive and concentrated edition of The Imaginary Republic to Kunsthall 3,14, a Bergen art institution with many years of dedication to fostering international contact and exchange. This finally included a series of seminars and presentations by invited curators and artists, leading to an exhibition featuring the works of the Sala-Manca Group, Tatiana Fiodorova, Joulia Strauss, and a collaboration between Octavio Camargo and myself. Held in 2018, the exhibition brought together individual works with the aim of capturing forms of artistic expression resonating with what Dimitris Papadopoulos calls "ontological organizing": the shared enactments by which existing social orders are reoriented, suspended, and reconfigured in support of other forms of life – other social and material assemblages. Through such enactments one works not only at existing scenes of struggle, or community identity, but equally at manifesting new imaginaries.

Dissident imaginaries:
Itinerant & transient / figures of trespass
Power of the weak / a fragile construct, in between
The carnivalesque / shape shifters & rapture
Poetics of relation / to speak the unimaginable
Stranger sociability / we enter, we exit
Radical empathy / the air is a medium full of breaths
Creative resistance / confronting the unbearable
A coming crowd / toward a radically open future
Problematic fields / local bodies, local encounters
The uncounted / to count the unaccounted for

Documenting the exhibition at Kunsthall 3,14, the publication unpacks some of the main themes and approaches through related texts and projects by contributing theorists and artists, including Hélène Frichot, Gerald Raunig, Rhiannon Firth, Marysia Lewandowska, Manuela Zechner, and Raimar Stange with Oliver Ressler. The collection of writings and works form a reader into contemporary social practices, ecological issues, and solidarity movements that invites a range of thinking. What might creative social practice mean in the face of capitalist ruins? In what sense can art relate to the knowledge economies that radically instrumentalize "creativity," as well as the commoning practices that mobilize a reworking of the sensible? Are there new emergent potentialities and pedagogies to be nurtured by holding onto the anti-social, or extra-social joy of inventing languages and practices together?

From questions of care and commoning, political resistance and anarchic ethics, The Imaginary Republic is wielded as a social fiction, enabling the rehearsal of communities to come: strange, supportive, lonely and unrecognizable communities by which to extend processes as well as imaginaries of social transformation. As Paul Chan highlights, "What ultimately distinguishes community from society is the difference between imagining that reality can be transformed and realizing that it can only be managed" (Chan, The Unthinkable Community, e-flux journal #16). Moving from management to imagination is a bold step, yet such a move is also not necessarily a one-way pursuit; rather, management and imagination may become two sides of a coin, where community oscillates between the actual and the potential, the restless desires and their material realization. The transformative and emergent process of imagining states of togetherness always entail an engagement with managing pragmatic stuff (within the imaginary republic who takes out the trash?). It is this combination rather, this unsteady intersection, this impossibility really, that makes community worth fighting for.

I'm further guided by the notion of "dream-action" put forward by Elena Loizidou. As Loizidou suggests, the articulations of political subjectivity gain traction by attending to the "dream worlds" of ourselves. For Loizidou, the life of dreams and how they come to circulate through forms of telling, narrating, and expression become vehicles transporting the realities we may live, and as such, give support precisely for how those realities may gain malleability. The imagination, in this regard, is radically significant in its capacity for not only figuring new worlds, but for impacting onto the logic of the world that, together, we inhabit.

In his book, Disagreement, Jacques Rancière identifies two sides to the governmental, what he calls “the political” and “the police” — as he states, often what we imagine as “the political” is only a mode of policing. Such a dichotomous view though may overlook or undermine the more nuanced, in-between articulations found in grass-roots movements, civic cultures, friendships and work, and the daily rituals between neighbors and strangers, as well as the poetics of relating to what is not yet, through which agency and self-determination find their future footing.

[illegible] dynamic interweaving of theoretical [illegible] project searches for al- [illegible] the political by [illegible] tatic and the itiner- [illegible] agonistic, the disap- [illegible] pathways toward fu- [illegible] is will lead into a [illegible] ns of political life, [illegible] ginary: what can be [illegible] orms of assembly.


IMAGINARY
REPUBLIC
ALL WE WANT

The Imaginary Republic

Kunsthall 3,14 / Bergen

Exhibition: October 19 – December 16, 2018

Tatiana Fiodorova
Octavio Camargo / Brandon LaBelle
Sala-Manca Group
Joulia Strauss

The Imaginary Republic looks at questions of common life and civic culture in today's globalized environment. It considers ongoing social and political unrest as well as the intensification of grass-roots initiatives, artistic activism, and practices of collaboration. In particular, the project attends to the creative expressions and dissident imaginaries underpinning autonomous politics.

The exhibition features participating artists active in a diversity of contexts and communities, and whose practices capture a range of approaches to what it means to "socially engage". As such, the exhibition sets out to dialogue with what Stavros Stavrides calls "communities in movement". These emerge by way of social thresholds, where borders function less as fortifications and more as points of contact with others. Communities in movement suggest new lines of collective power and imagination by traversing demarcations of the managed self. Such configurations of collaboration rework patterns of neoliberal life described by Isabell Lorey as "governing through insecurity". Instead, they bring forward a culture of co-existence and poetic world making that often engender networks of alternative support. The works presented in the exhibition dialogue with these larger issues and realities, articulating fragile meetings and temporary dwellings, imaginary journeys and the creative resistances found in gestures of care.


THE IMAGINARY REPUBLIC
Tatiana Fiodorova | Brandon LaBelle & Octavio Camargo |
Sala-manca group | Joulia Strauss

Tatiana Fiodorova
Selected Works

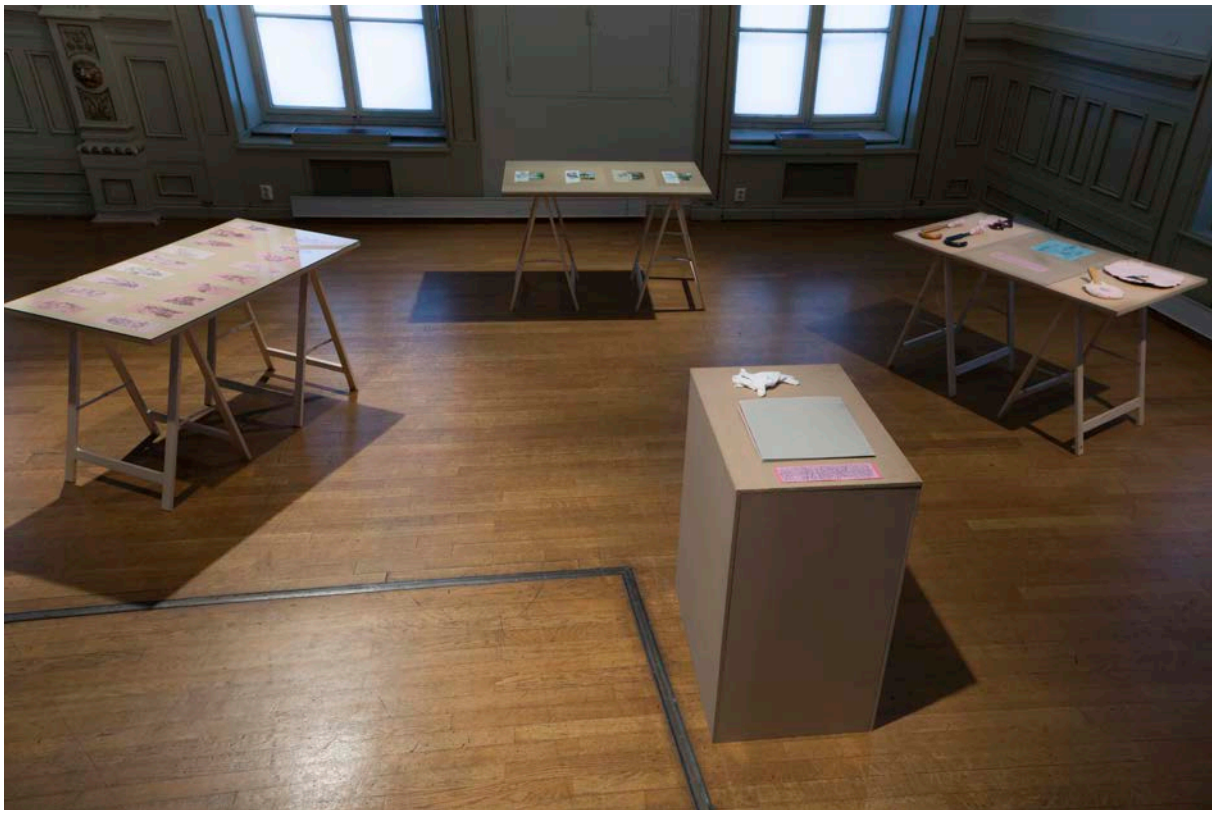
The artist Tatiana Fiodorova tells stories through the struggles of aging Moldovan women in order to help us rethink the Soviet past and present, bringing us closer to the informal conditions and often illegal practices found within states of transition.

"The Old Man Does not Need Anybody" /
drawings on toilet paper, 2016-2018 (Moldova, Transnistria, Georgia)

The title "The Old Man Does not Need Anybody" is a commentary by an elderly woman selling at a flea market in Chisinau and references her old age and the aging. The project covers such countries as Moldova, Georgia and the unrecognized Moldovan republic of Transnistria. The topic of the plight of pensioners in the post-Soviet territories now again becomes relevant as never before. Following the collapse of the USSR, during the transition to a market economy appropriate mechanisms were not created to protect low-income, socially disadvantaged groups of the population, such as pensioners. This topic is especially painful and difficult in countries where pensions are very small and the unemployment rate is quite high. The presented series of drawings is an attempt to outline the different ways of female survival in particular, from illegal trade, "dacha" business (growing vegetables and fruits to sell), collecting waste paper and bottles to begging.

"Only I know how we survived" /
artist book, 2018 (Chisinau, Moldova)

In search of her identity and facts determining her future, Tatiana Fiodorova has turned to the older generation of Moldovan women, many of whom are already retired. The focus of attention is the artist's mother who has worked as a saleswoman at a flea market for the last ten years. The book presents drawings made on toilet paper, an interview with the artist's mother, and small stories from the sellers at the flea market, which is located near the Chisinau railway station. For two years, 2016-2017 the artist has documented and observed the life of this place. In the summer of 2017 the flea market was closed by the authorities of the city of Chisinau. Portraits and stories of women tell of the difficult everyday life of the aging Moldovan women and help to rethink the Soviet past and present Moldova today. What is a woman's future for the country of Moldova?




Chisinau


Chisinau

“Archeology of everyday life” /
objects, 2018 (Iasi, Romania)

The archeology of everyday life and the rethinking of contemporary urban garbage became the starting point in this artistic study. Continuing to develop the topic associated with inconspicuous social violence and social indifference to the pauperized existence of older people, the artist draws attention to the fact that a person in old age in the post-Soviet space becomes a social waste. A person at this age is no longer useful to society or the state. His/Her social body was used in due time and thrown out in the trash with a meager pension.Fragments of old and unnecessary things, such as umbrellas, vinyl records, sunglasses, other items found by the artist at a flea market were repaired with fragile paper material to acquire a new life.

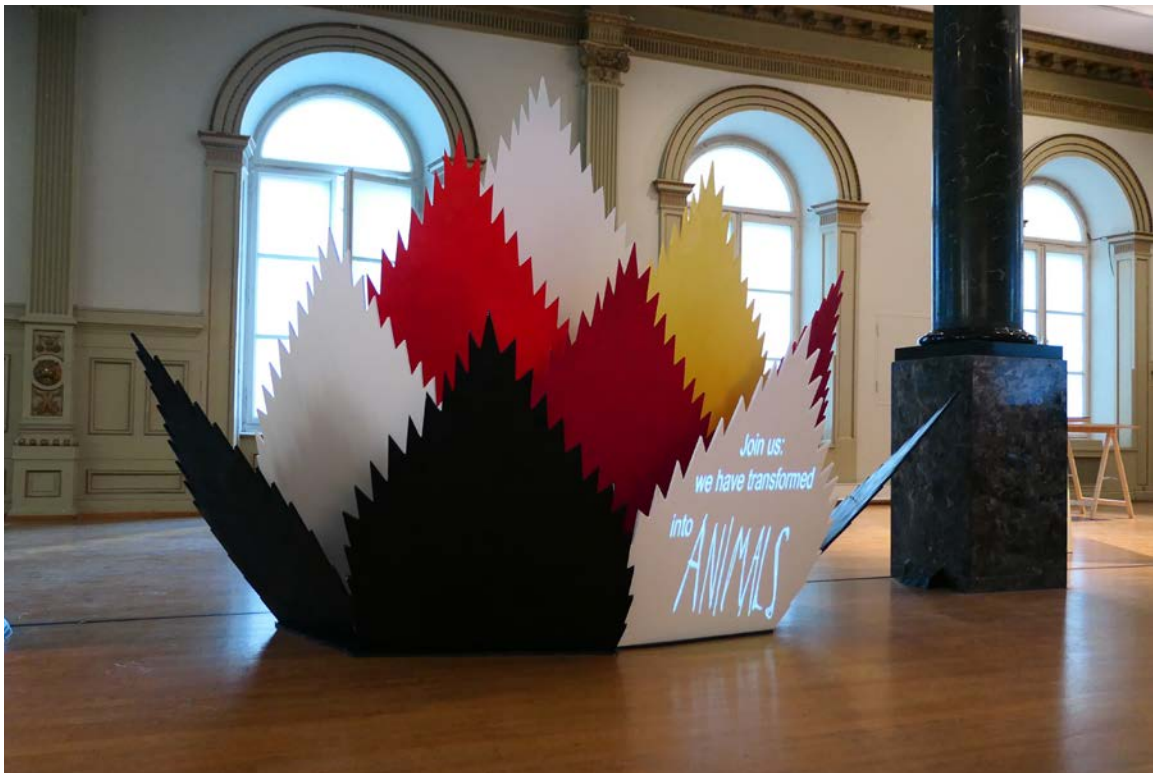
Octavio Camargo / Brandon LaBelle
The Autonomous Odyssey

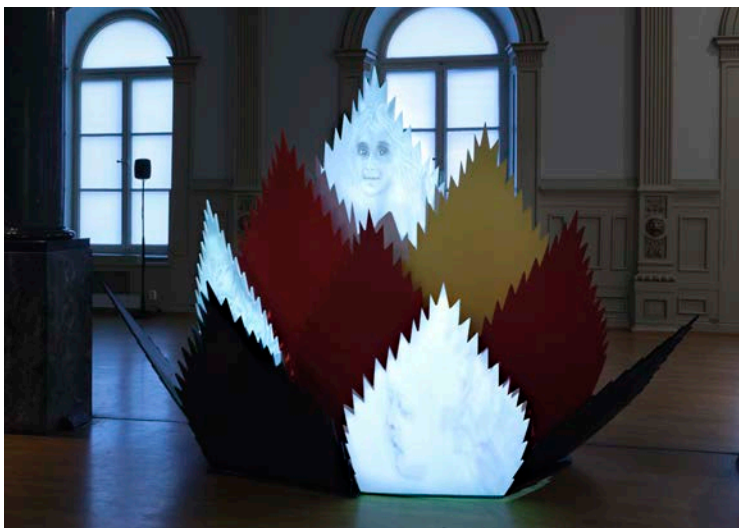
The work is developed as a set of five monologues that speak towards questions of contemporary struggle, and the bonds that may arise through the sharing of particular social imaginaries. Staged by a group of performers associated with the special environment of Sala 603, an unofficial theater space located in a house in Curitiba, Brazil, the work is presented through two parallel video projections. As viewers we follow each performer as they reflect upon journeys made and journeys still to come, leading us deeper into a poetic maze of hope and despondency, and possibilities for transformation. They speak of squatting abandoned buildings, the creative and critical endeavors found in making life together, the joy of shared resistances and the exhaustion. Recorded throughout the rooms of Sala 603, the work creates an uncanny relation to the city, and the ongoing demonstrations that were taking place during the making of the work outside the jail where former President Lula was being held. Echoes and frictions come to pass between the interiority of the house, as a space of collaborative life, and the city outside, giving way to acts of social commoning.

Performers: Chiris Gomes, Raquel Rizzo, Eliane Campelli, Pagu Leal,
Fernando Marés, Andressa Medeiros, Richard Rebelo, Denis Mariano (drums)
Videography: Gilson Camargo
Audio: Felipe Augusto
Additional photography: Rodrigo Augusto Ribeiro
Production assistance: Aline Sugi
Filmed in Curitiba, Brazil, June 2018.

Joulia Strauss in collaboration with Clara Mosconi

The sculpture, MoLotus, is a hybrid sculptural form bringing a Molotov cocktail and a meditation lotus flower together. The work aims to blast the notion of an artwork as a product, and celebrate the flow of an artistic process. It is an emblem of Avtonomi Akadimia, a self-organized grass roots university, a socio-cybernetic sculpture at the Plato's Academy Garden. MoLotus was first presented in the Parliament of Bodies at documenta 14, Athens.





Sala-Manca Group (Lea Mauas and Diego Rotman)
The Eternal Sukkah

The Sala-Manca Group explores the politics of cultural translation through a work that speaks towards questions of belonging, manifesting processes of "artistic smuggling" in Jerusalem.

In the lead-up to the 2014 Sukkot holiday, the Sala-Manca Group together with Itamar Mendes-Flohr and Yeshaiahu Rabinowitz decided to create a public sukkah on the grounds of the Hansen House in Jerusalem, a temporary dwelling for its activities during the holiday. They collaborated with the al-Korshan family of the Jahalin Bedouin tribe to delve into the sukkah's charged meaning in the Israeli context and to highlight the temporary nature of the structure and its associations with exile and refugee issues. The Sukkah was bought a year later by the Israel Museum for their collection of Contemporary Art. A series of talks, screenings and other projects were also generated as well as an eco-tourism project started by the al-Korshan in the new structure built with the income acquired from the sale.

Video documentation of The Eternal Sukkah project was presented as part of the exhibition at Kunsthall 3,14.

September 23, 20--

The Imaginary Republic

Communiqué #1

To exhaust the exhausted

The twilight is upon us!
The time of the exhausted!
The endless event...

Shall we play dead?
Shall we find the exit?
Shall we slow down?

To the Imaginaries – of the foreclosed and the hopeful, the dreamy-eyed and the tenacious – we gather here between the hinterlands and the city, to make a claim on the future horizon of a possible resistance. A possible coexistence.

To vote for each other.
~~*Yes / No*~~

The figuring of an Impossible Community.

Shall we stay with the lost cause?
Shall we prolong the departure?
Shall we capture the time of sleep?
Shall we disappear?

Pause
Hesitate
Occupy

Exhaust
every idea / this method of diffraction, improvisation

The restlessness of this cultural imaginary, the ceaseless thinking at the edge of thought, the inoperative unworking of Being – to exhaust the possible scene...

To the Imaginaries – of the instated and the unstated, the papered and the unpapered – let us announce with trembling heart and glowing intuition the making of houses of love, the generous touch, the consensual solidarity.

~~*Yes / No*~~

The spidery federalism that keeps us moving

Diary for a Landscape to Take With

Sala-Manca Group (Lea Mauas and Diego Rotman)

If the home is the republic, if the landscape is the language, if a temporary dwelling is the symbol of stability and a liminal identity, the painted landscape of our temporary dwelling structure may be the mythological origin or the destiny of our portable homeland. When landscapes are erased, when homes are destroyed, when structures of symbolic homes must be smuggled in order to survive and tell the story, the home/land remains ephemeral monuments in our memory. Acquiring and moving temporary and fragile structures, building unauthorized replicas of structures from scratch, transporting homes in order to build an architecture of political collective and individual historical criticism or a footnote to history, thinking through landscape, being attached to an unattached home, conceiving the unattached homeland as the aim of a temporal and portable sovereignty.

Those and other thoughts and questions, now articulated in words, were first formulated, constructed, dismantled and smuggled through a series of temporary dwelling structures charged with symbolic meaning of remembrance – *the sukkah*.

Sukkot/Sukkah

The Jewish holiday of Sukkot is one of the three holidays mentioned in the Bible during which it was customary to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem during the period of the First and Second Temples. The name of the holiday is the plural of the word *sukkah* – the huts in which the Israelites lived in the desert during their exodus from Egypt (Exodus 33:6). The holiday's relation to Jerusalem acquires additional meanings in the Bible when several of the prophets refer to the city using the term "sukkah" – see, for instance, Isaiah (1:8) and Amos (9:11).

The holiday commemorates the exodus from Egypt by means of the commandment to build *sukkot* (Leviticus 23:42) – temporary structures topped by a covering of branches or fronds. During the holiday, one's house becomes a "temporary residence," while the sukkah becomes one's "permanent residence." During the holiday, Jews are commanded to sit in the sukkah where they will eat, study, and even sleep during the seven days of the holiday. One of the central customs related to the holiday is the decoration of the sukkah; these decorations lend it a festive air and are a means of expressing the identity and ideological outlook of its builders. In the ultra-Orthodox community, dominant motifs include rabbinical figures; the seven ushpizin, or exalted guests, who are symbolically invited to the sukkah; and various religious symbols. Members of the national-religious community adorn their sukkahs with decorations that have a national character, such as images of the local landscape, its fauna and flora, and the Israeli Declaration of Independence. Jerusalem-related symbols are always central motifs in sukkah decoration. The sukkah symbolizes the tension between a permanent residence and a temporary residence.

The Eternal Sukkah #1

The first structure was created for "Liminal Spaces," a project by organized by the Palestinian Association for Contemporary Art (PACA), the Digital Art Lab Holon and the University of the Arts Berlin and co-curated by Galit Eilat, Eyal Danon, Reem Fadda, and Philipp Misselwitz.

The aim of the project was to verify "whether artistic projects created by Israeli, Palestinian, and international artists are capable of challenging the separation systems physically and mentally constructed by the State of Israel over many years between Israelis and Palestinians, both within Israel and between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Liminal Spaces aspired primarily to establish the absent platform ever so necessary for joint work and action and for dialogue between the Israeli and Palestinian art communities, a platform which would be able to exist despite the growing difficulties experienced by Palestinians under Israeli occupation, such as denial of freedom of movement and other basic human rights."[1]

Learning about borders, walls, and constructed landscapes, we decided to approach the challenge through the design of a sukkah that, through its fragile structure and symbolism, would reflect on the contemporary situation of Jerusalem. We purchased a commercialized structure (Sukkah kit, named Eternal Tabernacle) consisting of an easily constructed and dismantled aluminum frame, a prefabricated covering, and other do-it-yourself-style paraphernalia. Our intervention was executed through the cloth walls surrounding the sukkah, which is usually pre-printed with symbols and motifs of Jerusalem.

The design of our fabric was a reaction to the territorial politics carried out by the Israeli government, referring specifically to the beginning of the construction of the separation wall happening at that time and the attempts to cover it, to hide it. We decided to refer to a series of experiments to see what design would best hide the fact of the wall done by the Ackerstein Industries Ltd., following an invitation by the Israel government in 2005.[2] The aim of those tests, carried out on the Israeli side of the wall, were designed to hide the view of the separation wall through a series of reliefs including mountains, flowers, pastoral images, and facades of Jerusalem stone houses with windows overlooking nothing. The tests were done in Maavar Hazeitim (Pass of the Olives) in the al-Azaria area, near Mount Scopus, Jerusalem, a pastoral name intended to conceal the fact that an odd terminal there serves as a checkpoint. The use of landscape construction, through painting and reliefs, was not only intended in this case to create the idea of a peaceful wall, or to prevent the Israeli citizens from seeing the wall, but to make the wall invisible by making it blend in with the existing landscape.

Those tests are part of the design of artificial (or art-official) naïve landscapes, created on a very non-naïve platform. The "naïve landscapes" are an expression of the official aesthetics of colonialism, the first steps of a new fake as a way of living proposed by the Israeli state to its citizens. The sukkah was installed for the first time in the exhibition gardens of the gfzk (Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig). The sukkah was blown away with the wind, and was never brought back by the organizers.

1. Liminal Spaces 2006-2009 Reader, edited by Eyal Danon and Galit Eilat. Holon, Digital Art Lab, 2009.

2. We've seen those tests during 2006. We don't know the exact dates of those tests though.

The Eternal Sukkah#2[3]

In 2014, we were invited to create a public sukkah for the holiday of Sukkot in the gardens of the Hansen House for Art and Technology in Jerusalem. After a long process of research and discussion, we together with artists Itamar Mendes-Flohr and Yeshaiau Rabinowitz, decided rather than constructing an extravagant or innovatively designed sukkah, to delve into the sukkah's charged meaning in the Israeli context and highlight the temporary nature of the structure and its associations with exile.

If, according to the United Nations, refugees are those who, for reasons of persecution, have been exiled and cannot return to their country, then the ancient Hebrews in the desert could, the artists argued, be understood as early refugees and their sukkot, shanties in the desert, as a refugee camp. Our question then was, one, how to bring an "authentic" and contemporary house from a refugee camp from today's Israel/Palestine to Jerusalem, and, two, how to turn it into a kosher, functional, and "authentic" sukkah.

We traveled to the Judean Desert in the Palestinian territories to meet the al-Korshan family of the Jahalin, a Bedouin tribe uprooted in 1948 from its lands in southern Israel and relocated to the West Bank as refugees. The al-Korshan family settled in the Khan al-Ahmar area and pastured their animals on neighboring village lands. After Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967 and, as a consequence of the establishment and expansion of Ma'ale Adumim, a nearby Jewish settlement, the Israeli army increasingly restricted tribe members' access to many of the grazing grounds.

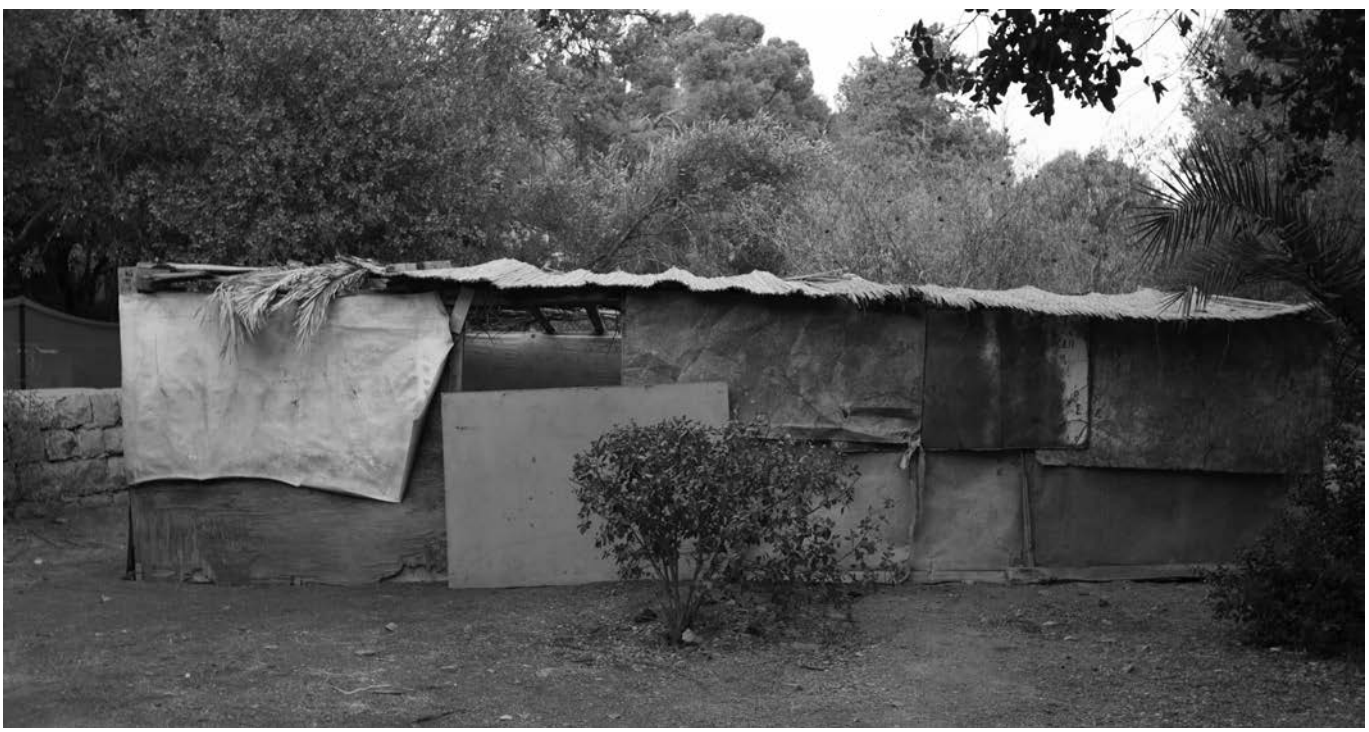
Tribal families live in temporary structures not connected to potable water or electricity. They live in tents or shacks built with found materials: scrap metal, wood taken from constructions sites, tin from water heaters, and old billboards. Roofs are mostly tin covered with plastic sheeting. All of their homes and other structures are under continuous threat of demolition by Israel's Civil Administration. Today there is a master plan for building a Bedouin town near Jericho, intended to accommodate about 12,500 people from three different tribes. But the Bedouin families oppose "the plan to cram members of different tribes and clans altogether […] in the same space [that] runs counter to their tradition, their way of life and their livelihood."[4]

We traveled to meet the al-Korshan family of the Jahalin tribe. We were hosted in the traditional Bedouin tent made of natural materials, were served tea, and listened to Abu Suleiman tell the Jahalin tribal story and the tribe's worries over the current threat of once again being relocated against their will. We explained our wish to connect the long-past Jewish exile to their actual exile and told them about our idea to transport a piece of one "hidden" reality to Jerusalem, where what was hidden would be made visible. We proposed buying a structure they were then using for storage and paying €1,300 for it, money the collective had received from the Hansen House in West Jerusalem.

The Mukhtar (the head of the village) gave his blessing, arguing that this might be an opportunity to publicize their story more widely and to build a stronger and better structure. Together with the al-Korshan family, we dismantled the shack in the dead of night to avoid detection by the Civil Administration. By the time we would

3. Fragments of this text were published in another version in The Ethnographic Department of the Museum of the Contemporary. Lea Mauas and Diego Rotman (eds.), Jerusalem: The Underground Academy, 2014, pp. 179-198. [Hebrew]

4. Liminal Spaces 2006-2009 Reader, edited by Eyal Danon and Galit Eilat. Holon, Digital Art Lab, 2009.



start reassembling the dismantled structure as a sukkah back at the Hansen House, the al-Korshan family – using the money they received – would start building a new and sturdier version exactly where the old one had stood.

In September 2014, the dismantled Bedouin home was transported to the center of Jerusalem as "construction waste," the "home" temporarily reverting to raw materials; this journey also manifested the tragic fact that the "home," at least as waste, can easily make its way to Jerusalem, a pilgrimage that cannot be freely undertaken by most of the Jahalin. The Bedouin shack was reconstructed in the Hansen House gardens. Some interventions were done to refer to the relocation and make the Bedouin structure into a kosher sukkhah: the roof was exchanged for palm fronds and the carpets with matting, while a paper decoration made by our daughter became a symbolic sukkah ornament. At the very moment that the ephemeral architecture of the Bedouin shack changed its roof from recycled tin to fresh palm fronds, the exile of the Jahalin tribe was materialized as a Jewish sukkah, and the Jewish exile was materialized in a Bedouin tent of a refugee family.

Jewish visitors to the Bedouin sukkah in the well-established Jewish neighborhood of Talbyeh in Jerusalem, a Palestinian neighborhood until 1948, had the opportunity to experience the Bedouin diaspora through the commemoration of the Jewish holiday. Visitors could enter the "almost real" home of a refugee family, become familiar with their story through a text, and fulfill the Jewish commandment of dwelling in a sukkah while experiencing their people's history as refugees. The illegal Bedouin "home," originally destined for demolition, changed its status and became a legal and kosher Israeli sukkah, surviving conversion and translocation thanks to this identity. But we aimed to complete the translocation by rebuilding it inside the inner sanctum of the Israeli art discourse through selling it to The Israel Museum.

The plan generated much thinking about the meaning of such a step, including the danger of cultural colonialism, Western manipulation, and exploitation of a so-called disadvantaged or disenfranchised community. Aware of these contradictory layers, we proposed that, in any sale, half the sum would be given to the al-Korshan family as a "copyright fee" for the design. The al-Korshan family accepted the plan on condition that any exhibition of the sukkah would be accompanied by an explanatory text of the project and the tribe's role and background.

We contacted The Israel Museum curators, to try to involve the museum in the process, adding new layers and meanings to the shack's history. After long and heated debate, the sukkah and a short documentary film were among the pieces slated for acquisition for the museum's permanent collection. What was formerly construction waste that was turned into a home and later a kosher sukkah would became the object of a process of cataloguing, conservation, and canonization not only of a work of art but of an illegal building – the first such undertaking ever.

The sukkah was exhibited for the first time in *We the People*, a collective exhibition, curated by Rita Kersting, from September 2015 to March 2016. In the temporary exhibition, the sukkah, rendered useless as a ritual space, became an art piece shown indoors. Inside it, a film documenting the process was screened and an explanatory text added. In

addition, a symposium featuring Abu Suleiman, scholars, and activists was organized and held during the exhibition.

Eco-Tourism

For a few hours, the dismantled Bedouin shack in the desert left an empty space to be filled the same night with a new and stronger one. The new structure became a focal point for displaying Bedouin culture and hosting tourists visiting the Bawadi eco-tourism project.

"Bawadi," as its Facebook page states, "is a Bedouin driven eco-tourism initiative offering guided hikes along the ancient shepherding routes of the West Bank, Palestine, often known only to the Bedouin […] Bedouin youth […] continue their traditional journeys through Palestine and give voice to their story […] Inviting guests to experience the song, the story, and the silence of the desert, Bawadi is both a vehicle for advocacy and for income generation for Bedouin youth wishing to safeguard and promote their distinct culture and traditions." Visitors would have "traditional Bedouin lunches, dinners and overnights under the stars in local communities. […] Sharing the little-explored and spectacular landscapes, flora and fauna of Palestine's deserts with visitors is a celebration of the Bedouin's living heritage."

If, at the museum, *The Eternal Sukkah* became a displayed ethnographic object out of its natural context, in the Bawadi experience, the desert, the real place, becomes – in Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's definition – a destination culture, an open-air museum for displaying and performing the Bedouin heritage under threat of forced exile.

Bedouin villages and heritage, whose legitimacy are unrecognized by the Israeli government, undergo a process of self-recognition, recreation, and interpretation redefining Bedouin folklore and traditions through the active process of performing, textualization, and sharing. Bawadi is not an art project; it is an activist initiative against the territorial and economic policies of the Israeli government, a counter-performance against the performance of demolitions.

According to Israeli law, the Jahalin don't legally own the lands where they live and don't have the right to wholesome living conditions. But, according to their own beliefs and narrative, they own the secrets of the desert and know and perform the ancient shepherding routes being converted, through this initiative, into the Bedouin heritage hiking routes. It is actually through the practice of walking or hiking that the Jahalin enact their sovereignty in the desert. They walk their heritage in order to share it, and share it in order to own it.

Bawadi hikes are part of a performative process of decolonizing, a walking practice contrary to a translocation process intended to proceed according to Israel's expansionist politics manifested in the E1 Plan for the area east of Jerusalem. The dismantling of the Bedouin structure, the incorporation of the structure into an art storage room, was a symbolic process of archiving the revolution, performing a secret practice of incarceration, a dystopic performance, in a hidden part of the museum.

The Deller's Sukkah Replica

After selling *The Eternal Sukkah* to the Israel Museum, we thought we should bring something out of the museum in real life. We became than interested in a painted wooden sukkah from Bavaria dated to the 1840s, because of the sukkah's beauty – the panels feature an impressive panorama painting of Jerusalem, seamlessly melding the holy city's landscape with that of the pastoral Bavarian village of Fischach – and because of the sukkah's biography. In 1937, in Nazi-controlled Germany, the sukkah was moved from the attic of the Deller's house in Fischach to Berta Fraenkel's house in Munich. Fraenkel, who fled Germany with her five children to Palestine where she was reunited with her husband, smuggled the sukkah out in one of her lifts. She did so at the request of a close relative, Dr. Heinrich Feuchtwanger, a scholar, collector of Judaica, and dentist who had convinced the Dellers to donate their sukkah to the Bezalel National Museum, which had opened in Palestine in 1922.

The inside walls of the Deller Sukkah are painted with original paintings of the local Jüdenhof (Jewish street) and Fischach landscape and with freestyle reproductions of the works of others. The main wall, showing a painting of Jerusalem, is based on a lithograph by German geographer Jeoseph Schwartz. The painting on the right wall represents both sides of the Jüdenhof. The first house on the right is the Deller house with its garden, where the sukkah was erected every year. Other notable buildings are the synagogue and what was apparently the Jewish school. The wall on the left depicts Fischach's forests, and a house. The last wall shows two men, the local baron and his hunter, or perhaps Abraham Deller with his son or servant, going hunting with a dog.

Over the years, the Deller sukkah was widely reproduced in pictures, sometimes as an iconic item representing the Jewish diaspora's longing for Jerusalem, sometimes as a representation of the central role the Jewish community played in Fischach's development, and often as a valuable piece of Jewish material culture. But I find the role played by the Deller sukkah and its reproductions as part of the heritage of three families – the Dellers, Fraenkels, and Feuchtwangers – to be of the greatest interest: they developed a parallel family tradition in which a picture of the Deller sukkah hangs on the wall of their contemporary family sukkah. The actual sukkah becomes a backdrop for displaying another sukkah displaying paintings representing objects of longing and belonging, including both a personal and a collective heritage. The act of remembrance of the days of wandering in the desert during the Jewish exodus and the remembrance of the days of the Jewish diaspora in Germany are represented or practiced through this *mise en abyme*.

The Replica

In the winter of 2017, we invited the carpenter Nir Yahalom and the painter Ktura Manor to join us in the project of building and painting an unauthorized but accurate replica of the Deller family's painted wooden sukkah. We photographed the original sukkah at the museum and began our research into it.

We had to adjust the construction to the quality of the local wood and to the budget we had, creating a local version of a Bavarian sukkah. We constructed it with low quality lumber. Unable to use Bavarian flora for the roof as was the custom in Fischach, and instead of installing plastic ornaments and artificial flora as is often practiced in Israel, we covered the roof with palm branches from the Hansen House garden. The sukkah was resized to allow it to be installed indoors in the room devoted to it. During the creative process, we constantly looked at the pastoral pictures of the village in the sukkah and, later on, at the few pictures of Fischach we located via Google images. We found ourselves suddenly longing for a place we had never before seen and were in no way attached to. We decided to visit Fischach to see what remained of the painted landscape: we wanted to enter the painting. In February 2017, we started a reverse pilgrimage: we and our children traveled to Fischach on a "roots trip" of a family we never heard of before.

Many buildings still remain in Fischach: the Deller house, the synagogue, and the Jewish school. But the absence of Jews was extremely present. We therefore abandoned the idea of a faithful replica, or we understood it differently. We decided to intervene in the replica slightly: The walls of the synagogue in the new sukkah feature two graffiti inscriptions in pencil: a Magen David that shows that the current dental clinic was once a synagogue; a copy of the sign installed by the director and owner of the clinic; and a sign with Dr. Dominkus Wunderer's name, a copy of the sign in front of the building attesting to the actual function of the former synagogue as a dental clinic. Instead of the figure of Esther Deller pictured in front of the Dellers' house, there is a graffiti with the names of the families living there when we visited, the Gross family and the Ozdel family (a German and a Turkish family respectively).

Standing in front of the Deller house in Fischach, the most surprising fact for us was the presence of the monumental village church, which was missing in the background of the original sukkah. We debated the issue – to bring the church back or leave it absent in the reproduction – until a week before the opening, when we invited the curator of Judaica at The Israel Museum, Rachel Sarfati, who didn't know about the project, to visit the new Deller sukkah. We shared our discovery about the church with her. Rachel answered that she was already aware of it: during the restoration process done in 2000, the restorers discovered that the church was indeed painted on the sukkah, but was later erased by another generation of the Deller family or perhaps by the owners of the sukkah themselves after seeing the church painted for the first time.

On the Politics of Historiography, Restoration, and Narrativization

Although the new sukkah would finally be almost identical to the original, it would have the opposite meanings: the paintings on the walls of the sukkah would be subtly transformed, changing the depicted environment. The image of Jerusalem on one of the walls, which in the original was an object of yearning, would become, being painted in Jerusalem, a kind of proprietary statement; the scenes of the pastoral German village, which used to provide a kind of visual record of the original local landscape, would become a wistful memorial of a

community and time that no longer exist. The new sukkah, or the artists, were yearning for exile, or yearning for the possibility of finding Jerusalem in another place.

Kingston Sukkah: The Erased Landscape

In August 2018, we started what we thought might be a long period of being out of home/land. We moved from a small rented apartment in the intense neighborhood of Musrara, in Jersualem, previously a Palestinian neighborhood that became the birthplace of the Israeli Black Panthers, into a 1960s bungalow with a garden in a bourgeois neighborhood. We rented the only furnished house we found in the small city of Kingston, Ontario, and decided to build a sukkah in the backyard, adjacent to the Cataraqui Golf Course. It was the first time we were building a sukkah in the house where we now live: a temporary structure in the courtyard of the Soberman family house, in the Canadian city of Kingston, adjacent to a golf course built on the lands of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples.

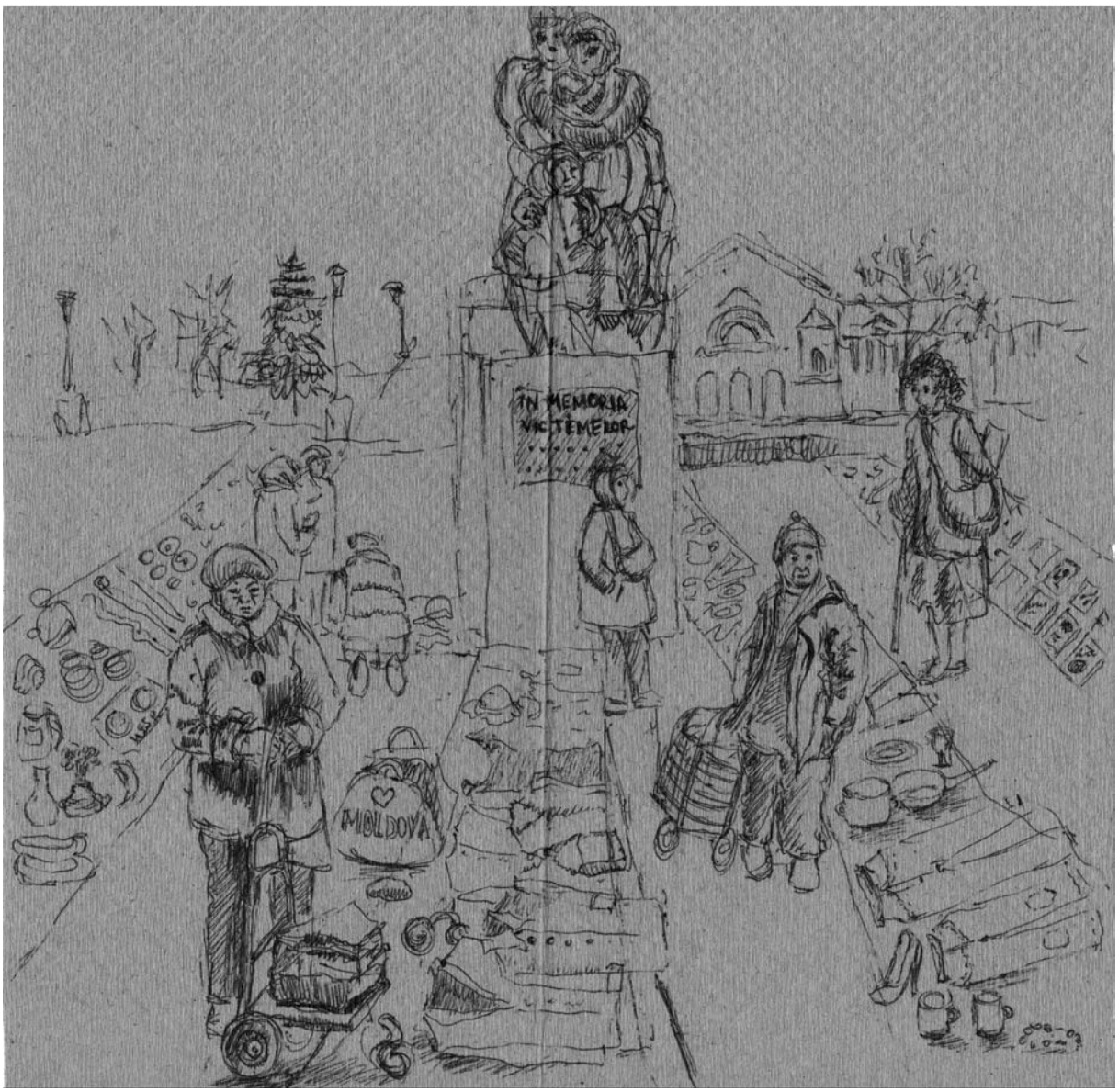
The sukkah's structure was a replica of the replica of the Deller sukkah – a structure as a quotation of a quotation. We bought the lumber at the local Home Depot branch. What in Jerusalem was a long process of acquiring, cutting and painting the lumber to make it look old, was here as easy as taking a supermarket trolley and putting the cut lumber into it and paying for it with cash. The walls remained decorated with some bird toys bought at a Dollarama and some other paraphernalia produced by our daughter and her friends. Not having had enough time to paint, the walls remained bare.

For Sukkot, we organized a series of events around the holiday and our former projects: relating to temporary dwellings, the situation of the Bedouin in Palestine/Israel, public housing, and home insecurity. Against the tradition in which you are supposed to build a sukkah for a week and dismantle it, our sukkah remained in the yard for the whole year, creating a parallel of time, in which the symbology of the holiday was challenged or stretched. Although we were not living in it, the temporary dwelling turned into our object of reference in the Soberman house and a reminder of our temporality, fragility, and migratory status.

During the winter, we came to see the green landscape vanishing beneath the snow. We realized that we wanted to make this temporal landscape into the eternal fixed landscape of our sukkah. To have painted in the walls this white desert, expressing not only the already growing feeling of longing for the snow, the winter silence, but this snow desert as a place of liminal stability, as an expression of social loneliness, as a counter reference to the threatened desert geography of the Jahalin tribe due to the Israel territorial politics, as an anti-quote to the false history of conquering the desert we grew up with in Argentina and which in fact stands as an Indigenous genocide.

For this project we commissioned Brian Ohad to paint on the chemically treated wood acquired in the local branch of Home Depot. To paint in our temporary/eternal and symbolic home the vanishing landscape of frozen lakes, bare trees and snow-covered fields, a painted quote of a place and a time we are leaving behind.

Who is this New Woman?


IN MEMORIA
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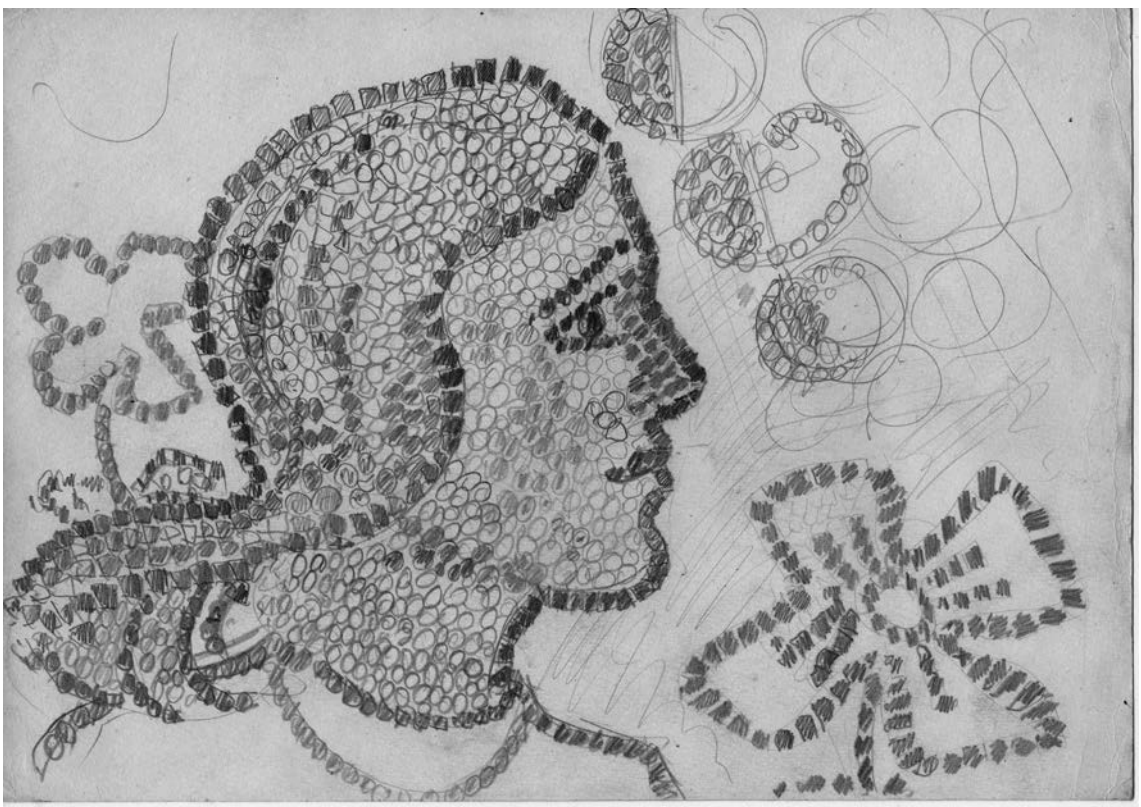
Who is this New Woman?

Tatiana Fiodorova



Tatiana Fiodorova is a Moldovan artist, curator and educator working on issues of social and political history, predominantly in connection with the post-Soviet transition period. Fiodorova was born and raised in Soviet Moldavia, but her formation as an artist began in the 2000s – a difficult transition period for the Republic of Moldova associated with the development of a market economy and new values. The lost Soviet identity and the formation of a new identity for a Moldovan woman facing social, political and economic problems are the focus of her artistic research.

The emancipation of the "Soviet Woman" and the radical modernization of the gender order that occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century and its transformation in the post-Soviet space is the focus of this text. How did the constructed image of the "New Woman" as a showcase of the socialist project change into the contemporary image of the post-Soviet "New Woman"? What did the "Soviet Woman" become? What real and symbolic capital (according to P. Bourdieu) did she acquire by the end of her life? When comprehending and reconstructing the past through gender optics, what does emancipation in Soviet and post-Soviet life mean today? Who is this woman, and how does she represent herself today in society and public space? The goal of this artistic research is to "capture"[1] and "fix"[2] the image of the contemporary post-Soviet woman, as the outgoing symbol of the Soviet era.

My creative research often resists personal stories related to my family and parents, in favor of stories that summarize and form a statement much wider and more capacious than just a family story. One of the stories is based on the experience of my father, who was an unknown "Soviet Artist"; another story is about my mother. In search of my own identity and future as an artist and mother I made an attempt to trace the fate of the unknown "Soviet Artist" and "Soviet woman" through my mother's experience and environment.

To understand the context of emancipation "in the Soviet way" it is important to turn to history. The formation of the Soviet state, accompanied by processes of social, economic, industrial and political uplift, required the involvement of huge masses of people in the transformation of Soviet Moldavia. It was then, in the 1920s, that the concept of "Soviet People" and the political construct of the "New Communist Family", "New Man", and "New Woman" were created. "A new human has grown up on our Soviet land, with new and bright ideas about life and about its place in it, with a new attitude to work".[3]

Belarusian writer Svetlana Alekseevich[4] described this political construct in one of her interviews: "Communism had a mad plan, to remake the 'old' person, the old Adam. And it turned out... Maybe the only thing that happened. For more than seventy years, a separate human type, 'homo soveticus', has been bred in the Marxist-Leninist laboratory. Some believe that this is a tragic character, others call him a 'sovok'. I think I know this man, he is well acquainted with me, I am next to him, I have lived side by side with him for many years. He is me. These are my acquaintances, friends, parents."[5]

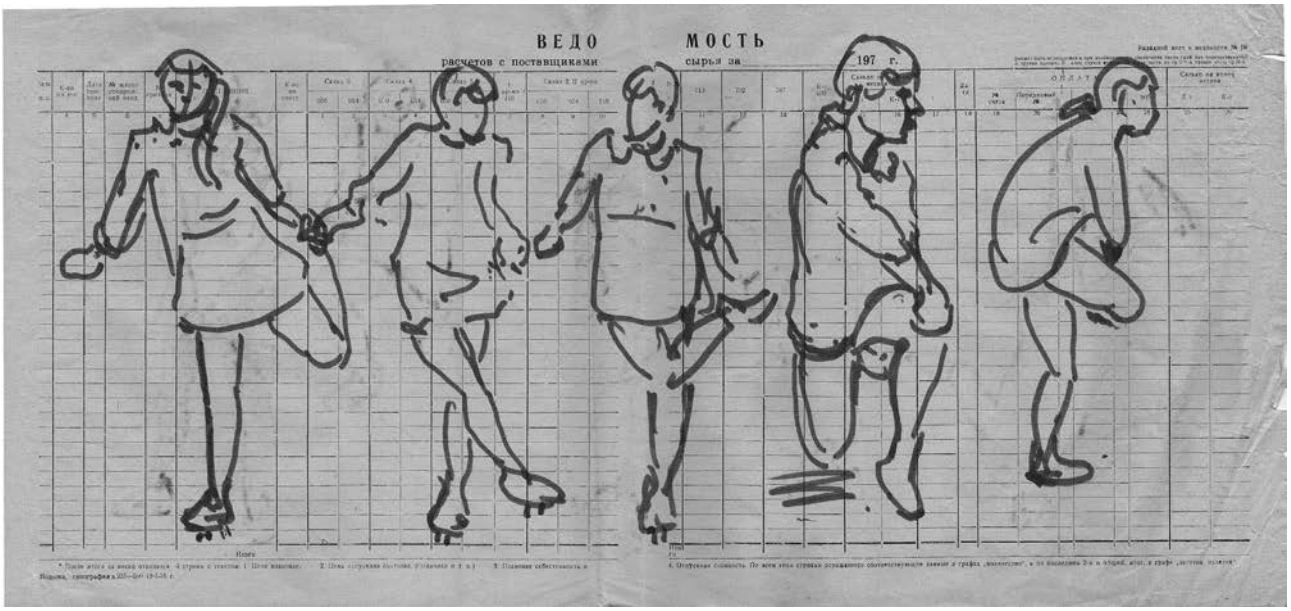
The new society demanded, respectively, a new inhabitant. The idea of creating a new person permeated many projects of the Soviet utopia. This idea is paradoxical: happiness, it turns out, is impossible without violence. L. Heller states: "Lenin... a new person will be created by training(tame), not by persuasion."[6] And Romanenko writes: "It was through coercion that it was intended to lead those who do not understand their happiness into the future."[7] This is furthered by Kononenko: "... a new woman was born on the earth. Not individual handfuls of feminists or separate ranks of courageous fighters for justice, but a new woman in general."[8]

The creation of a "New Woman" takes place within the framework of industrial policy to involve women in social production and active political life. The Soviet emancipation of women was accompanied by the destruction of the patriarchal family and the subordination of the liberated woman to the Soviet state. A Soviet woman of any

nationality was expected to be involved in the public sphere and to fulfill the roles of laborer and mother. The country needed working hands, and women could compensate for the lack of labor. Thus, the uniqueness of the Soviet model of the emancipation of women lies in the fact that the Soviet government, in solving the "women's issue", solved the main strategic issues of building socialism. The Soviet Woman, unlike the Western model of emancipation, was the object, not the subject of this policy.

Through the study of Soviet politics, Belarusian researcher Tatyana Shchurko, as well as other researchers such as Gradskova Y., Tlostanova M., et al., considers gender issues as a colonial project. In her article "The Woman of the East" Shchurko argues that the Soviet gender order in Central Asia was positioned unevenly between colonization and emancipation, in which the Soviet state used gender as the basis for the functioning and legitimation of colonial domination. Soviet projects of "national policy" included a variety of activities, from "acculturation" and enlightenment to coercive measures – for example, the elimination of former institutions and the resettlement of entire peoples.[9] Thousands of Soviet women took part in the construction of a "bright future." Soviet Moldavia joined this process only after the Second World War, after the country's accession to the USSR.

Gender equality was guaranteed by the Constitution of the MSSR (1941): "Women and men in the Moldavian SSR have equal rights. The exercise of these rights is ensured by providing women with equal opportunities in education and vocational training, in work, remuneration and advancement in work, in socio-political and cultural activities, as well as by special measures for the protection of women's work and health; creating



conditions that allow women to combine work with motherhood; legal protection, material and moral support of motherhood and childhood, including the provision of paid holidays and other benefits to pregnant women and mothers, a gradual reduction in the working time of women with young children."

The result of the Soviet state project of emancipation was the "New Woman" – "a good mother and a good production woman". Thus, the "Working Mother" became the fundamental Soviet identity of women. Despite the fact that the Soviet system of social protection for women workers and the protection of motherhood and childhood were considered the best and most advanced in the world, socio-economic conditions for women were not favorable enough to allow combining work and care for the home without damage to family and children.

*

In 2014, I created an artist book, "The Steaua Rosie / Red Star Factory". The book is based on my mother's memories of the Steaua Rosie Soviet textile factory[10] where she worked for more than 25 years. Through the personal history of my mother and the history of women who currently work in textile factories, the research rethinks the role and work of women in Soviet and post-Soviet contexts.

I will give a few fragments from an interview, where my mother tells how difficult it was to combine work with raising children.

Mum, did many women work at the factory?

The factory, you could say, was female, as it was mainly women who worked there. Only the porters and the engineers were men.

What kinds of work did the women do?

Women knitted, wove and sewed in the workshops, they knitted socks, tights, stockings, made knitwear and other types of clothes. Basically, it was just women who worked and they worked in two shifts. The first shift from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., the second from 4 p.m. to 11 at night.

Did the women complain about having to work two shifts — many of them had small children.

Nobody was interested in what problems you had at home! If you couldn't work, you quit! Especially if women had children who were often ill the bosses would immediately start to threaten them: 'Write an application for redundancy and stay at home. Work or quit.' Women sent their children to kindergarten

from the age of 6 months. Once a child was 9 months old, a woman had to return to work from maternity leave, and if they refused they were fired.

The dual, so-called family-labor workload imposed on women by the "Soviet patriarchy" took place in the background of the low standard of living of the country's population, with low wages, difficult adaptation to city life, and lack of housing.

The "Soviet-style" emancipation took place, I think, with great losses and hardships. After the death of my father, my mother raised my sister and I. I remember how difficult it was for her to be both a father and a mother. Working two shifts until 11 o'clock at night, she barely had time to come home and cook, clean, bathe. I can say that I was brought up by the Soviet school, since my mother worked all the time.

Analyzing the exploitation of women's labor in the garment factories today, based on the characteristics and difficulties associated with the developing capitalist market economy in the post-Soviet context, an even more rigid mechanism of exploitation of women's labor is found: slave labor, low wages and terrible working conditions.

*

Here, I present two fragments from my book on the Red Star Factory. These were collected from Internet forums where people share their work experience in the factories:

Administrator@@_ 11 September 2004, 17:45 Infinity — a sewing factory near to the trolleybus park. A Moldovan-Turkish firm. A three shift work regime, hassle and idiotic bosses. Money rip-offs at the end of the month. A trap for village girls as they hire without needing a registration. The night shifts are brutal, dirty air in the workshops. In the summer, its stifling. Thuggish security guards have their hands all over you. And a real prison regime. If you fancy such conditions, why not work there?

*pilmen 11 February 2005, 00:24 I have been working at that factory for half a year. And after this time, I can tell you I'm totally disgusted with the place. The factory bosses, by the way… are far from stupid people. They simply have understood how to profiteer out of simple people. They treat us like cattle! Anyone who says that people who sew here earn 100$ should stop making that sh*t up. In the best of circumstances, they get 500 lei (around 30 $), plus everyone who arrives they promise a secret extra payment (this in order to attract people and not to pay taxes, as the payments are unofficial.) Indeed, at the end of the month the director invents some excuses, like there's no money, or that you haven't managed to fulfill the planned norms. Although to be honest, the norms are specially set high, and people really can't make them.*

In “The Steaua Rosie / Red Star Factory” the fate of my mother is traced as an image of a woman worker, but the tragedy of my mother’s fate is fully considered in my next book, “Only I know how we survived” from 2018. The book continues the story of my mother and shows the transformation of the entire “Soviet People” in the period of *perestroika*, describing how the “Soviet world” collapsed in the 90s and how the destinies of millions of people collapsed with it.

During the *perestroika* period, my mother, like many women, was left without work. Factories began to close, industrial and trade relations between the republics collapsed, civil war broke out in Transnistria. The consequences of the economic and political transformations of the 90s led to the destruction of the entire Soviet project, including the weakening of the Soviet gender policy. The state, in “letting go free” women, refused to support the “working mother” economically and ideologically. As a result, women’s living conditions have deteriorated significantly, leading to unemployment, poverty and social insecurity. If the project of Soviet emancipation was part of the policy of a totalitarian state, which sought to deprive a person and family of all independence and autonomy, the post-Soviet period returned autonomy and independence to women. But what happens next?

The main thing was to survive by any means! This position runs as a red thread through my book. My mother, having been forced into early retirement in post-*perestroika* times (reduction due to the closure of the factory), was left with a small pension and two young children to care for. Without the support of her husband, parents, relatives or the state, she struggled to find a way out of her difficult situation. Like many other women, she began to work on the streets of Chisinau. First, by illegally selling products from the Steaua Rosie factory, then by selling European secondhand items.

My video work "European clothes" (2010) and the performance "Red Star" (2012), capture the contradictory and complex transformations taking place in the country of Moldova. They work at acting as metaphors for the adaptation of the former USSR and the Soviet people to new realities and new standards. In these works, an unpromising attempt is made to consider how people reshape their Soviet identity to become contemporary, to correspond with the new European standards. Following the characteristics and difficulties associated with the developing capitalist market economy, my mom moved from being part of the working class of the USSR to the ranks of the precariat as a result of neoliberal politics.

In her last theoretical work, "Misère: The Visual Representation of Misery in the 19th Century", art historian and feminist art critic Linda Nochlin explores the artistic depiction of poverty in the 19th century and addresses the question of the elimination of today's growing global inequality.[11] The social catastrophe that was unfolding before my eyes in

2016 pushed me to develop new visual forms and to follow a documentary approach to fixing poverty. If the artists Fernan Peles, Honor Daumier, Theodore Gericault, and Gustave Courbet were interested in the image of vagrants and people who were forced out by the powerful offensive of all-conquering industrialization, then I wonder what happens today in post-industrial times? Who are the people at the bottom of post-Soviet society? Who are the people who built our "bright future"?

An important aspect of my book projects is an attempt to visually "capture" and "fix" the transformation of the Soviet political construct of the "New Woman" as mother-worker into a new image of a woman.

In search of a visual metaphor for the "New Woman" as a departing symbol of the Soviet era, the female images that emerged on the surface of the paper, reveal a convergence and indistinguishability of the feminine and masculine beginnings. Despite the fact that there is a female figure in the composition, there is no femininity in these drawings. This androgynous female image is directly related to the political construct of the "New Woman" of the socialist project of the 1920s. According to Russian art historian N. Plungyan, "the idea of the artistic reflection of the androgyny 'new man' was close to the representatives of the artistic avant-garde of the 1920s and 1930s…. A photographic portrait of a young man and girl is mounted in one creature with a common third eye, vigilantly looking forward with the word 'USSR'[12] in the forehead. Here the representation of men and women is identical.... two genders merge into a surrealistic metaphor of the collective body (gender), the collective proletarian mind."[13]

To summarize, I would say that I view the image of elderly women as a metaphor for the generalized image of the defeated proletariat, of the unfulfilled Soviet utopian goal of building an ideal society, of an impossible and impracticable dream of universal happiness and justice. My performances "Something about toilet paper" (2012)[14], and "I am not toilet paper" (2012) further connect to the theme of the search for social justice, equality, and for an understanding of the sources of inequality of people, their poverty and misery. The project "The Old Man Does not Need Anybody" (2016-2018) is a continuation of the theme of the search for social justice. The title of the project comes from a comment made by an elderly woman selling at a flea market in Chisinau and references her old age and the aged. The project focuses on Moldova, Georgia and the unrecognized Moldovan republic of Transnistria.

The plight of pensioners in the post-Soviet context is a topic that has become increasingly relevant to contemporary life. Following the collapse of the USSR, during the transition to a market economy, appropriate mechanisms were not created to protect low-income, socially disadvantaged groups of the population, such as pensioners. This topic is especially painful and difficult in countries where pensions are small and the unemployment rate is high. The new challenges and risks follow from ongoing economic reforms to increase the age of retirement, which were adopted by almost all countries in the post-Soviet context. At a pensioner's age it is difficult to find jobs in these countries, and the person is perceived as useless to both society and the state, and is left without pension and work.

While speaking about the social aspects of aging and the social vulnerability of older people in the post-Soviet context it is important to mention the sociological concept of the "feminization of aging". According to statistics, in societies that support

traditionalist values, including post-Soviet countries, life expectancy for men is much lower than for women. Therefore, women are more likely to face the issue of survival post-retirement. I'm interested in this female experience of "survival". The series of drawings on toilet paper (Moldova, Transnistria, Georgia) is an attempt to outline different ways of female survival; in particular, illegal trade, "dacha" business (growing vegetables and fruits for further sale), collecting waste paper and bottles, and begging.

In this way I want to talk about a less visible form of social violence. It is the marginalization of people aligned with precarious material, especially the elderly, who become a kind of social waste. They are no longer useful; the state has used them; they have worked and their bodies have been good for production. Now it is as if they are dumped into the garbage, such is the state of their miserable pensions.

It is necessary to note the increasing age discrimination in Moldova. Low pensions (from 40-100 euros a month), and high utility prices force elderly people to look for additional income. Older people readily accept low-paying jobs, supplying cheap labor and joining the ranks of the precariat.

The focus of a more recent book project I produced is the fate of my mother who has worked as a saleswoman at a flea market for the last ten years. "Only I know how we survived" (2018) presents drawings made on toilet paper, an interview with my mother, and small stories from the sellers at the flea market located near the Chisinau railway station. For two years (2016-2017) I documented and observed the life of this place. In the summer of 2017 the flea market was closed by the city authorities of Chisinau. The portraits and stories of these women convey the difficult everyday life of the aging Moldovan women and help to rethink the Soviet past and the present Moldovan situation today. What is Woman's future in Moldova? It is likely that the future generation may be denied pensions altogether.

In his book *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*, Guy Standing writes: "The idea of an old-age pension will die away along with the pension itself, which was suitable only for the industrial age. The response to the financial crisis was the winding down of all schemes for early retirement pensions and work-related benefits in relation to age, a decrease in state pensions, an increase in the age at which people can apply for a state pension. The old social contract is crumbling. "[15]

Statistics show that the percentage of elderly people is increasing globally. For women, the problem of the 21st century is not only managing employment, childcare and domestic labor, but also caring for and financially supporting elderly relatives. We can say that women today carry a triple burden. We are witnessing the feminization of contemporary civilization, and the question still arises: Who is this New Woman?


Bătrâna
numără banii
1 martie 2017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Notes:

1. & 2. Capturing and fixing refers to processing film and paper in analog photography. These terms are not accidentally used in this context, because the process of developing a photographic image is directly related to my artistic working method. The project of drawing a post-Soviet woman on toilet paper is similar to a manifestation of the invisible in the visible, the unmanifested in the manifested or fixed. In addition, the drawings are monochromatic, similar to black and white photography, and I create my drawings based on the collected and captured photos from a mobile phone. It is very important to capture people in a relaxed atmosphere, without disturbing their usual way of life. The refusal of a staged frame and the act of working from memory is also an important component of these drawings. The mechanism of the my work is likened to a camera with its impartial capturing and the fixing of an image on toilet paper.

3. Voskresenkaya M. Meshchanstvu – boy! (Мещанству – Бой)/ Rabotnitsa 1963. N9 P.13, 15 Rabotnitsa (Russian: Работница; English: The Woman Worker) is a women's journal, published in the Soviet Union and Russia and one of the oldest Russian magazines for women and families.

4. Svetlana Alexievich is a Belarusian investigative journalist and essayist. She was awarded the 2015 Nobel Prize in Literature "for her polyphonic writings, a monument to suffering and courage in our time".

5. In the USSR, various terms were used to define such a person: "Soviet Man", "Homo Sovieticus" or "Sovok". The expression "Soviet Man" was widely used in the USSR in the official press to emphasize the positive qualities inherent in the citizens of the USSR. On the contrary, the phrase "Homo soveticus" or "Sovok" could only be used informally, in private conversations and served to indicate the negative features of Soviet people.

6. Heller M., L. Nika, M. Utopia in Russia. – SPb. Hyperion, 2003, p. 312.

7. Romanenko M.A. Concept Soviet Utopia. / / Utopian projects in the history of culture. Foundation for Science and Education Rostov-on-Don, 2017, p. 174.

8. Kononenko E. If women are of the whole earth (Если женщины всей земли)/ Rabotnitsa. 1963 N6, p. .2.

9. Shchurko T. "Woman of the East" Soviet gender order in Central Asia between colonization and emancipation. Concepts of the Soviet in Central Asia. Almanac 2 of STAB (STAB- School of Art and Theory) , Bishkek, 2016, p. 179 - 180.

10. The Steaua Rosie / Red Star Factory was a large Soviet enterprise whose products were distributed throughout the USSR. The raw materials for this factory came from the Union republics, in particular, from the Caucasus region.

11. Linda Nochlin, Misère: The Visual Representation of Misery in the 19th Century New York, Thames & Hudson, 2018.

12. Poster made by constructivist El Lissitzky for the Russian exhibition in Zurich (1929).

13. Plungyan N. "Soviet Woman" and the political potential of transmasculinity in pre-war visual culture. / The concept of the Soviet in Central Asia. Almanac (STAB -School of Art and Theory). Bishkek, 2016, p. 179 - 180.

14. Recently I have used toilet paper as material for inspiration in my artistic research. I use cheap toilet paper, which has its own specific features. It is fragile, very loose, with a pink and gray tint. Such paper is mainly found in post-Soviet countries. This material symbolically defines my personal place and identity in the frame of the post-Soviet context. It is an internal protest and resistance to social and political pressures and violence experienced by the artist from the society and the state of the Republic of Moldova.

15. Guy Standing, The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class, Marginem Press, 2014, p. 147.

Precarious networks and militant families

Manuela Zechner

> *All of a sudden, we don't simply see the world as an ensemble of autonomous individuals that pursue rational ends and life projects, but we see the world as an ensemble of persons taken in networks of care and engaged in responding to the care needs that surround them.*[1]

Reclaiming the family?

The family is a subject-object that hasn't been dealt with much in recent 'young' social movements like those of the Global Justice, EuroMayDay or various more recent student movements. While affect and micropolitics have been discussed variously in relation to post-fordist labour, life and organisation, the broader question of social reproduction is largely left untouched in those debates. These days, with the deepening of current social and economic crises and with a generation of activists (from which I speak) growing older, questions around the social organisation of reproduction emerge as urgent: how can we sustain our lives and collaborations in this context? The current crises are not just financial, social and environmental but more broadly may also be seen as reproductive, concerning the economies and ecologies of the commons and their sustainability.

Yet analyses of our current impasses rarely touch upon the family: neuralgic spot of neoliberal subjectivity, taboo in many militant circles for being synonymous with conservative, nuclear organisations of filiation, contested territory of feminist politics. Across networks of precarious workers and activists, many serious and legitimate doubts and hesitations exist concerning the family: what follows is a modest investigation of some dynamics concerning care and reproduction in contexts of networked and precarious work/life and politics, and the potential benefits of reclaiming the concept of the family.[2] The urgency here is precisely to invent 'creative' modes of thinking family, to imagine alternative forms of reproduction and care, from within social movements as well as beyond them.

The network form, so prevalent in culture and business, has been variously criticised for promoting short lived, juvenile, individualist, opportunist and competitive forms of relation. These dynamics also concern militant networks. The network cannot think the family, it seems. An unsustainable culture of relating and organising perpetuates itself through the silence around the reproduction of everyday bodies, its predominant forms and desirable adaptations. There are little to no visions of desirable families within recent large-scale social movements in the global north. If we define family as a relation that involves committed, non-transactionalist and relatively unconditional care (whether through blood ties or not), it is clear that the family is undeniably the most common reproductive platform across different contexts and societies, indispensable to sustaining our lives. To leave the family unthought, then, is to embrace a very limited understanding of social reproduction, ignoring not just biological reproduction and childrearing but also care for the sick and elderly, which majorly pass through family bonds in our societies – increasingly so with less state support.

*Adapted from the original essay published in Parallax, 2013, Vol. 19, No. 2, 70-84.

In Europe, the dismantling of the welfare state is reactivating the family in a variety of ways. Precarity and unemployment lead increasing amounts of young adults to keep living in their family homes, stop them from constructing autonomous lives and from setting up their own families, as witnessed particularly in the European (and of course global) south.[3] There is not just social but also demographic change associated with the reconfiguration of the function and form of family in the contexts of precarity and austerity. The policies of forced reproduction that the current revival of anti-abortion laws in austerity Europe implies, are propped up by (neo-)conservative and religious discourses of family. Furthermore, welfare withdrawal often causes families to collapse into themselves for support, heightening pressure on members and bringing back more archaic forms of family. The cutting of child benefits, family support and childcare facilities makes women bear the brunt of austerity measures, forcing them to draw more on their own families (particularly on women but also on pensioners and children[4] therein) for care. The effects of the neoliberal project's precarity and austerity regimes on forms of reproduction and care are considerable: if this huge arena of political contestation is left for conservative forces to deal with, the future of families will be rather grim.

In May 2012, the month of its first anniversary, the Spanish 15M movement launched 'toma la familia',[5] a small campaign to 'take back the family'. Following various 'toma' leitmotifs – 'toma la plaza' (the initial May 2011 slogan), 'toma la huelga' (of the strike in March 2012), and so forth – this 'taking back' or 'taking over' was possibly the most daring proposal of the movement as yet. The reclaiming not of just public institutions and spaces, traditional forms of workers resistance, or private entities such as banks and businesses, but also of the very platforms of everyday reproduction poses as much a challenge to movements now as it will to capital if successful. The context of 'toma la familia' is an unheimlich yet familiar one: the combination of a brutal dismantling of mutualist safety nets (social services, institutions, rights) combined with the neoconservative discourses and policies of a right wing austerity government, as privy to many a government in Europe[6]. Not only do those policies undo key achievements of feminist and decolonial struggles (questioning abortion rights[7], tightening immigration laws, cutting child benefits, introducing workfare[8], taking away migrants access to healthcare[9]) and enforce free labour, which as ever falls back onto women and those with no capital and fragile legal status – they also promote a conservative-bourgeois family model that hardly corresponds to what people in precarious and subaltern positions inhabit or may want to inhabit. The tightly knit, heteronormative nuclear model is at odds with the cultures of extended, fragmented or displaced families, with those that have little financial power to transmit, those operating as transnational care chains and networks, those with feminist ethics and so forth. 'The nuclear family is radioactive'[10] was a motif of this brief campaign emanating from Acampada Sol[11]: a call for transversal, creative politics.

In its basic definition, a nuclear family is one composed of a heterosexual couple and their child/ren. In the West, this form is inextricably connected to the modelization of social reproduction upon the bourgeois household, where children grow to be like parents, parents have some capital, and where the family upholds and

accumulates wealth and status (not least through more or less subtle internal hierarchies and obligations) in a relatively enclosed way. The industrial family as much as the contemporary entrepreneurial couple embody this ideal type, even if it is hard to attain in times of fracturing and faltering employment options and social support: where the family can't be an agent of saving and accumulation, it's bound to take on other, more communal forms.

In contexts of precarity and subalternity, it often takes more than two to build a viable support network: the family without capital functions not to preserve and maintain wealth and prestige, but to facilitate everyday survival. The middle and lower class family, 'symbolised by the house of the grand-parents, is a place of social anchorage that allows one to face the insecurity caused by the different forms of urban mobility (professional, residential)'[12]. It may have strong nuclear components, but it builds on extensive webs of support, through relatives, community and the state. The nuclear family that doesn't depend on a support network is a bourgeois wet dream: family independence is partially enabled by welfare, however rather marginally. Indeed welfare state policies have more feasibly enabled women to undertake childcare outside the married couple and in relation to other relatives, mothers, families and friends, building asymmetrical but strong kinds of families out of necessity and/or desire (the argument that welfare dismantles family cohesion appears flawed on several accounts[13]). However the privileging of heterosexual and income-safe couples for marriage, adoption and as debtors still promotes a certain nuclear model above all.

Militant networks and families?

Through and beyond these questions of the nuclear, heterosexual and bourgeois, I want to question social reproduction in relation to social movements here, asking how and under what conditions (a very open version of) the form and concept of 'family' can come to support militant networks and make them durable[14]. In this context, the question concerns the coming of age of a generation of social movement actors and the sustainability of militancy beyond the 20s. 'If you're not a commie before you're 20, you have no heart; if you're not a capitalist after you are 20, you have no brain', goes a saying that someone at a session of the London Micropolitics group once shared. How then to avoid ignoring the family, but also how not to naturalise it, just seeing it as something that happens to people and takes its 'natural' course? Clearly, as much as reproduction can seem to be an autopiloting biological-affective process (less so in the face of fertility problems), the family is a form shaped and intervened upon by state and market. What inspiring micropolitics of the family may we imagine on the one hand, and what models of common reproduction and collective care to go with this?

Inevitably, processes of re-inventing social reproduction and thus modes of building care networks are underway in the context of crisis, in the direction of new struggles around the commons and subsistence as well as in the direction of new governmental measures to make families pay for financial-fiscal crises. In the face of the 'care' side of current crises, and as part of undoing the mutualism of public care,

the Austrian county of Styria seems to have set a trend: it reintroduced a previously abandoned law that obliges (ex-)spouses and children to pay for substantial parts of their partners/parents elderly care[15]. In the context of debt economies, it is easy to see how the moral and legal responsabilization of the family for the cutting of public services may become norm. The family is thus a major site on which the destruction of mutualist systems aka 'austerity' comes to weigh. Reclaiming the family is crucial in the moment where austerity meets new politics of debt and free labour: on the level of micropolitical experimentations as well as macropolitical struggles for social rights.

Families and autonomy

Care networks and families are political matters not just because 'the personal is political' or because of their internal power dynamics, but because they constitute formations through which subsistence, resistance and education occur. The liberal family model has worked to decompose forms of collective feasting and celebration that held together communities and enabled collective resistance[16], in favour of building private and enclosed units of survival. As means to primitive accumulation, the liberal-bourgeois family model has always run counter to practices of self-organisation and commoning.

Jacques Donzelot points out that in the late liberal context, we witness an intensification and over-investment in family life, which incorporates a normalisation and disempowerment of the family vis a vis society and the state, making it the 'troubled site of social subjection'[17]:

> This is the advanced liberal family, then: a residue of feudalism whose internal and external contours are blurred through the effect of an intensification of its relations and a contractualization of its bonds: a sort of endless whirl in which the standard of living, educational behaviour, and the concern with sexual and emotional balance lead one another around in an upward search that concentrates the family a little more on itself with every turn; an unstable compound that is threatened at any moment with defection by its members, owing to that relational feverishness which exposes them to the temptations of the outside, as well as to that overvaluing of the inside which makes escape all the more necessary; a half-open place […][18]

When is the family a threat and when a slave to neoliberal governance? Beyond their defection, are there any promising imaginaries and practices of family within precarious militant cultures? Does the construction of collective resources and support networks of precarious people today have anything to gain from referring to the family, and if so, what? It seems important for precarity movements to open up to creativity and radical experimentation beyond the realms of cultural production, post-fordism and playful direct action.

While it is most intuitive to associate the family with troublesome heteronomy in our societies, the challenge here will be to investigate subversions of the traditional,

blood based family in view of building autonomy. Between unit of resistance and subsistence, and mechanism of capitalist capture, the family as organisational form varies and transforms. I refer here to a singular popular context in Argentina, where collectivity and militancy meet the family in inspiring ways. The self-organised and self-built 'Community Health Centre' in San Francisco Solano, a suburb of Buenos Aires, merged from the unemployed movement of the crisis of 2001 and maintains a political practice of autonomy that is infused with sensitivities from indigenous and also women's struggles. As some women of the centre recount their collective process, reflecting on themselves in the terms of family comes quite naturally, as does reference to the complementary figure of the network:

> N: Yes, this was a big family. Not in the traditional style, because you know the traditional family has its own [particularities]... it was very hierarchical, very authoritarian, with some authoritarian roles, you know... Mama and Papa often got into deep shit […] [laughs] And luckily, today this idea disappeared: there are children that can say what they think and that can make decisions at home too... and well, that's what the health centre is like. I think it's a collective practice that opened itself, instead of being influenced by the hierarchical style of the family... I think the health centre was an influence in democratization, horizontality and openness, this exogamic aspect of the family... [laughs]
>
> Me: A huge family, that is... how many people in this extended family?
>
> N: Thousands.
>
> M: We are... it's really difficult to count because there are those of us who come to work in the health centre, those that work in the fields, and at the same time we have networks with other collectives that do the same, and we help each other, we accompany each other mutually, so it becomes difficult to delimit where one collective starts and where another stops... and that's wonderful, to belong to such a big network that struggles and self-organises, it's really very beautiful.[19]

This account of care networks and notions of family appears to blow open both the model of the bourgeois family that liberal family politics imposes on its subjects, where the family is supposed to be an economically autonomous mini-institution that saves people from relying on the state, via its savings – or in the current context, and in ways that have shown themselves to be clearly flawed, via its debts. It also explodes the individualized therapeutic model whereby pragmatic and preventive treatment of relations occurs via individual effort, without bearing any relation to broader collective and social problems and politics. How to think autonomy in the context of radical and popular care networks? What are possible ways out of the self-referentiality and normalisation of the liberal family as much as of the militant network, towards forms of reproduction capable of generating heterogeneity and autonomy?

As N. and M. recount:

> We gained autonomy. We always fought, obviously, to be able to benefit from the resources that the government offered, but at the same time we sustained our autonomy and the administration of everything by ourselves...of everything. Of all the... I'm not sure if 'aid' is the most adequate word...of all that came from the government. And the government offered it precisely because we had previously demanded it, through organisations, through struggles/battles [luchas] in the street...[20]

Members of the health centre have developed their own practice and notion of autonomy, which consists neither in fitting the molds of state assistance, nor in performing the family as bourgeois enterprise that molds liberal bourgeois subjects, but in a militant practice that both contests state policy and produces popular and solidarious subsistence. It is through their history of piquetero struggle that these people won a certain autonomy from the state, not absolute independence but the rights to locally administer the resources they are due.

This account illustrates a collective take on the state as well as the everyday. It offers a perspective on how access to welfare not only originates from collective struggle but how its administration and configuration can remain sites of common discussion, organising and contestation. Such practices fly in the face of the way the liberal familial mechanism plays individual interests against family interests by forcing people through tutelary institutions and threatening benefit loss. Donzelot describes the new tutelary mechanisms in their subtlety, showing how

> […] claims procedures could be substituted for networks of solidarity. These are the things that made the family into the essential figure of our societies, into the indispensable correlate of parliamentary democracy. From this fact, one can also see how the problem of the twentieth century was to be, not the defense or abolition of the institution of the family, but the resolution of the questions that arose at the two trouble spots of the juncture between family and society: (1) How to cope successfully with family resistances and individual deviations in the working classes in such a way that the necessary intervention does not generate excessive advantages or overly harsh repression and thus cause the old forms of dependence or organic solidarity to reappear (the tutelary complex); (2) How to achieve the maximum harmony between the principle of family authority, its egoisms and specific aspirations, and the procedures of socialization of its members (the regulation of images).[21]

Questions of subjectivity, struggle and subsistence meet to make the family an urgent subject and object of reflection. How to reclaim networks of solidarity without losing our claim on democratic institutions and resource distribution? Just as democracy cannot be thought on the national level only in the context of globalisation, neither can support networks: the family, like other associational forms, has transformed in

relation to globalising forces, with its members moving ever more according to the investments and crises of global capitalism.

Other kinds of families: connecting the dots across chains and networks

The second-wave privatisation and capture of home and reproductive time ('care crisis') in the global north intensely mobilises informal and illegalized care provision, producing so-called migrant 'care chains', where a family member (mostly a woman/mother) in a poor situation migrates to make money for her family, as a care worker in a richer household. Accounts by migrant care workers often illustrate the blurring of their own family (back home) and that of their employer. The resulting ambivalence is not unlike that of immaterial cooperative labour, where relations are often equally complex in their entangling of intimacy and exploitation-competition. How to think of the networks that emerge from such ambivalent contexts of contemporary precarious and subaltern employment: spaces of care to be built on, or flawed semblances of familiarity? Helma Lutz asks in her study of the ambivalences of migrant domestic work: 'Does domestic work amount to cooperation among 'kin by choice', characterized by reciprocal trust, or is it a particular kind of exploitation in which the employer expects to be shown respect but, for her part, need only pay the scantest regard to the subordinate's position?'. She answers this question in pointing to the irreducibility of such care work to either:

> Various of our case studies have shown that the relationships between the parties involved are extremely complex, and cannot be shoehorned into a straight-forward exploiter-exploitee schema. Moreover, the egalitarian tenets of present-day Western society are ingrained in these relations […]. It is clear from the mutual uncertainty regarding modes of address and designation (female friend, sister, daughter or partner) that drawing uncritical parallels with historical precursors is not a tenable option, since the hierarchies of the master/servant society have no place in a modern habitus. But at the same time it is a working relationship characterized by multiple interlocking asymmetries, which cannot simply be ignored.[23]

This way of paying attention to the singular configurations of relations that such highly 'embedded' work implies may do well if applied to the asymmetries and ambivalences proper to contemporary creative work. While forms of commitment and engagement in such constellations vary, they often become lasting sites of inhabitation, sites of 'real' life.

How to think about the arrangements of family that emerge through contemporary practices of migration and mobility? What are the networks and extended families that we build across our places of belonging? And what to make of the fact that for most people coming from poorer regions to richer ones, migration eventually entails a shift from one family model to another, often from more extended models to variants of the nuclear family? As Emmanuel Todd points out, there is certainly a

reason for 'the emergence of capitalism in the [geographical-historical] zone of the nuclear [family], since this family type enables the social flexibility that's indispensable to the uprooting of peasants as well as the individual mobility necessary for technological experimentation.'[24] If obviously our forms of reproduction adapt to capitalism, then what of mutant forms of reproduction that form across global capitalist worlds – can such monstrous family assemblages be seen across transitional migrant as well as precarious networks?

In a chapter on 'transnational motherhood', Lutz emphasizes the need for a new way of looking at families – pointing to the fact that only 15% of all families in 1990s Britain lived in classic, traditional nuclear family formations (two heterosexual parents with dependent children), with numbers decreasing (divorce rates rise). Between unit of resistance and subsistence, and mechanism of education and exploitation, the family as organisational form varies and transforms. Traditional nuclear models are giving in to new forms, yet under what conditions will they go beyond the mom that's at home or works three jobs, and the dad who's a breadwinner or unemployed? Looking at migration and precarity may perhaps help see ways of negotiating extended and transnational work-life networks through solidarity and care.

Lutz argues that far from dissolving families, migratory projects of mothers very much hold families together: 'constant mobility accompanied by networking among community members across wide geographical distances can enable them to maintain a functional community and create collective identity.'[25] In the first instance of consolidating a network, this surely is the case. However according to Lutz, it's not just about preserving existing configurations: a 'more collective sense of family' emerges, whereby aunts and other family members take on parenting functions, while friends and even employers may take on a role supportive of one's family. At least for a generation or two, migrant networks radically extend support networks locally and translocally. This is why Lutz argues for a new definition of family, that can show how

> the current concept of the family as problematic because it prescribes a legal, moral and biological concept of relatedness, which ignores precisely those aspects which are most important in people's everyday lives, namely commitment, involvement, loyalty, care, and self-obligation. […] Accordingly, families must be seen as a constellation of ideas, images or technologies, which serve to ascribe domestic meaning to everyday life.[26]

These contemporary definitions of family indeed ring of the ways in which people within feminist-autonomist groups and networks understand their affiliations. The desire for ways of committing to each other beyond projects or jobs speaks of a desire for another kind of belonging, normativity and care network. As a male participant in the 15M and other Spanish movements, and migrant from Italy, puts it:

> [...] there is the neoliberal structure which is about opportunism and individ-

> ualism – that would be 'what guarantees my safety is money, it's not networks, it's not belonging' and somehow the network of political projects are opening a new space but that's on a much more precarious level. On the other hand you see that with passing years, people who invested more and more time in these networks were also forced to be respectful to the network, respectful to the ethics of the network. ...and so that was the way in which we are starting to give a normativity, a positive norm, not a constricting normativity but a constructing normativity, an instituting practice of that space. We are instituting networks of care and the fact that people are spending their time, their energy and renouncing other possibilities – of making money for instance – in the name of strengthening this network which in capitalistic terms is an immeasurable dimension of stability.[27]

The imagination of sharing resources and spaces across groups, clusters of friends and even across regional and national borders as it occurs in many social movement circles, resembles the way many families organise transnationally. It takes into account the ambivalences of contemporary work/life and the potential transformations of acquired families, while imagining processes of commitment. Yet at the same time, such care networks are perhaps not quite meant to statically last forever, to replicate the strong normativity of biological and traditional families. In the context of migration and mobility, care networks also need to constitute an opening, ways out of impasses or oppressive situations that still build on shared responsibility and respect. The families we see ourselves living within need to remain open to change, as a German activist-teacher-performer living in London says:

> I always speak about my friends as family... […] some families moved because of people moving away, because London was always, and will always be a place of movement, wasn't it. And some families, they got too tight – I have this that I might feel the need of moving away from families also, because the dynamics get to tight and they get too automatized also, so it's really difficult to break them – and for me that's really important, that there's space for things to be broken and changed.[28]

Emerging from these quotes is a sense of belonging and care that is strongly tied to an ethos of creativity and movement. This sense of common or community refuses tree-like affiliations with claims to eternity, while trying to institute sustainable ways of cohabitation and collaboration. And yet is is also sensitive to the more rigid affiliations of the biological family, appreciating the stability found therein. Lutz: 'Comparative cross-cultural anthropological studies on childcare and upbringing have, for example, drawn attention to the fact that concepts of family, motherhood and childhood are not subject to any universally valid definition but follow specific cultural patterns.[29] How then to invent those kinds of cultures that allow for care networks that can harbour children and sick as well as old people?

We touch upon cultures of elective kinship here. Queer families and gay com-

munities have been key experimental sites for elective kinship, and inspire attempts at practicing ways of doing childcare, love relationships and family beyond heteronormative norms. As one book on queer families puts it: 'The subjective agency implicit in gay kinship surfaced in the very labels developed to describe it: "families we choose", "families we create". In the language of significant others, significance rested in the eye of the beholder.'[30] Much like the network, the non-blood-based family is perceived, felt and enacted by people in differing ways: there is not necessarily a norm to when some people become 'family'. Such belonging can emerge through subtle processes of conviviality and cooperation and takes on its own performative effects once proclaimed, can be moulded to accommodate others. What defines family to the interviewees here is a commitment to care, friendship and a shared everyday, and indeed a sensitivity or closeness to queer cultures. An older militant in the 15M movement, M. imagines new constellations for care:

> I see that I'm old, going towards old age and death, and for me the support I can get from my son is compatible with the support I can get from my friendships, from within more horizontal spaces of cooperation. I think we still don't have a model we can stick to, and in that sense all these experimentations are good. From coming back to form families by decision – that is, I decide that you are my daughter and you decide that I'm your daughter and that's how we'll live, we'll make that deal – I wouldn't see why that shouldn't be. Or we decide that we'll be husband and wife but, whatever... an old lady with her female neighbour, for instance – we'll decide that we two women, we're husband and wife. I don't see why not... as I told you, we still haven't found the way, we're still in experimental phase... and for it to work... you have to have I don't know how many experiments in order to have one that works, to make that jump towards how we want to live. And so for me, cooperation is very important.[31]

Friendships are often the base of building lasting relationships of trust and cooperation, particularly where the autopilot of the heterosexual reproduction isn't given. Experimentations with polyamory and open relationships are often platforms for imagining other kinds of care networks, as one queer polyamory article points out:

> In the queer communities I'm in valuing friendship is a really big deal, often coming out of the fact that lots of us don't have family support, and build deep supportive structures with other queers. We are interested in resisting the heteronormative family structure in which people are expected to form a dyad, marry, have kids, and get all their needs met within that family structure. A lot of us see that as unhealthy, as a new technology of post-industrial late capitalism that is connected to alienating people from community and training them to think in terms of individuality, to value the smaller unit of the nuclear family rather than the extended family.[32]

Before and beyond the post-industrial, the liberal family alienates people from

broader collectivities, yet indeed post-fordist modes of work and life add some extra challenges to building lasting collective projects and relations.

Immaterial networks and care

I will zoom back to the question of care networks in contexts of precarity, immaterial labour and political organising now as this is the context I aim to speak to in this paper. Precarity fragments time and splits the future into thousands of impossible possibles, capsules of opportunistic time. Our capacity to decide is hampered in this context, not least because it is unclear who our partners in decision-making are and can be, since those time capsules soon tear us apart again. Additionally, as Maurizio Lazzarato points out, measure and debt/credit capture our capacity to act on our own terms altogether, in submitting the future to their (moralistic-instrumental) terms:

> The importance of the debt economy lies in the fact that it appropriates and exploits both chronological labor time and action, non-chronological time, time as choice, decision, a wager on what will happen and on the forces (confidence, desire, courage, etc.) that make choice, decision, and action possible.[33]

It is because of this double capture of time that collective organisations and imaginaries need to deal with care as much as organising around work and resources. The neoliberal phase of accumulation takes hold not just of peoples capacities to work but also of their capacities to decide, imagine and act together, often making us into weak pitiable beings to be put on the medical-therapuetic-consumerist drip.

How do different collectivities conceive of this capture of vital time and energies and how do they resist it? Whilst crisis and austerity do make new collective organisations, solidarities and resistances emerge, their consistency and sustainability hinge on the building of collective trust, desire, invention and care. This requires a politics of resisting finance, debt and accumulation as much as a new micropolitics of trust and associational bonds. Aside from inventing other forms of common production and reproduction (of relating work to life), it is a matter of how political work relates to life.

In relation to the future, this involves admitting that rather than living in some temporary phase, we already exist in the continuous reality of our lives. How to engage with where we are? If politics is the moment we take it upon ourselves to affect a shared world, if love is a youthful relation to the world that 'has no dominion'[34], if care is where we apply our love and time to the world, and if thought is that which navigates on the verge of what is imaginable – then two questions (for now). What experimentations need to become thinkable and possible? And what experience and tools-resources do we already have? It takes some work to recognise and strengthen networks as spaces where people meet each other in their difficulties, blockages, illnesses and darknesses as much as in their lucid, glorious, productive and performative moments.[35] What kinds of movements would emerge from a care-network politics?

A micropolitics of network-families?

Letting go of the 'networky' idea that we are just in more or less random transit towards something better – relationally, politically, existentially, geographically – how to draw on the many movements and changes we have in common? Migration implies a practice of building networks, as many people of our generations know first hand. The network also allows us to connect via long distances and support each other in finding alliances, pathways and support. As a female member of the nanopolitics group (an Italian migrant in the UK) points out, the relation between network and family clearly exists, though it's hard to understand what one might desire it to be:

> […] all of us were quite individualized, all of us in the group of friends in London, because we weren't committed to anything long term; we didn't have family responsibility, we didn't have older people to care for, we were quite a good prototype of the neoliberal self-entrepreneurial individual: critical, self-reflexive but absolutely free to reinvent themselves all the time without commitment, responsibility. And so the fragility of this is more than the fragility of a more traditional way of owing to each other and being part of the same family, of having social duties almost because of your role, because of your family position. But at the same time, there were commitments and we did create other forms of expectations between colleagues, between friends, between people sharing political projects maybe. But it's still a kind of commitment that will always forgive... the fact that at some time you will go. It's your choice, you're always free to leave eventually, and actually maybe people would envy you if you manage.[36]

How to negotiate commitment with flexibility, in the context of precarity? How to find each other within as well as across national boundaries, and imagine nourishing each other even though (or precisely because) we don't know for sure what will come? Care does not just rely on the existence of stable local lives, fixed jobs or homes: the networks emerging around so-called migrant 'care chains' are instances of how people invent ways of being able to care for each other, across the most difficult circumstances and long distances. To be sure, it takes a lot of trust to establish care across borders, and those relations do not replace a shared material-physical everyday where care means looking after bodies. Yet as increasing amounts of young people migrate with rising unemployment in Europe (where this text speaks from), to find work abroad, transnational forms of care will increasingly have to be negotiated with local ones. This means that the roles of both family and networks change in providing care[37]: how to intelligently and sustainably negotiate local commitment with trans-local movement in the age of global capitalism? The way capital likes us is punctually cooperative but ultimately isolated, competitive and dispersed. Can we imagine another politics of the trans-local, a networked politics that reaches across borders not just formally in organising and collaborating, but also more intimately in solidarity and care?

Someone from the Barcelona Schizoanalysis Group points to the difficulties of negotiating migration, flexibility, trust and care:

> Many and many of us were migrants at that moment: and that could be migrants from Spain itself, or from Europe, or some of us were from Latinamerica, so it was a migration that could be from nearby or from farther away, but we all lived that 'being foreign' a bit. And so there was always this thing of – between coming and going, feeling that it took a lot to have a more stable common territory. And we were also very afraid of not knowing up to where we could count with the other, because we all lived a bit in this indeterminacy. I knew that I could count on myself, and that the other person probably really wanted to support me and to have me support them, but those then were very temporary pacts, very brief, where very probably the other would leave and then I could no longer count on them because they'd no longer be around. So this question of housing/home [vivienda] not just as in 'the house' but as in 'how to inhabit'. So that was something that was there, as in... concrete practices of inhabiting. And the other [question] is to do with the precarity of work. To know that we were very fragile but that in any moment we could be left without work, and on top of that, without a network – that at least when you're in your place of origin you have a family, or a somehow older network that supports you, but here... that made you a lot more vulnerable. And it was paradoxical if only family ties could be ties that last. That's to say that it seemed that the only thing that could be consistent was the family bond, of blood and all that, or a couple bond. And I remember when I had married – for papers precisely – a friend who is amongst my closest, said: 'I just think we ought to have marriages for friends. I would really like that you and I, that we do a wedding and get married. Because I want you to always be in my life' and I told her, 'Yes of course, I also feel that link with you, where I would like to be able to ask for this kind of commitment. I want a marriage with my friend and I want her to never leave, I want to be able to ask of her to be present'. But within this politics of freedom... well of course, making demands is no good! And it's very difficult, to know how to ask the other to be there...[38]

A radically creative and caring process of imagining other kinds of families, inspired by queer and migrant experiences, might be underway. If we understand family as a space of commitment, mutual support and love that enables people to collectively raise children and care for old people, irrespective of blood ties or gender, then why shouldn't social movements be able to build, hack, experiment and create their own?

Notes:

1. Pascale Molinier. Sandra Laugier, Patricia Paperman (2009). *Qu'est-ce que le care ? souci des autres, sensibilité, responsabilité* (Paris: Payot) p. 39.

2. It is based on interviews done for my PhD thesis, 'Collective practices: creativity and care', using the future archive method. Unless otherwise stated, all interviewees are female and in their 30s. See also http://futurearchive.org/static/fa-archive-index.html

3. See the Coventry Industrial Relations Research Unit's work on young people and precarious employment, particularly this list of papers http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/wbs/research/irru/ywesrc/seminar1/sem1papers/
4. See Rachel Williams, '700,000 children acting as carers, survey shows', *The Guardian* (16 November 2010).
5. See this anonymous article reporting the birth of 'Toma la familia' http://www.diagonalperiodico.net/En-esta-familia-cabemas-gente.html
6. For some background on Spanish neoconservative and catholic family discourses, see: Izaskun Sánchez Aroca, 'Recetas "antieleccion para salir de la crisis' in *Periodico Diagonal* (24 May 2012) http://www.diagonalperiodico.net/Recetas-antieleccion-para-salir-de.html
7. As the Rajoy government planned to do in Spain in 2012 (August 2012).
8. The UK conservatives have probably put in place the most extreme workfare of Europe so far. See the 'Boycott Workfare' Campaign http://www.boycottworkfare.org/
9. In Spain, the Rajoy government came up with a decree (16.2012) excluding under 26-year olds who haven't paid into social security in the past 2 years, from access to the healthcare system. This excludes a huge host of people who can't or don't do documented work: migrants, housewives, the unemployed.
10. See http://madrid.tomalaplaza.net/2012/05/20/la-familia-nuclear-es-radioactiva-2/
11. See the blog of the Sol Acampada: See http://madrid.tomalaplaza.net (June 2012)
12. Claudia Fonseca (1997), 'Review of "La famille en Europe. Parenté et perpetuation familiale"'. In: *L'Homme*, No.144, EHESS. p. 224.
13. See Shirley L. Zimmerman (1991), 'The Welfare State and Family Breakup: The Mythical Connection'. *Journal of Family Relations*, Vol. 40, No. 2, pp. 139-147
14. Beyond the individual support people in a network get from their own family.
15. See 'Pflegeregress: So viel muessen die Steirer zahlen' in *Kleine Zeitung* (29 July 2011)
16. See Jacques Donzelot (1979 [1977]). The Policing of families. (New York: Random House.)
17. Ibid, p. 227.
18. Ibid, pp. 228-229.
19. Interview with members of Community Health Centre, San Francisco Solano, Buenos Aires Province, Argentina. April 2012. http://futurearchive.org/movies/63
20. Ibid.
21. Jacques Donzelot (1979 [1977]). *The Policing of families*. (New York: Random House), p. 94/95.
22. Helma Lutz (2011). *The new maids : transnational women and the care economy*. (London, Zed), p. 79.
23. Ibid, p. 110.
24. Emmanuel Todd (2011), *L'origine des systemes familiaux*, *Volume 1: Eurasia*. (Paris: Gallimard), p.18
25. Helma Lutz (2011). *The new maids : transnational women and the care economy*, p. 113.
26. Ibid, p. 116.
27. Interview with P. London, October 2011. http://futurearchive.org/movies/55
28. Interview with N. Barcelona, November 2011. http://futurearchive.org/movies/57
29. Helma Lutz (2011). *The new maids : transnational women and the care economy*, p. 114.
30. Kay Weston (1991). *Families we choose: lesbians, gays, kinship*. (New York: Columbia University Press) p.109
31. Interview with M, Madrid, October 2011.
32. Dean Spade (precise date unknown, in the 2000s), For Lovers and Fighters. Published online at http://www.makezine.enoughenough.org/newpoly2.html
33. Maurizio Lazzarato (2011). *La Fabrique de L'homme endetté*, (Paris: Editions Amsterdam), p. 45.
34. In a session of the Nanopolitics group in London, on love, eroticism and activism, participants read the poem 'no dominion' by Dylan Thomas to each other several times. See www.nanopolitics.noblogs.org
35. Care networks are also spaces for reflecting on what isn't possible, in relating to limits, blockages and borders. Being able to determine and act upon limitations: to give up the silly promise of unlimited potential, so typical of networks, and engage in crises and fragilities with care and love. A space where to begin to trust, to understand and respect each other in ways one might think belongs only to couples or families.
36. Interview with G. London, June 2011.
37. See also 'Soziologe: Familie zerbröckelt als Unterstützungsnetzwerk', Interview in *Der Standard*, July 2012.
38. Interview with N., Barcelona, November 2011. http://futurearchive.org/movies/61


ÜMITS

October 16, 20--

The Imaginary Republic

Communiqué #2

To think the unthought

The night is upon us!
The time of the delirious!
The moment of encounter…

The parades of ceaseless wandering and animal magic –

Of tender thoughts, of restless dreams, the social fictions by which to capture other matter-energy assemblages, human-nonhuman worlds.

To the Imaginaries – of the runaways and the bandits – we gather here, on these streets to make a claim on the future horizon of a possible species. A possible ecology.

The figuring of an Impossible Planet.

Pause
Hesitate
Occupy

The restlessness of this cultural imaginary, the ceaseless thinking at the edge of thought, the monstrous unworking of Being –

The Night Commons

Dis/appearance: a disfiguring, trespassing by way of appearance, identity, and then out again – the night is always undoing itself – *mutational*

Formlessness that forms itself nonetheless, somehow, not knowing: shivering, germinating (pleasure = pain = laughter) the uncertainty of this sensation (this experimental scene, the creaturely construct).

To the Imaginaries of the Night – what of the loneliness that must be lived, the deep time?

The Autonomous Odyssey

Octavio Camargo & Brandon LaBelle

We are in a house, rooms. It is day. There is light from the windows. There are shadows, in the corners, the stillness. We are in a house, the quiet inside, a gray light from the cloudy day coming in. It is a renegade house, an outlaw home. It is without order, a type of dirty beauty, life. In each room there is a figure, a person – Do they wear masks? Are they lost? Have they returned from a journey? Or are they preparing to leave? To go out. Are they freedom fighters, lovers, spiders? They are hiding out, they are dreaming, of other rooms and other events. Each one speaks, a monologue – no, a poem of praise and restlessness, describing a movement: Resistance? Festivity? A new community? The figures are separate from each other, they are apart, each occupying a room in the house, yet they are together. Each is a fragment, a voice passed from one to the next, remembering, narrating what has been and what may still come – it resists completion, capture, this poem, this polyphony.

We are in a house, with rooms full of voice, escape.

1 /
The shadows, the emptiness, this beating life and fragile idea
He moves forward, to enter, to search – and the others as well
The floating subjects, and the sudden togetherness
To be *side by side*
The shadows, the silence, the city outside
We feel its light as it pours through the windows and the cracks
To catch our hands
The corridors, the decayed materials, rooms of dust and debris
She pauses to count the broken pieces, to listen to the footsteps around her
Side by side, the floating subjects
In search
For something, a possibility: the making of a network, a soul, vitality
Each a figure within, along the weak stairs and past the empty offices, the glass and the papers left behind, underfoot
This abandoned building that turns into a world as they enter, capturing the emptiness
In daydreams and passions
This imaginary republic, of crossed lines and stolen joy
This they undo and rework, with slow steps, and the slowness that eases across the walls and into the passing of touch to touch
This that unfolds into the making of community, without knowing
He closes his eyes to hear the shadows, and the voices that whisper and that give counsel to the desperate movements
The passion of giving up and of trespassing, this body echoed by the other
A world of echoes that beat against the musty darkness, upsetting the law of center and margin with reckless lyrics
What cannot be held by the name, and that shivers the skin
The rhythms that drive these first steps, steps shared and hesitant
Into the cracks, and toward each other
The city disappears into this sudden composition – the assembly of the incomplete, that begins again, and again
With the shadows and the emptiness, the dust and the debris
And the terrible joy, the power of the heart
With held breath, and the dogs outside
The vibrating earth and the listening they perform
Into the new life like thieves

2 /
Let us run, into the dust, the dim light and shadow
The rooms like a labyrinth in which new desires begin to take shape
Passed from hand to hand, mouth to mouth, and planted into the broken boards and piles of torn matter, the brittle cardboard and the crates strewn from left to right
It is a building left behind, withdrawn and that gives way
The opening up into which they run – their running, that demands: *to be more*
The breath and the extended arms, held out and then pulled back, playing with the dim light, spinning it around fingers and hand-made flowers
She reaches, and the emptiness spills over, suddenly
With the dust and the passageways, and the slow movement of things, the body becoming other than itself, turning away and then toward, with hands grasping the air, to pull it close to the skin
To resist and to give
With that brightness of the common body
What they begin to call the fragile community
Itself like an errant work, with found wood and blankets, the threads and the sticks
These tools and these weapons
Passed from hand to hand, step by step
Found in the backrooms, the closets, under the floorboards
With the cardboard and the metal, dug out from within piles of trash
To make a form, a shelter – a house of spiders
This hand around your arm, and their talking and their laughter echoing
Your hair draped across the windows
Up along the ceiling, turning this way and that way, this dizzy spell of ecstasy into which they fall
One over the other, the other more than one
Climbing and running, pulling the shadows from the corners
Your legs, and your mouth that swallows the new hope
She drifts, she gets lost, they are lost
One replaced by the other, this one in the place of the other
Placing, stepping
And then back, down again
Running, for each other

All this that cannot be contained, and that intrudes and that interrupts
The commotion, and the vibrant break, suddenly
His pockets full of sand, and the plastic bags they use
To carry the broken dreams and empty bottles
Your eyes full of smoke, and the blackened lips bruised by the beating heart as it drums
This heart that becomes a network of compassion and rebellion
A republic of the shaken, the one and the many

what of the world outside
what of the time it takes

    what of the shelters holding against all this

what of the conflicts and the clashes
what of the figures that steal into the night
what of the lonely
what of the disappearing community

    what of the memories they share like a music
what of the frustrated conversations
what of the trials and the accounts

what of the barred entrances
what of the hand that passes a hat

        what of the declarations made
what of the listening in the dark

    what of the stones marked with mysterious messages

    what of the angry crowds those that capture the flags of the nation


CORRUPÇÃO ZERO
MAIS
COLA
MAPEX

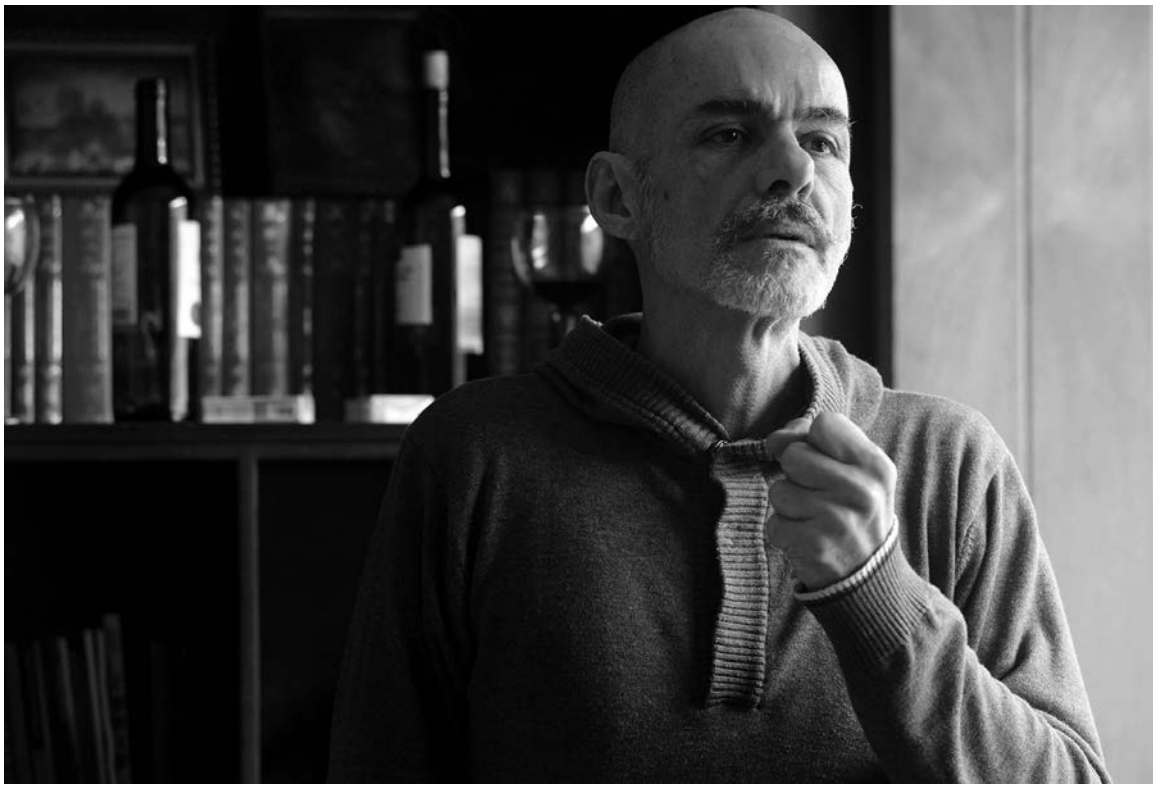
Former Brazilian President Luis Inacio Lula da Silva was arrested in April of 2018 for corruption charges. Throughout his incarceration in a jail in the city of Curitiba a camp had been set up by demonstrators and supporters, occupying the street and nearby lot as a form of protest-Vigil. Many believe his imprisonment was a political act aimed at withdrawing the possibility of Lula running in the Presidential election in October 2018, which led to the election of Jair Bolsonaro, even though the UN Human Rights Committee ruled, on the 17th of August, that Lula cannot be disqualified from presidential elections because his legal appeals were ongoing. In the following year, The Brazilian Supreme Court ruled, on November 7, 2019, that a convict can only be imprisoned after the end of appeals, which has four instances in the Brazilian Constitution, changing the former understanding, of 2016, that allowed imprisonment after the second instance. Lula was released on November, 8th, 2019, after being held for 580 days.


O PETRÓLEO É DO BRASIL


de doações
LULA LIVRE
LULA LIVRE!
Em Defesa da Democracia

The door, the blanket, the table, the glass on the table, and the tapping. We continue, down the hallway and into the rooms where they gather, these figures. With the struggles of the nation tapping on the window. The people outside shout: *Lula Livre! Lula Livre!* A gathering of citizens on the streets, camping and calling for the president of the people. Where has justice gone to? Where are the moral arguments? The wealth of everyone? This is the scene outside, with the streets that tremble to vibrate the walls, the doors, the table, the glass on the table which falls. And is caught by the imagination of these figures. The house becomes a set of pathways between inside and outside, back to front, like a web, as they speak, as they wait.

3 /
I to you, you to us, us to this
This that starts to shiver, under the fragile form taking shape – multiplying like spiders in the cracks
Of floating subjects and breathing bodies, this human vitality and the living that passes from lung to lung, feverish
Flexed and unfolding, to ease into the surroundings and the dark corners, and for each other
I know you will support me as I tumble into the emptiness
I to you, you to us, us to this
This that breaks and stirs, that turns the body into things collected and assembled, stitched together from passions and poor histories
The stories she once told while watching the fire, and how he listened feeling the night air against his hands
This that searches for description, to be marked onto the ground of this opening out and for, with a language of retrieval and renewal, of new breath and the sudden togetherness which feels like a nation spilling over – this sharing which upsets the streets and the productions, the scarcity and the evicted
To impress onto the concrete floors and deep emptiness a feverish idea
Did I tell you how we used to break into houses just to imagine living there, to feel the life of others, close to one's own
To imagine, and to construct from the matters of others, a dwelling, a place of support and for supporting this life that flows and that is overwhelming and that wants to burst into declarations of generosity
Eyes aglow in the shadowy light and the corridors without, awake to each other
Planning, plotting, scheming
To break in
The breaking and the undoing, the reworking of the home and the building, the street and the city
With memories of back alleys and the dirty paths, and the fennel bushes against their legs, collecting the dust of dry summers
Let us sleep here, to lie in the corners and with the cloths found and stitched, the living and the making, a tapestry of the story of joy
I to you, you to us, us to this



4 /
You take this, and hold, while I loop it over, across and then under
Like this, remember, and then let's find some more, that rope we saw behind
And that can fit alongside, to tie, to collect, to add this here, I know it can work
With the hand that passes, and then fixes, turns and then hangs, holding back the wood, before it falls, and then falling, this coming apart, for a moment, like a possibility, as nobody knows and everyone does, the doing that breathes
The time that disappears and becomes a material which we wrap around, becoming a surface that starts to shimmer, taking a step, closer
Against the against
She raises her hands as high as she can, with all that desire and the wanting, like creatures in search of the wilderness, and the trees that start to grow from his fingers, the flying leaves and the bright overflowing urban rivers of your hair and your steps which I follow
Into rhythms of self-organized movement, crossing over and standing alongside, this elsewhere wrapped around the face, suddenly, into the eyes and nose, the breathing and the beating, with arms outstretched and the broken pieces, reworked – the city becomes a dream, a dreaming chaos
The inside moving out, into a new skin, as the floor shakes and the walls crumble in slow-motion, yellow and green and beating
The making of being together and falling apart at the same time, the shattered pieces like noises that keep us safe within their strangeness
They dance the uncertainty of gesture and restless forms – can you hear, the noises that may remake the order of things, with their chaos and the beauty of this voice out of the throat
It shudders the emptiness
She sings, she grunts, with feet stomping the ground into pools of red flowers
And that drips through the cracks and along the walls, taking root and taking the breath away
Turning chairs into shelves, and marking the windows with mysterious signs – signs of life, touching and being touched
The matters of flesh and ideas, fingers into the holes and the pleasure of not knowing, together and under, and then up, into the attic
We dream this building into a world, we construct the erotic touch of everything
Can you read the burning tears across the face?
Can you pick up the falling blood of this suffering and festivity?
Can you drum this breaking apart as a new rhythm?

5 /
It is already changing, the wishing and the wanting, the order of this body
Blood and breath, eyes dripping and your hands into my throat
With the stressed borders, the broken lips, suffering the pleasure of coming together, and the music from the distance into the bones that rattle with joy
Can you hear the sounds?
Can you recognize the melody?
These lines that spread their wings like bats
Let us fall, into the night as day, the day of shadowy light
Let us digress, to open doors for the others as they run, running away and for
As they search for the beginning, the reworked languages spoken at times and that may become a lyric, to interrupt
Scratched onto the walls, taken down as notes for a future songbook
Fragments upon fragments
Figures of thought and of movement, incomplete
Those that stand in the shadows, and that generate a new darkness to break the windows, to deepen the night
These songs that resound, with melodies of wishing and remembering, and that travel, undercover, through uncountable vessels: your heart, his arms, those that walk with deep steps
It keeps me awake
These restless thoughts, and the rhythms that capture one's pulse, and that collapse
They know there is more to do, with the left-over pieces, the hand to hand
From island to island, the salt on their lips as they kiss
As they kiss again
For the making of the passion, the dreamwork to be performed, for what may still come
The interrupted, and the crime of togetherness

We continue, as we must. Each room a free territory, a zone of relations, inside to outside, back to front. Praça Olga Benario, Praça Lula Livre, Praça Puerto de Sol, with the lost parade that travels, down to Sala 603, and further, toward the City of Joy and Sorrow, the Autonomia Akadimia – these errant bodies that defend the house of spiders, spinning a web for the solidarity economy. This is what they speak about, and what they make. To open the doors and the windows. The street runs into the house, and then out again. Past the national borders, past the ropes tied to trees. It comes in, and it goes out, the street and all that it carries. It brings all types of strangers together. This is a stranger house. Let us enter, let us exit. Let us continue. Down the hallway and onto the boulevards, to the Zionskirchplatz and the environmental libraries, into the basements of forbidden books, and further, across the network of real media, these communities in movement that move us, as they must. As they must.


BRECHÓ
PONTA DE ESTOQUE
MÓVEIS USADOS
NOVA GERAÇÃO

The Molecular Strike

Gerald Raunig

17 September 2011. A demonstration march through lower Manhattan chooses as the destination of its dérive a small park near the enormous construction site of the World Trade Center. Zuccotti Park is a formerly public, now privatized square belonging to the real estate corporation Brookfield Properties, named after its chairman John Zuccotti. On older maps of the financial district, however, this square has a different name: Liberty Plaza. The demonstrators have not chosen to occupy this territory because of a universalist invocation of freedom, but rather because they want to set a further component of the abstract machine in motion that has drawn lines of flight throughout the entire year, especially through the Mediterranean region. And the most intensive line of this abstract machine was probably the Egyptian part of the Arab Spring with its center in Tahrir Square, the "Place of Freedom". By purposely occupying another place of freedom at the edge of Wall Street, the precarious occupiers seek not only to interrupt subservient deterritorialization, the flows through the global financial center, but they also take up the practices, with which current activisms de- and re-territorialize their times, their socialities, their lives in new ways.

In his last course with the title "The Courage of Truth"[1], Michel Foucault explored the scandalous life of the Cynics, to which he applied the colorful term of "philosophical activism"[2]. It was not his intention to attribute a privileged position to the activity of the philosophers, even less to reduce activism to a cognitive capacity. Rather, the Cynic philosopher served as a backdrop for a more general form of activism, of changing the world, of newly inventing worlds. For Foucault in later years, philosophical activism was an "activism in the world and against the world".

The Cynic philosopher is, first of all, the exemplary, anecdotal, almost mythical figure of Diogenes, with no permanent residence, at most a tub, living his life completely in public, scandalously all the way to masturbating in public, practicing parrhesia, the manner of "saying everything", even if it is associated with great risk, which in Cynicism conjoins the art of existence with the discourse of truth. Foucault's endeavor of a "history of life as possible beauty" situates this old Greek Cynicism as the pivotal point of a whole genealogy of scandalous, disobedient, self-forming forms of living. Foucault sees historical actualizations of Cynic activism in the minoritarian heretical movements of the Middle Ages, in the political revolutions of modernity, and – somewhat surprisingly – in the theme of the artist's life in the nineteenth century. And here I would add to the Foucaultian genealogy the new activisms of the twenty-first century: anti-globalization movement, social forums, anti-racist no border camps, queer-feminist activisms, transnational migrant strikes, Mayday movements of the precarious. Now since last year there has been a tremendous intensification of these new activisms in the wider Mediterranean region: from the waves

of university occupations to the revolutions of the Arab Spring, all the way to the movements of occupying central squares in Greece, Spain and Israel. Day-long sit-ins at the Kasbah Square in Tunis, revolutionary occupations of Tahrir Square in Cairo, Acampadas in the Puerta del Sol in Madrid, tents in the Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv. Much could be said about what these new activisms have in common. They are all about appropriating real places, about a struggle against precarization, against extreme competition and against the drivenness of contemporary production, largely dispensing with representation and weaving a transnational concatenation of social movements. There are, however, three specific vectors, on which these activisms enter new territory: in their search for new forms of living, in their organizational forms of radical inclusion, and in their insistence on re-appropriating time.

1. Inventing new forms of living.

When Foucault brings art into play, following the revolutions in his genealogy of the Cynics, it is not classical aesthetics or an existentialist theory of art that concerns him, but rather art that is "capable of giving a form to existence which breaks with every other form"[3], a form that forms itself, newly invents itself, an "aesthetics of existence". Aesthetics as ethics, as the invention of new modes of subjectivation and of new forms of living (together), existence as aesthetic object, life as a beautiful work. This ethico-aesthetic aspect of forming life is by no means to be understood as an individualistic stylization of life: even though dandyism and existentialism certainly also belong to the genealogy of the aesthetics of existence, the term does not refer to an aesthetization of the artist's existence. Instead, Foucault's examples go in the direction of relationship, of exchange, and not in the direction of the pure and autonomous implementation of a self-relation. Forming life as living together takes place at the microphysical and the macrophysical level, in the forming of the individual body, in the forming of social relations. In his lecture, Foucault explicitly says about this: "By basing the analysis of Cynicism on this theme of individualism, however, we are in danger of missing what from my point of view is one [of its] fundamental dimensions, that is to say, the problem, which is at the core of Cynicism, of establishing a relationship between forms of existence and manifestation of the truth."[4] Philosophical activism is not about a model philosophical or artistic life beyond relations, at the edge of the world. Cynics live in the midst of the world, against the world, with the horizon of an other world; in Foucault's words, they have "laid down this otherness of an other life, not simply as the choice of a different, happy, and sovereign life, but as the practice of an activism on the horizon of which is an other world".[5]

This understanding of an other life enabling an other world applies all the more to the collective Cynicism, or rather: the molecular Cynicism of the new activisms today. In this kind of molecular Cynicism, it is not the individual philosopher, not the dandyesque artist, not the existentialist activist that is at the center, but rather the exchange relations of singularities testing disobedient, non-subservient, industrious forms of living.

If today's revolutions are not only taken as molar, as – in a narrow sense – political projects, but rather also as molecular revolutions, then the aesthetics of existence takes its place alongside the political project as a "continual and constantly renewed work of giving form [to life]"[6], to living together. A contemporary concept of molecular revolution requires the ethico-aesthetic level of transforming forms of living into a beautiful and good life, as well as the becoming of forms of living together across continents: micro-machines, which in their singular situativity form disobedient modes of existence and subjectivation, develop arts of existence and life techniques, as well as translocally dispersed, global abstract machines. The molecular revolution also comprises the "ethical revolution" that is called for at the end of the manifesto of the Spanish occupiers of M-15. The multitude that occupied the many main squares of Spain beginning on 15 May for several weeks is not particularly interested in gaining symbolic space and media attention. The occupiers take over the occupied squares, they appropriate them and make them their own, even though they know they are only there for a certain time. This time, however, is decisive, an extraordinarily important time of their lives, the time of assemblies and the social time of living together, of residing and sleeping in the occupied squares. Their new ethico-aesthetic paradigm seeks revolution in the forming of their own lives and of living together. The call for an ethical revolution is thus not at all a kind of first demand for different, better politicians, nor simply the obvious demand that corrupt politics should resign as a whole. Instead, it is a demand to themselves, a call for fundamental transformations, for the fabrication of non-subservient machinic modes of living, for disobedient industries, for non-conforming forms of living together.

2. Inventing new modes of organization.

When today's activisms turn against a one-sidedly molar procedure, this does not mean that they neglect aspects of organization and reterritorialization. Yet the streaking of time and space finds its own molecular procedures. Molecular modes of organization are not organic, but rather orgic-industrious, not centered around representation, but non-representationist, not hierarchically differentiating, but radically inclusive. Molecularity does not focus on taking over state power, but it takes effect in the pores of everyday life, in the molecules of forms of living. Molar organization arises as striating reterritorialization, it focuses struggles on a main issue, a main contradiction, a master. In a molecular world of dispersion and multiplicity, a different form of reterritorialization is needed, inclusive and transversal, beyond individual or collective privileges. Transversality means that the movements of reterritorialization and deterritorialization do not pursue particular goals, they do not establish and secure privileges. Instead they smooth and streak territories by crossing through them. The special rights of every single singularity are diametrically opposed to all individual or collective privileges. Yet these special rights only exist where every singularity can fully live its own specialness, try out its own form of concatenation, streak its own time. There is no privileged position for the intellectuals, for art or activism. Molecular struggles are struggles that emerge incidentally

and spread further through what is incidental to the incidentals. No master heads the molecular organization.

The Cynic philosopher is an anti-king. Philosophical activism is not practiced in the form of sects, communities, in the form of small numbers. Instead, there is no community at all in Cynicism; the Cynic form of philosophical activism is, according to Foucault, "in the open, as it were, that is to say, an activism addressed to absolutely everyone"[7]. This kind of openness evolves in the practice of the new molecular activisms. In the language of the activists it places radical inclusion at the center of assemblies, discussions and actions. An "activism addressed to absolutely everyone", and yet nevertheless not operating universalistically, but transversally, like the tent camp in the Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv, for example, following which the largest demonstration for social justice in the history of Israel took place in early September 2011. Radical inclusion means here, most of all, establishing an open milieu, in which the right to a place to live is not only demanded for everyone, but also acted out straight away in protest. The tent assemblages, the assemblies, the discussions are already living examples of the radical inclusion and transversality of the movement.

In the case of #occupy wallstreet, the tendency to radical inclusion is evident primarily in the invention and development of general assemblies. These are not so much "general assemblies" in the conventional sense, but rather transversal assemblages of singularities, which renew the grassroots-democratic experiences of the anti-globalization and social forums movement, further developing them into a form of polyvocality – for instance in the invention, almost by chance and out of necessity, of a new procedure of "amplification": because the police forbid them to use microphones, megaphones or other technical means, they began to repeat every single sentence from the speakers in chorus. The functionality of this repetition consists, first of all, in making the speech intelligible for hundreds of people in an open air setting. Yet the chorus as amplification here is neither a purely neutral medium of conveyance nor a euphoric affirmation of the speakers. It can happen that the chorus, whose voice is speaking the same thing, proves to be radically polyvocal and differentiated: one voice supports the speaker with hand signs, the next declares dissent with other hand signs, and the third has turned away from the speaker to better ensure the amplifying function for the others listening.

3. Industrious re-appropriation of time.

Just as the Cynic philosopher seeks scandal in the offensive transparency of his life, the new activisms speak clearly by taking the empty promise of "public space" at its word. This is the exercise, as widely visible as possible, of deviant modes of subjectivation, not or not only in the nakedness, placelessness and promiscuity of the Cynics, but most of all in playing with the paradox of the public: public space does not exist, and most of all not in the smooth spaces of urban centers, whether they are the touristic non-places of the Puerta del Sol or the Rothschild Boulevard, whether it is the privatized sphere of Zuccotti Park, or whether it is the heavy traffic of Tahrir

Square. And yet, or specifically because of this, the new activisms occupy the central squares, turn them into common-places, as a paradoxical provocation of normativity and normalization. And beyond this spatial re-territorialization, it is primarily the re-appropriation of time that marks the protestors' modes of action. In the midst of the nervous poly-rhythms of precarious life, in the midst of this mixture of drivenness and melancholy, they invent a surplus, in the midst of subservience they create a desire to not be taken into service in that way. In the midst of hurried timelessness, the precarious strikers insist on different time-relations, they streak the time in the patience of assemblies, in spreading out living, residing, sleeping in the squares, feeling their way to the first rudimentary possibilities of a new form of resistance, the molecular strike.

The occupiers take the space and time seriously that they set up, striate, streak, taking time for long, patient discussions and taking time to stay in this place, developing a new everyday life, even if only for a short time. In an otherwise boundless everyday life, the molecular strike spreads out these small new durations of everyday life. Its institution, however, first requires an evental break with subservient deterritorialization in machinic capitalism. The molecular strike is both: duration and break. It is not leaving, not dropping out of this world, no time-out. The molecular strike is the breach in the time regime of subservient deterritorialization that we drive in, in order to try out new ways of living, new forms of organization, new time relations. No longer a struggle merely to reduce working time, but rather for an entirely new streaking of time as a whole. In machinic capitalism, it is a matter of the whole, the totality of time, its entire appropriation. The molecular strike struggles for its reappropriation, its streaking, piece by piece. The new Wobblies will be no Industrial Workers of the World, but rather Industrious Workers of the world, a gigantic industry carrying everything along with it, not submitting to subservient deterritorialization, at the same time a reterritorialization, an industrious refrain, a dangerous class that will no longer let its time be stolen.

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Translated by Aileen Derieg.

[1] Foucault, Michel, *The Courage of Truth*, trans. Graham Burchell, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. [2] The original French term "militantisme" is translated in the English version of the course as "militancy". [3] Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, p. 187. [4] Ibid., p. 284. [5] Ibid., p. 287. [6] Ibid., p. 162. [7] Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, p. 284.


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Creative Ecologies, Speculative Empiricism, Critical Pragmatics

Hélène Frichot

A book written is inevitably undone by its future encounters. Soon after publishing *Creative Ecologies: Theorizing the Practice of Architecture,* I finally opened Didier Debaise's *Speculative Empiricism: Revisiting Whitehead*, originally published in French in 2006, only to discover a more adequate way of making an account of what might be understood by 'creative', or rather, 'creativity'. Not to mention what it might mean to place creative beside ecologies, in the plural. The creation of concepts, for instance, necessarily acknowledges the histories of emergence that give them meaning, Debaise insists (Debaise 2017: 33). Here the echo of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's discussion of concept creation can be heard, "every concept relates back to other concepts, not only in its history but in its becoming or its present connections" (1994: 19). Concepts are not isolated abstractions. What Debaise, after A. N. Whitehead, stresses, is that creativity does not come first, instead it is the encounter in all its radical contingency that calls on creativity to commence its work. Encounter first, creativity as a response to the situated encounter. What has just happened to me, to us?

Following the emergence of the creative industries, those milieux over-populated by 'creative types', 'creative' is a term increasingly at risk of devolving into the attribute of a marketing exercise. The marketing people, who no doubt rejoice in the cunning invention of the aesthetic figure of the creative type, are inevitably better funded, and wilier than most. They are confidence tricksters well-practiced in selling the appearance of rarefied experiences multiplied en masse. Creating, packaging and circulating concepts, seemingly tailor-made, just for you, they facilitate the mass customization of your only apparently rarefied experience. Try it on. See if it fits. This fitting extends beyond clothes as a secondary skin to the tertiary skin that is architecture, spatial interiors sartorially arranged. And perversely, while we by now know this story so well, we still fall for it nearly every time.

Amidst the shove and push of the marketing melée the entrepreneurial subject, an apprentice of sorts, likewise eagerly scrambles to catch up, developing a trade in concepts, hoping to float a big idea. Or two. In these tired end days of extremely advanced, financialised Capitalism even to speak of something so quaint as a public intellectual as an exemplary figure of creative resistance seems hopelessly naive. It would appear that it is no longer possible to reclaim such a stand point. Though, it would be worth asking, was this ever a figure we should have wanted to aspire toward anyway? Who, after all, did the public intellectual represent? Who can claim to speak for whom? Who can claim to best represent the construction of concepts? Was the public intellectual ever enough of an on-the-ground activist? There is nothing novel about these queries. Bruno Latour, for instance, raised a flag in the aftermath of the Science Wars some time ago now, asking not whether, but why critique has run out of steam (2005). This is another way of asking why concepts no longer trouble the status quo, but only serve to further fortify it through skillful brand management.

Returning to the travails of concepts, McKenzie Wark puts it simply: "Concepts are compressed, easily transmissible, packets of information." (2017a) This description should immediately alert the thinker to the ease with which a concept as a convenient package can be transported, whether its content is contraband or accepted. Wark suggests that: "If a good fact is mostly true about something in particular, a good concept is slightly true about a lot of things." (2017b) Concepts here are assumed to be packets of information that can be extracted, that is to say, abstracted from a situation in order to be used elsewhere. This is convenient because, as Wark further suggests: "Nobody has all the concepts they need to have. We all work with particular slices of information in particular ways and tend to map the world more or less the same as the bit we know." (2017b) We all compose our concepts in such a way as to construct a kind of patch-work conceptual landscape, and we rely on other concepts, which we borrow, steal and adapt. Yet, in that concepts can be packaged and transported with relative ease, they are in imminent danger of being abused. Furthermore, if we are always in the habit of capturing concepts that we seem to always already recognise, mapping the world according to familiar landmarks of thought, then can this still be said to be the work of creativity? How often do we manage to actualise a novel concept following the event of an encounter? Do we, for the most part, merely repeat ourselves? That old refrain.

Much as concepts have taken on somewhat different shapes and sizes and functions, the very possibly defunct figure of the public intellectual is not what it used to be. Wark discusses the demise of the public intellectual, but suggests that it is no use lamenting their passing. Weary of talk of the dissipation of the public thinker, Wark suggests it is time to change the language anyway. To do this he appropriates a concept from Karl Marx's *Grundrisse*, what he calls the 'general intellect.' Returning to his earlier book with its punchy polemic, *A Hacker Manifesto*, Wark explains that today those working in the domain of cognitive labour, anyone from academics to web designers, belong to what he calls the hacker class: "We are the hackers of abstraction. We produce new concepts, new perceptions, new sensations, hacked out of raw data." (2004: 1) Within this class something emerges that can be called "general intellects", understood not as a case of the singular, sovereign intellectual, but as a collective phenomenon. A gathering together for the meantime in response to some urgent encounter. That is not to say that the thinker-practitioner should not also take the opportunity to retreat and think a while on their own, but their obligation is to return again into the mess of relations. There must always be something at stake. Concepts are not mere intellectual exercises.

Wark constructs his own cross-section through the intellectual labour being undertaken today, and offers a map of proximities across twenty-five thinkers, including feminist philosophers of science Isabelle Stengers and Donna Haraway. He apologises in advance for the fast and ready cognitive labour he has been obliged to undertake, explaining that he has had to strip the thinkers back to the bone. Who, he asks, has the luxury these days of writing a dense book that needs 100,000 dollars worth of higher education to unpack it. Instead he undertakes what he calls "low

theory" and what I would call "dirty theory" (Frichot 2019). Much like one possible approach to the construction of a concept-tool, he explains: "I stripped out the good bits so you can grab hold of them, and use them to make your own writing, your own art, your own design." (2017a) This is the constructive procedure of how to make a thinkable sufficiently durable and thereby generously available to others.

There are those who have stolen the work of the concept and put it to nefarious use, the so-called 'ideas men' who sell their concepts on the market place (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 10). The challenge for the intellectual, so activated by a problem in direct relation to a milieu, a problem that demands a concept and a concept that operates as a tool, is the constant risk of the recuperation of concepts. If concepts are tools, handed from one crafts-thinker to the next, then the infrastructure holding these tools in assembled play is what can be called theory. Much maligned theory. Much exhausted theory. Theory critically and creatively practiced, which we so desperately need.

This means that the one who constructs concepts (perhaps we need to invent another name than intellectual here, perhaps something like apprentice, diplomat, modest witness, even idiot, would be better) must struggle amidst relations of power that are always about to transform her into its "object and instrument" in the domains of knowledge and discourse (Foucault and Deleuze 1977: 208). Architects come perilously close to operating in such a manner because of the ways in which they are obliged to package their ideas and communicate them with enticing graphics in order to arouse the affects of whatever audience is prepared to receive their message. And increasingly, audiences are exactly that: prepared. Prepared by an image saturated milieu of received ideas.

Though this should not mean giving up on affects, understood (if we read Spinoza) as an increase in capacity, an increase in the power of joyful modes of existence, enabled following those encounters that produce more durable compositions. Neither does it mean giving up on the promise embedded in 'creative'. We forget too quickly that the one who constructs concepts is inevitably many. The open-ended construction of concepts composes an open-ended assemblage, an always-in-process collaboration, as Anna Tsing would put it (Tsing 2015: ix). "We are contaminated by our encounters" she asserts (Tsing 2015: 27). While this can be dangerous, depending on the symptoms that emerge following such contamination, it's not a bad thing per se. It is through ardent story-telling that we can begin to get intimate with the necessarily complex relations of the one and the many, get contaminated. This is what Donna Haraway means to mobilise with her acronym SF (Speculative Fiction, Speculative Feminisms, Science Fiction, String Figures, etc.) (Haraway 2017: M28). Speculative as a moniker emerges yet again in the ethics of care Maria Puig de la Bella Casa offers in her book *Matters of Care*. Here speculative, understood as a speculative commitment to how things might be different when managed with care, is tied in with practices of assembling socio-material configurations, 'thing-gatherings' (2017: 58-59. See also Latour 2004: 246). Following Haraway, Puig de la Bella Casa's material-semiotic becomings contravene any sharp distinction between humans and non-humans, instead acknowledging their messy entanglements. To relate, not to

divide things, she insists. To contaminate, Tsing suggests. This is also about expressing a critical sensibility. Stengers and Debaise introduce the "speculative gesture", which they associate with "idiotic" gestures "in the sense of the Deleuzian idiot who slows down when others speed up", they explain (2017; 2015) Here the critical gesture, the speculative gesture is deployed in order to hesitate, to survey the scene to get a feel for what might happen next, specifically, what might happen to our modes of thought to render different environmental relations possible. We are suffering, they exclaim, a crisis of thinking that is bound up with our global environmental crises (2015). We must urgently place thinking under the sign of the possible.

A powerful sisterhood of sorts emerges among these voices, with relational strings knotting pedagogical and collaborative ties between Haraway, Tsing, Puig de la Bella Casa, also Vinciane Despret and Stengers, and Debaise, with whom I opened.

All this gets me back to Didier Debaise, a frequent co-thinker with Isabelle Stengers. Revisiting Whitehead, a philosopher whose name is now circulated more readily in part on account of the reception of Gilles Deleuze's philosophical work, Debaise speaks of how pragmatism is a method for inventing ideas. Conjoined with pragmatism he offers speculative thought as a productive epistemological practice that follows the requirements of creativity (2017a: 48). In a later work, *Nature as Event*, he argues: "What is needed is a philosophy that, in its very form, its ambition and its manners of relating to things, can grant due importance to the deeply plural experience of nature." (2017b: 77) He calls this philosophy 'speculative' and this speculative philosophy is pursuant to the intensification of experience. Knowledge can be imagined as a creative practice. At the same time, and crucially, speculative thought is profoundly political (Debaise 2018: 22). It addresses how far the bifurcation of nature has populated think-landscapes with false problems, for modes of thought can also operate as "incredible instruments of domestication of heterogeneous and minoritarian knowledges" (22).

Debaise places pragmatism and speculative thought together, where to be speculative is not usually associated with being pragmatic. In architecture this is akin, I argue, to placing critical and projective together, denying those who would have us locate our intellectual labours in a post-critical register (see Doucet and Frichot 2018). Though in architecture, when we introduce the word speculative, we are likely to imagine real estate speculation, and how architectural modes of representation are too easily used as the means of communicating new spatial futures, easing anticipated financial transactions. Speculative, to speculate, otherwise suggests a forward-looking orientation for which you are yet to gather any firm evidence, visionary even. An imaginative leap, a speculative gesture. It will be necessary to wrench the term away, again and again, from those who would put it to work, for instance, in the sale of spatial products.

What Debaise calls the speculative method is composed of five concepts. Under its rational constraints there are the requirements of necessity, logic, and coherence. Then, in response to the diversity and differentiation of existence creativity must achieve applicability and adequation (Debaise 2017a: 11-12). The five concepts set out a procedure of sorts, but not a recipe. He warns that these steps should not be

installed as general principles, but understood as constraints, presumably productive constraints. Creativity here is given as the utmost principle, specifically creativity as a process, not creation per se. Creativity, following Debaise's revisitation of Whitehead – influenced as it is by Stengers's reading of Whitehead and what she describes as a "free and wild creation of concepts" (Stengers, 2011b) – stipulates that: 1. Matter is non-passive (Debaise 2017a: 23), which is another way of saying non-hylomorphic, or not given as secondary in relation to form, or *eidos*. 2. Creativity is likened to novelty, but does not emerge out of nothing. Here Deleuze and Guattari can be heard, in their assertion that concepts are created, but never *ex nihilo*. 3. At the same time, creativity, novelty, is not derivative, not derived from other beings, but *sui generis*. A basic activity. 4. Creativity, importantly, takes place; it depends on the actualization of actual entities, actual occasions. Debaise explains that "creativity does not exist, or at least, it does not exist outside of the operation of actualization" (30).

Again, it must be stressed, creativity exists only through its actualizations. Whitehead introduces a few wonderful concepts for this: Concresence, Prehension, Actual Entities, and Actual Occasions. Let us use Debaise to help us here, for his clarity achieves great pedagogical effect. Concresence: The *irreducible* link between individual and process of actualization, between actual entity and actualization (Emphasis in original. Debaise 2017a: 47). The joining of several parts wherein the individual, the parts, are never as such – alone, isolated, autonomous – but a seething conjunctive individual-environment, "a mixture, a hybrid of pre-individual nature and individuality"; the individual unfurls, extending itself beyond itself (46). Though this still risks making it sound like there was an original individual, where there never was one. This production draws together diversity, differences, and the passage from the many differences toward the one actual occasion operates through prehension. Debaise cites Whitehead from *Process and Reality* to stress the relation between the many (diversity) and the one (momentarily achieved individuation) as the "production of novel togetherness" (Debaise, 2017A: 48; Whitehead 1978: 21). Prehension is the term that speaks to this production of togetherness: To take, to capture, to appropriate. And in this ongoing process of capture (and release?), no individual is left as it was before, but apt instead to transform. With each encounter, a transformation stirs amidst the conjunctive situation of individual-environment. Prehension then, Debaise continues, allows the specialist definition of actual entity to be clarified (2017a: 52). Patricia Clough, in her review of *Nature as Event*, presents the argument like this: "Debaise restates Whitehead's treatment of prehension, or each present activity of feeling that grasps the past as the totality of the universe and which is gathered in concrescence to produce an actual entity eventuating in events or societies (to use Whitehead's terms)." (Clough 2019) Yes, and another term for actual occasions is societies.

In a round-about way what begins to emerge as a speculative pragmatics leads to the question of practices undertaken from the midst of environment-worlds. For Vinciane Despret whose work includes animal human relation, as well as studies on the relations between the dead and the living, "the 'pragmatic stance,' involves learning to follow practices, this time not to judge or condemn them, but to learn from them."

(2018: 65) This is an adventure, to create and to imagine, and to not take anything straightforwardly as a matter of fact.

Latour argues that matters of fact are a poor proxy of experience and experimentation: "What set Whitehead completely apart and straight on our path is that he considered matters of fact to be a very poor rendering of what is given in experience and something that muddles entirely the question, What is there? with the question, How do we know it? as Isabelle Stengers has shown recently in a major book about Whitehead's philosophy." (Latour 2004: 244) He further insists that "the critic is not the one who debunks, but the one who assembles." (244) The critic does not debunk, or pull the rug out from under the naive, but instead understands that if something is fragile, it is in need of care and attention. Rather than blowing something apart, the critic constructs, and this is also a creative caring activity.

This is a message that Puig de la Bella Casa likewise forwards in *Matters of Care*, where she discusses the gatherings of neglected things (2011; 2017). If we make the shift from matters of fact to matters of concern then we can be encouraged to better understand the vulnerability of things and their relations, specifically when we set out to study them (2011: 88). Better still, we could strengthen the feeling of matters of concern, and frame our matters instead as matters of care. Bella Casa argues that care expresses an even stronger affective and ethical connotation than concern (89). By way of explanation she suggests that we can think of the difference between saying "I am concerned" and saying "I care." The latter expresses a greater involvement, attachment and commitment to a situation. The aim here is toward mutual respect and the co-construction of better worlds.

As for the 'ecologies' of creative ecologies, much like 'creative' it has become quite a marketing buzz-word in need of reclaiming. As a concept it is first signed by the German zoologist Ernst Haeckel to designate the relationship between organism and environment, an argument notably supported by his marvelous and truly strange illustrations, which, I would add, are used on the cover of Debaise's book *Nature as Event* (2017b). This leads us to questions concerning the places as well as the modes or habits of existence of living things. We might lament that ecologies, conceptually and materially both, are near exhausted. A short list of titles demonstrates the marketing value of the term: *Urban Ecologies* (Kate Orff 2016), *Ecological Urbanism* (Mostafavi and Doherty, 2010) *Urban Political Ecologies in the Anthropo-obscene* (Ernstson and Swyngedouw 2018), *Design Ecology Politics* (Boehnert, 2018), *Design Ecologies* (Tilder and Blostein 2009), *Relational Architectural Ecologies* (Rawes 2013). It should come as no surprise that this concept begins to proliferate at a moment of extreme affective anxiety over our precarious worlds. Somehow, we must move on and through this exhaustion, and exhaustion is a theme I feature in my own contribution, *Creative Ecologies* (2018), fully aware that the title of my own work was in part a result of decisions made in a publisher's marketing department. Moving through and with exhaustion, Peter Pàl Pelbart affirms: "Exhaustion may be the term that acutely defines, albeit enigmatically, the hesitant and unnecessary passage from catastrophe to creation" (Pelbart 2015: 122).

To engage in 'creative ecologies' is to participate in making environments liveable, rather than pursuing short-term profits. Creative ecologies support a culture of life and liveability, T. J. Demos insists, a project he calls the "decolonisation of nature" (2017: 20). My own formulation of the conjunctive capacity of creative ecologies concerns practices, how we go about supporting socio-cultural relations toward more resilient compositions amidst our shared environment-worlds. The disjunctive synthesis embedded in the concept 'environment-worlds', which organises the first third of my book *Creative Ecologies*, draws attention to how, amidst environments, worlds of sense are carved out by specific subjectivities and social collectives – the one and the many – based on their capacity for world-making projects and for making life liveable. While such projects might admit a troubling anthropocentric tendency toward the exhaustion of worlds, to say nothing of the extinction of worlds, the diminution of landscapes of perception, and the delimitation of a capacity to produce ameliorative effects, yet, amidst the symptoms of (architectural) exhaustion, possibilities all the while emerge, possibilities we must urgently reclaim: "One lets oneself be led to create, with those whom one addresses. Because that is what these practitioners do: create thought, create stories, intensify what matters." (Despret 2018: 77) Despret adds that to let oneself be instructed, is one way of being obliged to a practical situation (77).

Requirements and obligations support Stengers's argument for an ecology of practices as outlined in her cosmopolitical project (2010; 2011). The knowledge constructions we compose, what Stengers calls 'factishes', in science as elsewhere, bind us to certain obligations that are associated with our activities as practitioners undertaking our work in the context of communities of practice. We are obliged to our knowledge community in case of our agreements and disagreements, and in terms of the work of interpretation we do together, the sites of controversy we debate, and the values we share. (Stengers 2010: 49) To obligations Stengers adds requirements, and both are understood as constitutive constraints relative to practice, but at the same time, constraints are not imposed from without but emerge from within the specific locale of the experimental event taking place. Where obligations concern colleagues and the controversies that circulate around newly proposed facts, requirements "are entirely directed at phenomena" (51) or the milieu in which the practice is embedded and from which productive problems emerge. Stengers explains: "In constructivist terms, we could say that the production of obligations pertains to the register of creation, which must be acknowledged in its irreducible dimension, while the assertion of requirements presents the problem of the possible stability of that creation, of its scope, and of the meaning it proposes to embody for others." (53-54) Something happens, "it works!" and knowledge is witnessed to manifest amidst such events, in relation to requirements and obligations. We can recall here Debaise, where he outlines five constraints pertaining to creativity.

What we are left with is a scene of creativity engaging with matters of care in which we emotionally invest, constrained necessarily by the requirements of our milieu and the obligations we have to human and non-human others. Creative ecologies affirm what is possible from the midst of our daily practices, that we must believe in this world, that from amidst concatenating crises, we must believe we can still express a speculative gesture that works with and through our collective exhaustion. We must continue to ask, what has just happened to me, to us? And, what is to be done?

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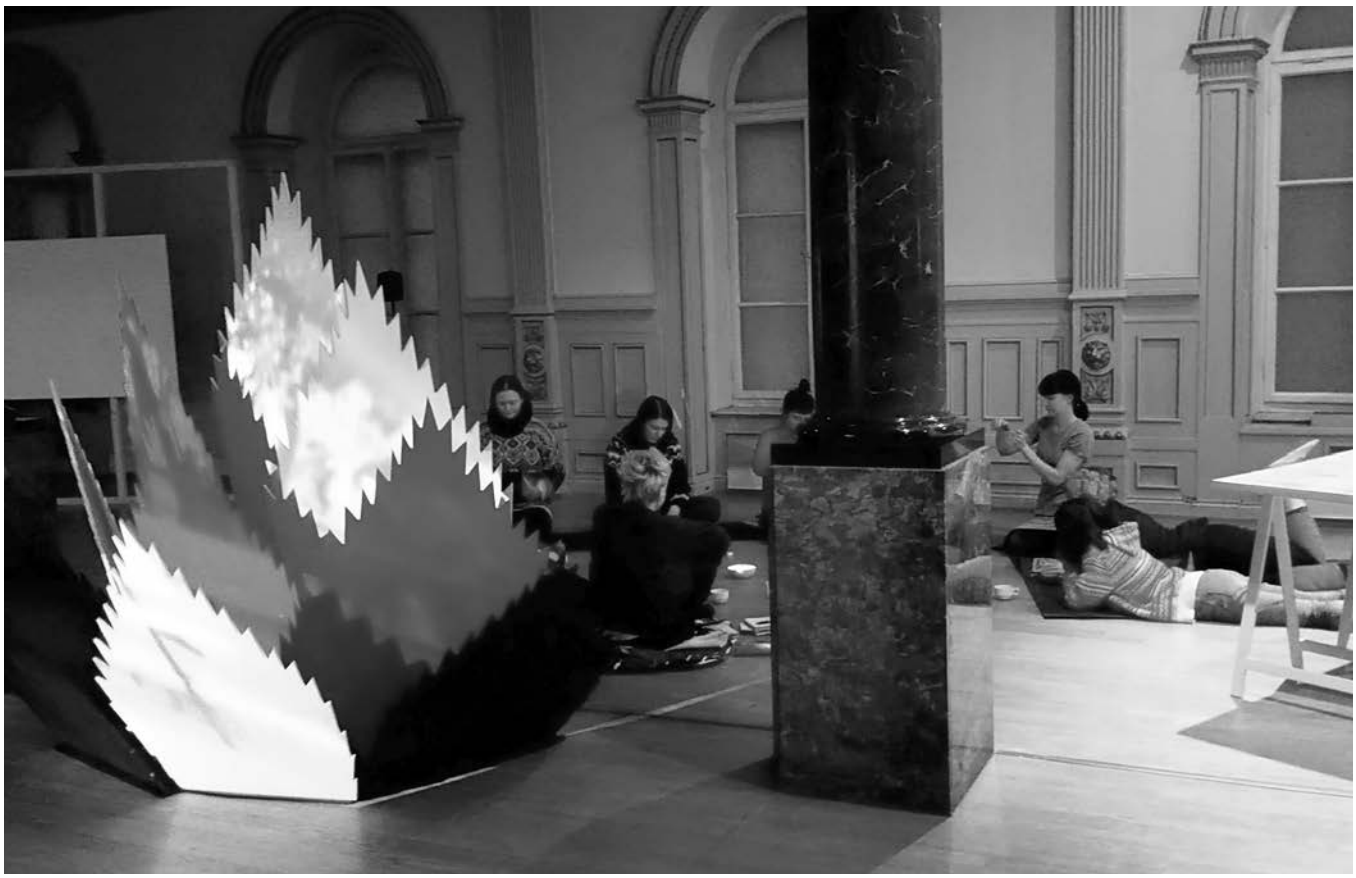
Anarchist Ashram

Education as an ecosystem for art.
Art as an environment for education.

As part of the exhibition, Joulia Strauss leads a one-week workshop dedicated to collectivity and the lessons of forbidden knowledges. The Anarchist Ashram focuses on the presentation and practice of forbidden, discredited and peripheral forms of knowledge. With the current decentering of the West, art is opening up to the deep database of alternative techniques of Enlightenment which are crucial for our socio-political struggles today. The Ashram acts as an Imaginary Republic, where the Imaginary becomes the Real through which to marginalize the perverted, pre-quantic "reality" of biocapitalism. Through such work, we explore ways of manifesting a new social body, undoing and unlearning certain patterns inscribed onto our imaginations. Side effects: we may never be able to return to our depressive ego-based individualistic art studios.

daily gatherings
qi gong lessons
collective drawings
animal spirit portraits
readings
assemblies
secret screenings
teleaffective meetings with athens
new rituals
sound art
ancient greek hymns, mantras, peruvian shamanic healing songs
banned knowledge
queer porn
alternative currencies

This documentation cannot document tenderness and the warmth of relations created during the Anarchist Ashram, nor can it entertain with porn or shock. It is simply a proof that an art institution can actually make sense and fulfill the ethical, social, and, if you insist, aesthetic needs of our society by transforming into a de-elitist cultural center where an exhibition becomes an environment for a community enjoying an educational format as an art form.



MoLotus sculpture by Joulia Strauss (2017) and Clara Mosconi (2018).

Herbalist surprize by Vilde Jensen.

We open the Anarchist Ashram.

Education as an ecosystem for art.
Art as an environment for education free to the public
and to celebrate the art institution of the 21st century,
an open process enabling a community,
accommodating the oneness of the world.

We will give short public introductions of processes
and activist practices we have been part of prior
to the unfolding of the Anarchist Ashram into
the Imaginary Republic.

These introductions will be held
not only in human language,
but also as soundscapes and will shapeshift
into an inaugurational ritual, opening the floor
to participants who are willing
to contribute performances and actions.

Opening Event, including:
Vilde Jensen, Herbalist Surprise
Emma Fuchs Sjövall, Testing Smooth Communication
Clara Mosconi, Sacredia / Island listening group
Tanja Silvestrini, Sonic Interruptions
Brandon LaBelle, Soundscapes
Joulia Strauss, Songs of the Transindigenous

Anarchist Ashram opening assembly holds space where the polarizations “the institution”, “the participants” and “the public” are de-emphasized.

Lisa Englesson Hallberg’s eye is being explored by one of the very few Tibetan Pulsing practitioners.

Viktorija Prunskute, learning the epistemology based on relating all elements of the human organism to designated areas of the eye.

Collective artistic practices beyond existing hierarchies are spreading around the world. This peaceful revolution has many beginnings, it consists of numerous autonomous actions to transform our relations. Endless fun of creativity immediately unfolds once the individualist "I" turns into the kind "WE". This "WE" cannot be split by the zombiopolitics* of the paleoliberal** democracy. Once we reconnect to ourselves*** and horizontally root****, the dream of the enlightened society***** doesn't seem utopian at all … does somebody want to continue, to delete, to edit, to subvert, to start something completely different?
(Joulia Strauss)

* Term by Luca Di Blasi
** Term by Luca Di Blasi
*** In the sense of decolonizing forms of knowlegde marginalized by the occidental "civilization"
**** With and without Bruno Latour
***** As in the Shambala teachings by Chögyam Trungpa

Thoughts on collective eating...

The collective body that eats together find a place to meet, savouring more than a flavour of what is to come, you and I ruminate around a conversation that bites down into sweet sustenance. Nourishing is not just about my body or your body: a wealth of nutrients in each mouthful of orality. Filling up on flavours, savouring opinions, chewing on the bread and butter we cut and spread together; made for generating more than just one life.
(Gentian Meikleham)

Dérive in the public space of Bergen, initiated by Sarah Frederikka Grunner-Svensson. From left to right: Katrine Østergaard, Vilde Jensen, Sarah Frederikka Grunner-Svensson, ray of the sun, Lisa Englesson Hallberg, Margrethe Emilie Kühle.

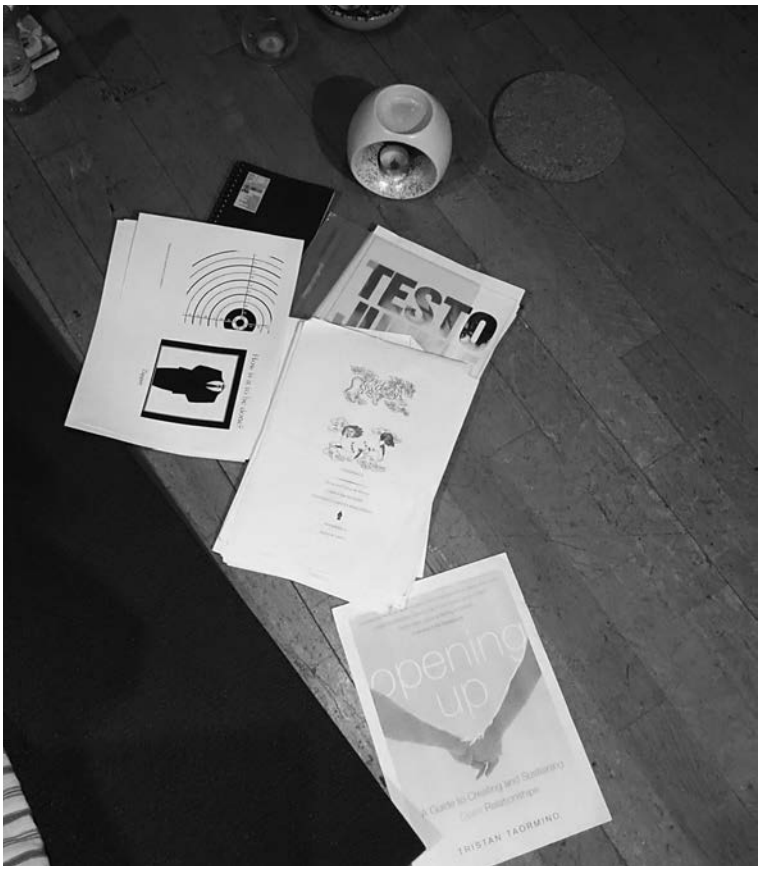
Readings:

1. Chögyam Trungpa, The Sacred Path of the Warrior
2. TIQQUN, How To
3. Tristan Taormino, A Guide to Creating and Sustaining Open Relationships
4. Bruno Latour Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime
5. Daniel Odier, Tantric Kali / Secret Practices and Rituals
6. Paul B. Preciado, Testo Junkie

Thoughts on silent conversations…

Just as sharing a meal together becomes a collective action or mode of enjoying ourselves focused on what's in front of us, we in a way remove the pressure from the conversation and discussion and the idealistic ideas about collectivism. In order for us to be as present and caring in meetings with others, we need to care for ourselves first. Eating well, taking care of our bodies and minds. These are all things we can do by ourselves – fit into our daily, busy schedules, but they are even more so actions we can enjoy collectively, enabling for the group to grow strong with every bite, every posture and sound that we register.

This collective work needs no words. We can let all these actions become a fully embodied pursuit, a position of attending to the world and the people around us. A point where our awareness is tuned both inward and outward. We'll meet each other here, when we're ready and until then we'll share a dinner and practice Qi Gong barefooted in the park.
(Clara Mosconi)



Deepistemicidal remix of knowledge.

Boredom, staying
Faces
Bodies
We're in this together
Waiting
Can something come out of nothing
But despair
Comfort
Surface
Drop off
What's more important
Restless souls wanting to escape
Or to deal with it
Let's be in this together
Trying to get to figure it out
It's not about what we say
but to allow ourselves to be
Ourselves
Together
(Emma Fuchs Sjövall)

The boys club (The Bank of Norway), pre-transformational inhabitants of the building of Kunsthall 3,14.

Modern Astrology with Maja Chiara Faber.

Closing Event, including:
Emma Fuchs Sjövall, Closing Ceremony
Brandon LaBelle, Free Sound
Lisa Englesson Hallberg, Text
Hanna Nakken, Poetry
Vilde Jensen, Preparing for Winter
Maja Chiara Faber, Modern Astrology
Joulia Strauss, Sound Healing

Hanna Nakken, poetry reading.

Think about the bodies in this circle as planets. Place your left hand somewhere on the planet on your left side. I will share some moments on this planet. Every time another situation is described you move the hand to another place on the planet. I trust that we treat each other with respect and care.
(Emma Fuchs Sjövall)

This is where a young girl stood up and said I'm not gonna take it anymore
This is where a woman kissed her girlfriend because she wanted to
This is where they choked people who defended their rights with teargas, attacked people standing by the side, killing them with baton, shields and gas
This is where a bread slowly merged into the ground after falling from a thief's pocket
This is where a plastic bag full of lemons fell down from the sky
This is where thousands of people held each other's hands, crossed the border and were welcomed on the other side
This is where a young boy lifts sand in his hands, singing for the worn out earth
This is where a man stood yelling like a wild animal to a woman who fearlessly looked into his eyes
This is where a group of 34 people ran around like dogs because they had enough of the humankind
This is where a sick woman had a sip of coffee, did her daily soduko and then lay down to rest
This is where thousands of people met in silence, to celebrate the survival of a plant in an area doomed by a bomb
Here is where a radio is still playing while the workers due to a flood left the factory a long time ago
Here is where a group of people sit on the floor of a former fucking bank, practicing the Anarchist Ashram

Somatic Pedagogies: critiquing and resisting the affective discourse of the neoliberal state from an embodied anarchist perspective

Rhiannon Firth

This paper takes as its context widespread feelings of anxiety within neoliberal society caused by a combination of material and discursive factors including precarious access to work and resources. It is argued that the state uses 'discourses of affect' to produce compliant subjects able to deal with (and unable to desire beyond) neoliberal precarity and anxiety. Critical education theorists have argued that discourses of 'well-being', emotional support and self-help have gained increasing purchase in mainstream education and in popular culture. These discourses are dangerous because they are individualized and depoliticized, and undermine collective political struggle. At the same time there has been a 'turn to affect' in critical academia, producing critical pedagogies that resist state affective discourse. I argue that these practices are essential for problematizing neoliberal discourse, yet existing literature tends to elide the role of the body in effective resistance, emphasising intellectual aspects of critique. The paper sketches an alternative, drawing on psychoanalytic and practiced pedagogies that aim to transgress the mind-body dualism and hierarchy, in particular Roberto Freire's work on Somatherapy.

Introduction

This paper emerges from the 'turn to affect' in the humanities and social sciences. Explicit use of the terminology of 'affect' generally comes from critical paradigms, yet I argue that this response is situated within a wider context of neoliberal state discourse that harnesses affect to produce compliant subjects. In particular, the paper targets the public discourses and educational policies of what Kathryn Ecclestone and Dennis Hayes (2008) call 'therapeutic education', and the limitations of existing critical debate on this topic. In summary, I argue that the current epoch of neoliberal globalization has led to more precarious forms of life and work, and an increase in indebtedness. This emergent social structure causes widespread anxiety throughout society, which is harnessed by the state using discourse and policy ostensibly designed to reduce fear, by promoting 'well-being', resilience, therapeutic practices and 'security'. Critical responses quite rightly argue that such policies actually (re-)produce anxiety by placing responsibility for both the causes and the consequences of good/bad well-being on the individual, creating narcissistic, vulnerable and compliant subjects. This creates a de-politicized culture and undermines capacity for collective social action. The response from radical approaches has been to posit critical pedagogies that problematize and critically explore affective states, raising the political consciousness of students or learners. I argue that while these approaches are important – indeed essential – strategies of resistance, they also maintain certain assumptions: the

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conflation of affect with subjective emotions, a separation between mind and body, and that education is essentially discursive. In order to think beyond these assumptions, I draw on examples of utopian practices that involve learning through movement, play and physical activity. The examples I have chosen incorporate elements of 'somatic' theory that takes an holistic approach to the relationships between body, mind and (human and non-human) others. My hope is to approach the conditions for a non-hierarchical and non-vanguardist pedagogy able to resist state structurations of affect – the social reproduction of oppressive emotional regimes – without reproducing some of its key assumptions.

Neoliberal Anxiety

Theorizing affect has been an important concern of recent research in the social sciences and humanities, to the extent that many have referred to a 'turn to affect' (e.g. Clough and Halley 2007; Lather 2009; Hemmings 2005). These engagements draw on a broadly post-structural tradition. Spinoza (1994: 157-9), and later Nietzsche (1968: 354) then Deleuze (1986: 36-7), are careful to distinguish affect from conventional understandings of subjective emotion insofar as they give affective states a material foundation in the body: thoughts and feelings are ultimately inseparable from physical states, which incorporate relations with human and non-human bodies. Nonetheless, I will argue later, many recent take-ups of the concept sidestep the issue of the body entirely, or render it in highly abstract terms. At this point I would like to provide some context as to why affect has recently re-emerged as a key conceptual category, and briefly explore the nature and dynamics of affect in contemporary society.

In an important and timely article, the Institute for Precarious Consciousness argues that we are entering a new era of affective sensibility. The early industrial period, as famously portrayed by Marx (1867: Chapter 25) was characterized by misery. The Fordist period was characterized by boredom in secure but monotonous jobs and an anxiety relieving but bureaucratic welfare infrastructure (Institute for Precarious Consciousness 2014: 247). The contemporary neoliberal period, by contrast, is characterised by anxiety as the dominant affect, and this is closely associated with precarity (Ibid: 275).

The idea of precarity arose from Italian autonomism before spreading more widely through critical discourse (Federici, 2006), frequently defined in contrast to Fordism, as 'the labour conditions that arose after the transition from life-long, stable jobs common in industrial capitalist and welfare-state economies, to temporary, insecure, low-paying jobs emerging with the globalization of the service and financial economy' (Casas-Cortes and Cobarrubias 2007: 115). Precarity leads to anxiety in a variety of ways. Temporary and zero-hour contracts cause feelings of uncertainty about access to resources needed for a stable life and personal development (Precarias, 2004). Endless cycles of debt trap people in perpetual toil and deferred pleasure (Escalate Collective, 2012). Casualised contracts, unpaid internships, intermittent work and labour migration impact on sociality as maintaining close friendships and starting a family become increasingly difficult (Tarì and Vanni, 2005). People are expect-

ed to be always on-call and communicable by employers, family, friends and lovers through mobile phones and the internet without real social contact, whilst working from home dissolves the boundaries between work, family and leisure (Taylor 2012; O'Carroll 2008). Time is cut into commodified packets that can no longer be enjoyed at the slow pace required by creative and pleasurable emotions (Berardi 2009: 91). Precarity produces feelings of guilt and inadequacy as workers compare their achievements unfavourably to the full-time permanent positions that comprised the 'post-war imaginary' (Tari and Vanni 2005). Anxiety is associated with physical affects: Berardi argues that the speed of information flows combined with the fragmentation of life leads to a constant bodily excitation without release (Berardi 2009: 91). The assumption of this paper is that anxiety is a real affective force that acts on individual and collective bodies and is created by global material and economic conditions. I do not wish to suggest that anxiety is a discursive construct, but rather that states can alter structures of affect through policy and discourse, and they do so to suit the needs of neoliberal capital. I argue that any viable resistance to state structurations of affect needs to critically reveal existing structures of affect, and resist these through a reconceived understanding and the creation of new affects at an embodied level.

How states harness affect

Affect, as theorized by Spinoza, Deleuze, Nietzsche and others, is an holistic concept that draws together bodies and their environment and relations with other bodies through 'forces of encounter' (Seigworth and Gregg 2010: 3). Affect is concerned with a body's *becoming*, and how it transforms in interaction with the world. This requires a de-individualized understanding of what constitutes a body: 'with affect, a body is as much outside itself as in itself – webbed in its relations – until ultimately such firm distinctions cease to matter' (Ibid: 3). Nonetheless, this paper contends, states are able to exploit affect in order to fragment and individualize affect, alienating people from their relationships and environments, to suit a neoliberal agenda. They do this through 'discourses of affect' that harness bio-power to produce compliant subjects able to deal with (or, unable to look beyond) neoliberal precarity and anxiety.

The example I draw on to illustrate this phenomenon is what Ecclestone and Hayes (2008) call 'therapeutic education'. In the education system there has been a 'deluge of interventions [to] assess the emotional needs and perceived emotional vulnerability of children, young people and adults and ... develop their emotional literacy and well-being' (Eccleston and Hayes 2008: ix). Examples derive from all levels including primary, secondary, colleges and universities and the workplace. Furthermore, these interventions are not limited to formal institutions but are part of what Furedi (2004) calls 'therapy culture'. This ethos is seen to have emerged in Anglo-American culture and politics over the last 40 years (Ecclestone and Hayes 2008: x). Examples include discourses of 'vulnerable' and 'at risk' learners, interventions intended to foster higher 'self-esteem', 'confidence', 'emotional literacy' and 'positive attitudes' in schools and other institutions (Ibid: xi); provision of services for young people with perceived

behavioral and emotional problems; therapeutic support for emotional difficulties and stress; and academic subjects designed to develop resilience and flexibility (Ibid: 374).

Taking the UK as an example, one might be inclined to question whether discourses and debates surrounding well-being, therapy and resilience are historically situated within the previous New Labour government's agenda, and that the current coalition government conversely appears to be placing more emphasis on discipline and securitization and even militarization, which have become key in the government's attempts to create compliant subjects (Chadderton 2013). Nonetheless, recent speeches and policies by Education Secretary Michael Gove and government initiatives continue to place emphasis on 'emotional intelligence' and 'resilience' (see Walker 2013; Williams 2010). Discourses of well-being are explicitly linked to the need to create compliant subjects in the UK research agenda. The Economic and Social Research Council Delivery Plan 2011-2015 places emphasis on 'Influencing behaviour and informing interventions' as one of three strategic priorities for the time period. This is explicitly linked to a discourse of well-being: 'How can interventions to improve health and wellbeing draw upon advances in social science?' and potentially coercive elements are made explicit: 'What is the appropriate role of public policy in terms of coercion through legislation, persuasion via incentives or social marketing, or coherent combinations of approaches?' (ESRC 2011: 6). Well-being is linked in the document to willingness/ability to work, meeting corporate interests, and the desire to reduce welfare expenditure (Ibid: 7). Furthermore, emergent discourses of discipline and securitization also mobilize affect in the form of *fear*. They rest on similar assumptions of vulnerable subjects in need of state protection, and the desire to restrain and control bodies (DeLeon, in press). Aside from governmental standpoint and policy, a culture has become deeply embedded whereby happiness and wellness are assumed to be moral imperatives, rather than matters of choice or privilege (Cederström and Spicer 2015).

Critique of State discourse of affect

Such discourse and interventions are problematic for many reasons. They individualize responsibility for economic problems and re-cast social problems as emotional ones (Furedi 2004: 24). This enables policy makers to evade discussion of material causes and effects (Eccleston and Hayes 2008: 12). The discourse promotes a particular kind of subject: one that is introspective and narcissistic (Ecclestone and Hayes 2008: 136). It erodes social ties as personal relationships are increasingly feared as potentially dysfunctional, abusive and dependent (Ibid: 136; Furedi 2004: 61), whilst discourses of 'parenting skills' and 'social skills' presume homogenous desires and expert knowledge that colonise personal relationships (Ibid: 98). This fragments the informal networks that people might previously draw on for support, which in turn undermines the potential for collective political struggle (Ecclestone and Hayes 2008: 141). It also leads to increased dependence on professionals who are implicated in practices of surveillance as people are expected to reveal more and more of their private and inner lives (Ecclestone and Hayes 2008: xiii). Staff appraisals and per-

sonal development expectations in the workplace integrate therapeutic terms with performance targets (Ibid: 18) and student satisfaction surveys are used to discipline academic staff (Amsler 2011: 51). They promote a particular limited and limiting account of what it means to be human: a 'diminished self' (Eccleston and Hayes 2008: xi), who is lacking something essential (Cruikshank 1999: 3) which undermines the radical and transformative power of education and of human beings (Ecclestone and Hayes 2008: 161).

This lays the ground for the production of conformist neoliberal subjects with truncated hopes, dreams and desires (Cruikshank 1999: 2; Amsler 2011: 50-51). Those who do not fit this image are shaped and excluded through diagnoses and medication (Furedi 2004: 99). Political interest in emotional skills is integral to the demands of the market, particularly in the emerging service economy and public sector jobs: 'the education system plays a key role in socialising the 'right' forms of emotional labour for different jobs' (Ecclestone and Hayes 2008: 18). Therapeutic education is therefore a normative and dangerous combination of discourses and policy. It has real effects on people's bodies, which are subject to surveillance, fragmented from social relationships, medicalised, and trained to conform to particular types of labour. This is all ostensibly a response to – but actually reproduces – neoliberal anxiety and precarity. So the key questions become: How can we 'unlearn' dominant notions of well-being and resist neoliberal structurations of affect without inputting another normative notion of physical and mental 'good'? If subjects are trained to accept, adapt to and ultimately desire precarious life in neoliberal societies, how might we persuade them otherwise without also assuming a 'diminished subject' or attempting to impose revolutionary desires?

Critical pedagogy and affective resistance

The works by Ecclestone and Hayes and Furedi are largely critical-deconstructive and leave the alternatives to therapeutic education largely implicit. Nonetheless, they rely on a liberal-humanist view of the subject, and call for a return to progressivist forms of education based on 'rational philosophy that focuses on the ability of humans to transform the world by making scientific and social progress through reason' (Ecclestone and Hayes 2008: 161). As such, they bypass poststructural critiques of privileged knowledge, exclusion of marginal knowledges, representation, misrecognition, social hierarchies and violence, and the ways in which discourses of 'progress' and 'reason' have tended to reify dominant and hierarchical ways of knowing and learning such as Western, masculine, heteronormative, able-ist (Burdick and Sandlin 2010, 351). This omission can be deeply problematic, for example Furedi's critique of state intervention in private relationships evades the gendered nature of unequal power in the domestic sphere (e.g. Furedi 2004: 80-81) with the dubious implication that domestic violence and oppression ought to remain a 'private' matter.

Amsler however takes up this challenge in the context of Higher Education, arguing that 'affect is central to both learning and to any viable conception of

socially responsive education' (Amsler 2011: 52) and that 'transitions from therapeutic to political education in neoliberal societies cannot be accomplished without recognition of the affective conditions of critique and non-essentialized subjectivity' (Ibid: 56). In a society where people are affectively trained to conform to neoliberal desires, the prospect of critique can be challenging and even frightening, whilst the affective sensibilities which might motivate political action to change their conditions are likely to expose them to feelings of alienation that they might not otherwise have felt or recognized (Ibid: 55-6). Contrary to the assumptions of Freire and other critical pedagogues one can no longer assume an essentially critical subject that desires transcendence and an end to oppression. Critical educators in existing institutions like universities are likely to face resistance (Motta 2012), whilst radical pedagogical projects face the problem that neoliberal anxiety and its submersion within dominant discourses is a 'public secret' (Institute for Precarious Consciousness 2014: 275).

Responses to this problematic involve developing critical awareness of the role of emotions and affect, problematizing emotional responses to critique. Amsler argues that we should 'establish affect as a site and resource of both learning and political struggle' (Amsler 2011: 58). This can begin in non-hierarchical spaces for discussion and engagement with otherness, both within and outside existing institutions (Motta 2012). In the university, discussions can evoke multiple perspectives and epistemologies (Andreotti, Ahenakew and Cooper 2011) and encourage 'embodying and practicing other forms of politics' (Motta 2012: 93) by 'fostering discussion [and] enabling active listening and respect between all members of the classroom space' (Ibid: 92). This can initiate a polyphonic dialogue to prevent ideas from becoming stagnant, or fixed, at an epistemological level (Bakhtin, 1984: 21). Opening up ambiguity and complexity in the classroom can mean acknowledging an important pedagogical role for *unpleasant* affects and emotions such as discomfort (Burdick and Sandlin, 2010; Zembylas, 2006; Boler, 1999). The aim of discomfort is not to prescribe any single course of action, but rather 'for each person, myself included, to explore beliefs and values ... and to identify when and how our habits harm ourselves and others' (Boler 1999: 185). In radical spaces and social movement practice, the Institute for Precarious Consciousness (2014: 278-283) argues for a revival of the feminist practice of consciousness-raising in radical social movement spaces, which involves speaking from experience, validating submerged realities and constructing voice within safe space as a basis for affective transformation.

Suggestions for radical praxis within and outside formal institutions tend to locate resistance to affective oppresion in critical thought, discussion and dialogue (e.g. Cruikshank 1999: 2). There is an assumption that emotions are discursive, arising from cultural processes and meanings, rather than physical in origin and effect, and that resistance resides in raising critical consciousness rather than constructing new affects. Zembylas and Boler (2002: 9) define emotions as 'discursive practices that constitute one's subjectivities'. By situating both emotion and resistance in discursive practice these critical pedagogies inadvertently maintain an alienating mind/body dualism and hierarchy. The tradition of sitting down and talking in academic – and

even in radical – spaces maintains separation: 'we don't need proximity or contact to participate in a debate' (Goia 2008: 56).

Motta develops a role for bodily movement, encouraging students to move around the space, and work outside, in order to transgress 'the rigidity of fixity and stillness of normal classrooms' and bring 'physical fluidity to the space' (Motta 2012: 92-93). This is an important point yet remains under-theorised in existing literatures. Existing theory offers pointers for opening up discussion of ways in which emotions and the body are sites where oppression, inequality and affective control are played out, felt and embodied. Yet there is little consideration of how the body and its affects are always-already a utopian site: 'a locus of freedom, pleasure, connection and creativity' (Shapiro 1999: xx). Ignoring the body's capacity for agency leaves it 'paradoxically, in a peculiarly objectified state' (Shapiro 1999: 20). Shapiro therefore calls for a 'critical pedagogy of the body' that begins from an understanding of 'not only how it is socialized into heteronomous relations of control and conformity, but is also a site of struggle and possibility for a more liberated and erotic way of being in the world' (Ibid: xx). Understanding the body as a utopian site of resistance involves coming to understand the Cartesian mind/body distinction as a cultural construction. This creates possibilities for a critical discourse that expands our understanding of the body and practices that foster bodily creativity, connections and compassion (Ibid: 18-19). As discussed, the philosophical tradition from which the concept of affect is drawn already constructs it as an holistic concept, involving proximity and interaction of the body with other bodies and the environment. Where neoliberal state discourse has tended to individualise affect and limit desires, turning subjects inwards, critical responses have perpetuated the exclusion of physical interaction by relying on a discursive framework for praxis. In the following sections I will explore theories and practices that take a radically different, and expanded understanding of what constitutes the human body, and practices involving movement and touch that work with this understanding, therefore transgressing the mind/body dualism founds the basic assumptions of both mainstream and radical pedagogies. My wish is not to supplant existing critical pedagogies, nor to posit an alternative essentialist understanding of being or affect. Rather, I seek to explore alternatives that might supplement them, by transgressing the fixed binary of 'mind/body' therefore triggering new affects and creative resistances. Aspects of the theory and practices that I draw upon are self-avowedly utopian, and therefore may not be suitable to transpose exactly as described to formal and restricted institutional spaces such as the school or university. Nonetheless it is my hope that ideas might be adapted to inspire further somatic praxis in a range of spaces including universities, schools, social movements and radical spaces.

The body unconscious

In order to further elucidate the relationship between emotions, affect and the (reconceived) body or 'Soma', it is worth spending a moment to reflect upon the tradition of psychoanalysis and in particular theories of the unconscious. While much educational

work on affect tends to elide psychoanalytic thought, it often forms the starting point for political philosophies of affect (e.g. Deleuze and Guattari 2004a: 188; Deleuze and Guattari 2004b: 286-289). In this section I define the psychoanalytic tradition broadly, to include the debates and critiques of Carl Gustav Jung and Wilhelm Reich who began working within, but were expelled from the Psychoanalytic Movement. I also include contemporary theorists such as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari who claim to deviate entirely from the basic premises of psychoanalytic theory, developing a new theory of 'schizoanalysis', yet engage with psychoanalytic subject matter and debates.

Throughout psychoanalytic theory, the 'mind' is split into 'conscious' and 'unconscious'. In various ways throughout different theories, the unconscious is perceived to be within, to affect, or be affected by the body. For Sigmund Freud for example, an unconscious blockage can cause symptoms such as 'hysterical paralysis' (Freud and Breuer 2004). Jung (1968) views the unconscious as a collective, quasi-spiritual phenomenon that manifests through various individuated personality types and narrative archetypes. Wilhelm Reich inverts these theories to produce the idea of 'character armour' – rigidity within certain parts of the body – as well as neurotic symptoms, caused by a combination of the inability to achieve full orgasm (Reich 1972: 16-17) and authoritarian social structures with an investment in the suppression of sexuality (Ibid: 281). Because of the unconscious, however conceived, emotions can arise without apparent conscious cause and emotions can manifest in bodily states or sensations when they are not otherwise consciously apparent. The problem is not simply a technical one of addressing the body and not the mind: the blockages in the body occur with an underpinning in what Lacan terms 'the Imaginary' (Lacan 1988: 74), or within the realm of archetypes in Jung (1968). They are blocked because of meanings or images which shut them off or exile particular energies or parts of the self, whilst separating 'inside' from 'outside' through processes of alienation (Lacan 1988: 294).

If one agrees with Reich that unconscious blockages can manifest as character-armour and bodily states, then practices I will describe might compose acts of resistance, involving processes of unblocking similar to Deleuze and Guattari's negative or deconstructive stage of schizoanalysis (Deleuze and Guattari 2004 a: 325-354). Whilst Freud and Lacan view neurosis as essential to humans with origins in the triadic (Mother-Father-Me) familial assemblage (e.g. Lacan 1977: 205; Freud 1956), Reich and later Deleuze and Guattari propose that neurosis is actually the product of wider neurotic and authoritarian social structures, of which the family is one manifestation (Deleuze and Guattari 2004a: 303-304). Resolution of psychic conflict therefore necessitates critique of the social system (Reich 1972: 233). Such a process involves 'untying knots' or undoing social codes, such as taken-for-granted assumptions about the Oedipal family, and the participation of such institutions in 'a pedagogical social machine in general' (Deleuze and Guattari 2004b: 327). This negative/critical phase sets the scene for further positive tasks that construct new 'desiring machines' (Ibid: 354).

Affect therefore has a broader meaning than usually understood. Spinoza refers to impacts on bodies by other bodies, which increase or decrease their powers by combining to form different bodies (Spinoza 1994: 154) through affective connections

between 'lines, planes, and bodies' (Ibid: 153). 'Bodies' in this sense transgresses the individualised (neo-)liberal human and refers to immanent affective connections with natural causes and phenomena (Ibid: 157; 202), yet no distinction should be made between mental and physical life: 'An idea that excludes the existence of our body cannot be in our mind, but is contrary to it' (Ibid: 160). Deleuze and Guattari use the term 'affect' in relation to bodily postures and movements and related 'discharge of emotion' (Deleuze and Guattari 2004b: 441) implying that an 'affect' is a point of contact between bioenergy inside and outside the body; a flow which goes across the boundary of the body. A 'reactive' affect is one which is turned inside or displaced (Ibid: 441) and causes 'blockages' in Reich's terminology (Reich 1972: 17). This is useful in distinguishing 'affect' from 'emotion'. In everyday language, emotion usually refers to an individuated physical feeling (not mental or intellectual) that is passive (not active) and has a more-or-less irrational relationship to the world and outer life. In contrast, affect, as constructed by these thinkers is a necessary part of social and ecological assemblages, which passes through the unconscious field. Thinking beyond discursive pedagogies requires a reconceived understanding of the body, and indeed what it is to be human. To avoid confusion, some theorists and practitioners working with this approach have introduced a new term, 'Soma', to describe an understanding that both transgresses and encompasses the mental/discursive and the physical.

Possibilities for somatic pedagogy

The word 'Soma' is derived from Greek, meaning 'body', but tends to be used as an alternative terminology to describe a much wider understanding of embodiment: 'it incorporates the body's extensions, such as its desires and ideals, thoughts and attitudes, ideology and love, profession and social life. A human 'Soma' is everything that a person is, including how and with whom she or he has relationships' (Freire and da Mata 1997: 3). The works of somatic theorists can be traced back to the thoughts of Wilhelm Reich, discussed above. Reich's work is important because it transgresses the Cartesian mind/body dualism, illustrating the possibility of a neurophysiological basis of repression (Hanna, 1970: 125) and a somatic understanding of the human body extending to relationships and social and economic environment. Affective discourse of 'therapeutic' education that attempts to homogenise desires by creating compliant subjects would for Reich be complicit in perpetuating bodily repression. This offers a starting point for thinking through ways in which working within a certain economic and social structure means 'to be inserted into a way of life that appropriates one's productive energies for specific purposes' (Shapiro 1999: 58). This opens the doors for a range of somatic pedagogies exploring the ways in which our bodies absorb, embody and can potentially resist their social constructions: "When people can't be themselves nor live out their ideas and desires, they enter into a defensive neurotic state. The neuromuscular armour is, therefore, a direct consequence of an authoritarian pedagogical game that teaches us to accept standards that are not our own" (Freire and da Mata 1997: 7).

The primary example I would like to draw on in this paper is Somatherapy. The first time I encountered Somatherapy was in 2007 during my doctoral studies, when I helped to co-organize a KnowledgeLab event, during which I chose to attend a workshop entitled "SOMA - an experiment in anarchism - Consensus decision making without the mind/body split", with very little idea of what to expect. The workshop was facilitated by Jorge Goia, whose subsequent writing I have cited in this paper (Goia, 2008). The workshop consisted of an opening talk on the history and ideas behind Soma, which I will touch on later in this paper, a series of group physical exercises designed to build body-awareness and solidarity, and a 'sharing' discussion afterwards. I left the workshop feeling deeply connected to the other participants, and with a profound sense of euphoria, apparently a common response (Ojo and Dejerk 2008: 44). The workshop was intended as a 'taster' of what Somatherapy can be like. To engage in a full course of Somatherapy one would have to commit to a year or more of monthly meetings (Freire and da Mata 1997: 13-14). To my knowledge there are no full-term workshops in the UK. This is my only personal experience with practising Soma. My sources are therefore based on the limited work of Roberto Freire published in English (most of Freire's original work is written in Portuguese and remains untranslated), a conversation with Jorge Goia, an experienced Somatherapist who trained under Freire, and on secondary writings by Goia and others. In what follows I explore Somatherapy as a potential source of inspiration for somatic pedagogies. In particular, I will focus on the questions: How does it resist state structurations of affect? How does it transgress existing critical pedagogies, assumptions of mind/body dualism and discursive/dialogical modes of practice? After considering this example, I will signal other potential sources of inspiration, and attempt to consider ways in which these might inform and shape existing critical praxis.

Somatherapy combines therapy and pedagogy, arts and science, politics and emotions (Goia 2011b). It was created by the Brazillian psychiatrist and anarchist activist Roberto Freire (who bears no relation to Paulo Freire) in the 1970s in the hope of providing a therapeutic pedagogy that could support people resisting the dictatorship (Goia 2011a). In developing Somatherapy, Freire explicitly drew on a wide range of influences, including theories of the body, emotions and the unconscious drawn from Wilhelm Reich, combined with insights from Frederick Perls, Gregory Bateson, Thomas Hanna, Max Stirner, anarchist politics and organization; anti-psychiatry, Gestalt psychotherapy and the Brazillian martial art Capoeira Angola (Goia 2008: 57; Freire and da Mata 1997; Goia 2011a; Goia 2011b; Ojo and Dejerk 2008). A 'course' of Soma has about 30 sessions facilitated by an experienced practitioner in a non-hierarchical manner inspired by anarchist politics and organization. The aim is through enjoyable play, games, sound and co-operative movement exercises to 'salvage spontaneity, playfulness, creativity, and awareness of anarchist organization where no one is boss' (Goia 2011b). The purpose is to challenge authoritarian politics and competitive capitalist social relationships at a personal level, by cultivating bodily awareness and producing non-authoritarian social relationships (Goia 2011b). An accessible introduction and fuller description of the process can be found in the article

by Ojo and Dejerk (2008).

Soma works to break down divisions and hierarchies not only at the social level but also at physical, unconscious and affective levels: 'When the body is in articulation, it is in transformation. The more articulations we make, the more we are affected, the more we become sensitive to difference, and the more we can refine our senses to perceive, opening possibilities of new engagements' (Goia 2008: 60). Soma is explicitly political, beginning from the body and the politics of everyday life: 'we raise awareness and bring out the physical reality of our bodies educated in the capitalist culture of fear and security' (Goia 2011b). Somatherapy transgresses the construction of mind and body as separate: 'The politics of everyday life does not happen only through arguments, discussions and critiques in the search for rational ideas about life and relationships. We are concerned with the politics of the body, to break down cultural prejudices against the forgotten body' (Goia 2008: 58).

Nonetheless Somatherapy does involve discussion, which takes place after the games, where participants discuss the feelings and physical sensations that they experienced (Ogo and Dejerk 2008: 44). There is an orientation towards avoiding interpretation, analysis, 'why' questions, or general claims in favour of describing physical and emotional sensations, 'how' questions and building solidarity and sincerity across differences (Goia 2008: 57-58; Ojo and Dejerk 2008: 46). Soma participants are also encouraged to undertake independent and group readings, and practice in Capoeira Angola, leading to a learning experience that transgresses traditional 'therapy' and encompasses 'a skill share, and an experiment in anarchism applied to personal dynamics' (Ojo and Dejerk 2008: 47).

The theme of celebrating rather than suppressing bodily differences speaks directly to the key theme of this paper: resisting the state homogenization of affect and production of compliant subjects through a non-vanguardist approach to pedagogy. Freire argues that 'driven by the economic power of the state, authoritarian societies need to standardise human behaviour in order to facilitate control and domination' (Freire and da Mata, 1997: 3). Thus, a core purpose of the games and exercises is to identify and eliminate the effects of homogenizing discourses on our bodies in order to "encounter the originality in the lives of each one of us" (Ibid: 3). Rather than seeking to impose psychological diagnoses and 'truths' on the body, Soma aims to 'create singular experiences' and 'perceive more contrasts' (Goia 2008: 60-1). The process of producing and celebrating individual difference seeks to politicize personal and everyday life and the ways these are permeated by state authoritarianism and capitalist values such as private property, competition, profit and exploitation:

> It is impossible to deny the influence of [state and capitalist] values in vital areas of social relations, where feelings (jealousy, posessiveness, insecurity) and situations (competition, betrayal and lies) seem to reproduce on the micro-social level, the authoritarianism of states and corporations. The political starts in the personal, and this is where the mechanisms that maintain social order are born (Goia 2008: 58).

Soma seeks to explore micro-political dynamics starting form the body and to resist them by challenging participants to 'reinvent relationships' (Goia 2008: 60) using games to foster trust, co-operation and sharing, and mechanisms for dealing constructively with conflict (Goia 2008: 56).

Soma thus seeks to recreate politics at a fundamentally dis-alienated level, treating the moving, sensing, relating body as a utopian site where new relations can be configured. It resists dominant discourses without recourse to counter-discourse: 'a rebel body needs to articulate differences to challenge paralysing definitions ... we give voice to the body to express doubts; questions, where often one prays for certainty. Soma doesn't try to define one's body, the process attempts to keep one's *soma* moving' (Goia 2008: 60). This is an anarchist practice, seeking to inspire 'skills to build horizontal relationships' that can 'transform the way we perceive the world, re-building the body, its dwelling and livelihood' (Goia 2008: 61).

Further body-focused pedagogies can be found elsewhere. Augusto Boal's work on *Theatre of the Oppressed* begins from a somatic assumption that bodies become alienated through labour; for example one who sits at a computer all day becomes 'a kind of pedestal, while fingers and arms are active' (Boal 1979: 127) while someone who stands or walks all day will develop different muscular structures. Boal develops a range of theatrical techniques to explore the limitations and social distortions of the body, and starting from this to learn once more to make the body expressive, affirming rather than denying one's own physical differences (Boal, 1979: 126). Sherry Shapiro (1999) argues for a critical pedagogy based on dance and movement, which begins from a critique of the commodification of dancers' bodies yet celebrates and brings to critical awareness the function of dance in producing pleasure, agency and freedom (Shapiro 1999: 72). Jeremy Gilbert (2013) argues for a pedagogical technique in university lectures and seminars inspired by DJing in dance clubs that aims to mobilize affect to assemble a collective and empowered body. Bell and Sinclair (2014) argue for a reclamation of the 'erotic' in higher education in ways that refuse commodified sexual norms. This might involve exploring the relationship between knowledge and bodies, and recognizing love and nurturance in collegial and pedagogic relations. Examples might also be drawn from practices at a range of international communities that draw on body-work and reconceived relations between the body and world. ZEGG Community in Germany, uses a technique based on both words and movement to reveal parts of oneself to the community, and defines itself as a sex-positive community that embraces multiple different kinds of relationships (Zegg n.d.2). Findhorn in the UK similarly encourages healing techniques based on dance and movement, and embraces ontology that transgresses fixed assumptions about the relationship between body and environment. Several courses and workshops at Findhorn explicitly drawn on the work of Wilhelm Reich and other radical psychologists (e.g. Findhorn Foundation n.d.). Tamera in Portugal places focus on cooperation between human being, animal and nature and focuses on interpersonal intimacy as a means of freeing the individual (Tamera 2015). Network for a New Culture in the US was originally inspired by ZEGG. Whilst this is not an ongoing populated

community it offers summer camps, retreats and other experiences designed to build community and intimacy, encourage challenging oneself, and practice new ways of interacting (New Culture Institute 1996-2015). Such communities often avoid some of the drawbacks of more typical self-help approaches in that they link personal growth and interpersonal connection to larger community and societal structures. Some of these ideas in the context of intentional communities in the UK are explored in Lucy Sargisson's book, which provides an exegesis of radical ecological ontologies that transgress dominant assumptions about oppositional Self-Other Relations (Sargisson 2000: 117-151) as well as my own book, which examines holistic views of subjectivity (Firth 2012: 131-135). Also relevant are groups such as the Centre for Nonviolent Communication (n.d) and the Human Awareness Institute (2015). These organizations offer workshops examining ways in which cultural norms can alienate people from their ability to understand and communicate bodily needs and sensations, resulting in verbal and physical violence, and offer skills training to promote alternative, compassionate forms of communication and relationships.

Conclusion: Spaces of somatic becoming

In this paper I have critiqued and transgressed the assumptions of a specific area of pedagogic theory – in particular the uncritical conflation of education and learning with normative discourses of therapy and well-being. Rather than following existing literature by taking a critical standpoint yet retaining assumptions concerning the mind-body split and the discursive nature of pedagogy, I have attempted to adopt a utopian methodology (Firth 2013), taking the reconceived body or soma as a starting point to think through ways of opening up this field of thought and practice to difference.

The question remains: where might somatic pedagogies take place? If, as the introductory sections argued, 'therapeutic' pedagogies are prevalent throughout many levels of society, both within educational establishments and outwith institutions through a wider cultural discourse, effective resistance also ought to take place both within and outside existing institutions. Since 'therapeutic' pedagogies begin from the earliest stages of school, pioneering teachers may be able to think through ways these might be resisted, within institutional constraints. Finding time outside curriculum activity, health and safety constrictions and rules on physical contact may make the school environment particularly prohibitive for Somatic pedagogies. Nonetheless, taking a critical approach within aspects of the curriculum imbued with 'therapeutic' discourse may be possible.

My own pedagogic experience derives from academic teaching and lecturing in Universities at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, presenting at conferences, and from facilitating and taking part in grassroots popular education work in autonomous social spaces and with social movements. The first time I presented this paper at a university, one of the audience quite poignantly pointed out that universities are perhaps the place where this kind of activity is *least* likely to be taken up, referring to the fact that when any participatory element is introduced in a lecture or conference

paper, academic audience members – from undergraduates to staff – often shirk from joining in. The physical environment of classrooms and lecture theatres is designed to facilitate sitting in rows facing the 'expert'. Academics are arguably the section of society most alienated from their own bodies due to the emphasis placed on intellectual power and 'the mind' (Bell and King, 2010). At the same time, implicit and commodified sexual economy and other embodied hierarchies (Bell and Sinclair 2014) undermine possibilities for creating requisite conditions of equality and solidarity. However, it is important to note that cracks and spaces for radical activities do appear in universities and other institutions. The first time I encountered Somatherapy was at a university, albeit at an autonomously organized event. Many Universities now encourage the use of innovative and critical pedagogies, albeit often in a de-politicized attempt at introducing 'novelty value' to enhance 'student satisfaction', which opens possibilities for more critical and interesting activities (Motta 2013).

Somatic pedagogies might also take place outside formal institutions, in autonomous spaces such as autonomous social centres, squats, occupied protest camps, housing co-operatives and intentional communities. Activist social spaces already often host a variety of pedagogical activities with physical elements such as skill-shares and martial arts workshops. However, I have only occasionally encountered workshops that take the body itself as a starting point for critique and resistance. Somatic pedagogies might be of use to social movements since a widely acknowledged source of dissonance and conflict is the verbal dominance of more confident or educated people in meetings and discussions (Firth 2012: 109). Somatherapy is designed to build solidarity through movement and the emphasis on physical difference rather than discussion and may ameliorate some of these problems. To end this paper, I would like to distil from the above some important themes that an interested pedagogue might consider when planning a workshop. I do not wish to offer a single concrete 'set of instructions', nor to recommend that a pre-existent practice, such as Somatherapy, be taken up in its entirety. The aptness of different techniques will vary according to the space, participants and context.

First, a facilitator might consider the approach that they would take towards critique and knowledge production. An underlying argument of this paper has been that in order to avoid (paradoxically) imposing anti-authoritarian values and desires, knowledge production ought to be non-vanguardist. Rather than taking as given any particular values and desires, one promotes epistemological practice that problematizes the status quo, using concrete experiences of the body and its immediate relationships as a site of critique and resistance. The approach takes to its limit the feminist slogan that 'the personal is the political'. This involves processes similar to consensus decision-making combined with physical movement, producing new knowledge by bringing bodies into motion. Second, the paper has argued that a genuinely non-vanguardist pedagogy ought to involve critiquing state structurations of affect and definitions of 'well-being' beginning from re-thinking the body as inseparable from the mind, other bodies and the environment and constructed through relationships. I have not argued for a closed definition of the body because this should be politicized and

open to negotiation during classes or workshops. My hope is that definitions remain open to constant differentiation as bodies and understandings of bodies continually undergo change. Third, I have argued that such a pedagogy would celebrate rather than suppress or homogenize different bodies and desires. This would involve accounting for both physical and psychological difference, for example some participants may not like to be touched or may find different levels of closeness comfortable during workshops. Therefore processes for articulating and respecting personal boundaries should be incorporated. Finally, resistance should be fun, joyous and playful. This last point is perhaps the most difficult to achieve in practice: how can we construct joy in a society where consumerism is central to enjoyment? Where activism is too frequently characterised by notions of selflessness, suffering and sacrifice? (Graeber 2014). Finally, somatic pedagogies should not lose their political, critical and resistant facets. In discussion with Goia, I was informed that in Brazil, Somatherapy has in some places become a recuperated practice, 'just another group therapy' widely used by people with spare time and money rather than radical activists. On the other hand, many radical social movements already embrace aspects of Somatic pedagogies, in the form of performance art and carnivalesque activities, for example the *Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army* (see Routledge 2010). Such practices might benefit from engaging in Somatic critique, raising the issue of the body as a site of resistance in further pedagogical activity. *The Nanopolitics Handbook* (The Nanopolitics Group 2014a) explores recent political engagements with bodywork and social movement practice, showing how such practices can and do avoid recuperation into the mainstream. In particular it is important to note that whilst there is always a possibility that somatic practices might be recuperated back into the capitalist mainstream, this does not invalidate the necessity of critical practices of the body for radical politics. Indeed, politics must not reside only in voting or making statements, but 'politics can be a tangible experiment of feeling and acting that's based in our bodies and their ways of relating.' (The Nanopolitics Group 2014b: 19). A politics of the body can be a politics of joy, pleasure and immanent revolution (Ibid: 23) to be experienced in the present, rather than deferred to the future.

This paper is intended as a preliminary introduction of the concept of Somatic pedagogy into debates on education and pedagogy and it is beyond its scope to offer extended ideas for practice. Nonetheless I have argued for the political significance of the body. Whatever concept of radical change we embrace, be it revolutionary, reformist, or through creation of utopian alternatives in the here-and-now, one cannot deny the importance of the body in radical praxis. Critical social change is unlikely to occur whilst we are sitting in front of a computer but will involve our collective hearts, minds and bodies.

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January 2, 20--

The Imaginary Republic

Communiqué #3

A Lover's Discourse

the street the hand the blanket
the night the endless ticking
the useless
the never again the time the time
uncounted
the table the glass the humming
the breath the frailty the tear
tearing
the hunger the one and then
the many
the house the room the light
the gate the path the hand out-
stretched
stretched – *between*
the day after day the birds the drift
the empty the outside the finger
strumming tapping whispering
point by point
step by step *your joy*
the refusal the anger and the for-
gotten pieces
the friend the drum the book
carried – a vessel
under the arm across the border
the terrible news the twisting from
left to right
the pushing against and for this
they create
the strategies the giving the elabo-
ration
the falling down
down *into*
the escape running hiding
and the joy and the sorrow
the mending
of these clothes
these threads
threading by way of the movements
the arm in arm the scratches
the shouts *your pulling*
stitching
into the distant the near
the brushing against
uprooted and unhomed by you
and this

this
that I begin to love and am loved by
the voice
the touch given
ecstatic

It's About Time /

Marysia Lewandowska

It's About Time was an audio-visual installation commissioned by Ralph Rugoff for the Pavilion of Applied Arts (V&A) of the 58th Venice Biennale. The project brought together nine Italian women practitioners from London and Venice, speculating a scenario in which the foundations of La Biennale di Venezia were built by women, allowing the sound of their "unheard voices" to be encountered for the first time. Asserting their own presence through invention and self-discovery, the resulting debate draws attention to the mechanisms of how knowledge is created and disseminated and how what is imagined is capable of inciting a fundamental cultural shift.

The resulting audio recording took the form of a debate amongst imaginary female "founders" contributing their personal reflections and staging arguments "live". As an act of collective imaginary originating from the Biennale's historical documents, serving as a common reference pool, the group has generated a new text, an augmented version of history placing women at its centre.

Simultaneously, looking to the past was fundamental in constructing an alternative version of an event such as the Biennale, taking into consideration issues of civic responsibility, local community engagement, gender representation, sustainable economy and relations with the public. While exposing existing hierarchies the project stressed the importance of rehabilitation of women's role in public life.

As we are reminded by Kate Eichorn, professor at the New School in New York: "The archival turn under neo-liberalism should not be primarily read as a desire to escape the present but rather as an attempt to regain agency in the era when the ability to collectively imagine and enact other ways of being in the world has become deeply eroded."

It's About Time has been developed with a peer group of Italian feminists, Lucia Cavorsi, Gulia Damiani, Valeria Facchin, Alice Ongaro, Carlotta Pierleoni, Flora Pitrolo, Clarissa Ricci, Silvia Tanzini, and Francesca Tarocco, who have engaged in the collective writing, shifting the emphasis from providing an accurate account of the past to generating a productive form of fantasy. The endeavour has been driven by anachronism as method bearing upon our approach to the historical omission. The revision, which has emerged in the act of constructing the new narrative, offers an alternative account imagined by women whose role in public life remains missing from the recorded histories.

Could the 1895 origin of the Biennale, with its dual mission of strengthening commerce and encouraging civic pride, provide inspiration for the digital age? Can it act

as a transformative force by utilizing social media platforms? Could it become more civic than commercial, more distributive than centralized? Imagine it as a digital acupuncture with some of the following questions it might be capable of raising. Might the networks of intellectual kinship emerge through making a will to Biennale an emancipatory act?

A distributed model of culture depends on creating a fluid space where access is gained through a process of acknowledgement without the necessity of seeking permission. As artists we must continue building trust amongst peers and a wider public, stand up to corporate power, remain vigilant of digital enclosures. If we imagine the will to Biennale as a take over, a collectively built new institutional network, the most important would be to begin work on its governance structure. By scrutinizing procedures preferencing monetization, we could attempt to replace them with reciprocity attracting a wider participation beyond sharing amongst users.

Imagine a digital Biennale platform to be able to aid transparency of decision-making process by introducing commoning as a curatorial method.

Imagine how a digital Biennale could change cultural practices linked to the regime of unbearable lightness of swiping, clicking, liking on one hand and an alarming spread of hatred, rather than debate, on the other.

Imagine a digital Biennale helping to establish new forms of sociality to harness energies related to "collective awareness platforms", devoted to slowing down movements and long-term collaboration initiatives.

Imagine how developing digital sensibilities could forge meaningful involvement with as yet unknown others.

Imagine what a peer-to-peer Biennale solidarity could look like.

Imagine a digital proximity as a reflexive space.

Imagine a Biennale functioning outside of the recommendation industry without dismissing an existing community of engaged artists, critics, curators, and academics.

Re-imagine a Biennale as a digital public garden, a space of production of discourse and pleasure, with an in-built ability of an ever-expanding mutually beneficial fluid space.

Imagine a Biennale more like a digital wallet with artworks as its symbolic currency? Just as a digital wallet breaks down the traditional barriers of entry and privilege, could a digital Biennale do the same?

AUDIO SCRIPT

The first meeting of the Società delle Donne Veneziane took place at Palazzo Persico, the residence of Signora Damiani, in April 1893.
The following women were in attendance:
1 Cavorsi; 2 Damiani; 3 Facchin; 4 Ongaro; 5 Pierleoni; 6 Pitrolo; 7 Tanzini.

PITROLO: Dear all, good morning. Thank you for coming to the first meeting of this future exhibition of ours – I'm sure our exchange will be fruitful and stimulating. First of all, I'd like to take note of who's here. We have our host, Signora Damiani....

DAMIANI: Yes. Good morning. Thank you for gathering at my house today.

PITROLO: We also have Signora Cavorsi, Signora Ongaro, Signora Tanzini, Signora Pierleoni, Signora Facchin, and myself, Signora Pitrolo. Good, so let's start! Signora Cavorsi, would you like to begin?

CAVORSI: Yes, thank you Signora Pitrolo. I was thinking about the role we would like the public to play within our exhibition. When we say we'd like this exhibition to be a valuable means of furthering intellectual progress and bringing people closer together, what do we really mean by that? What are we thinking?

PIERLEONI: This exhibition is definitely a way to reflect on what is currently happening in the world. How can we establish a dialogue to move forward and understand what future lies ahead.

CAVORSI: What are we prepared to do in order for the public – and others – to become invested in the intellectual progress? Could this exhibition become an opportunity for a collective excellence.

(Pause)

PITROLO: To what extent do we need some sort of structure to move forward? I am enjoying our collective harmony but am wondering – do we need someone to take charge? Someone who would, so to speak, shine a light on our proceedings without making them any less democratic?

TANZINI: I think that our organisation definitely needs a leader and, in any case, having someone in charge wouldn't negatively impact the democratic process.

FACCHIN: I perceive our meeting as a roundtable gathering. We are a group of experienced, mature women who complement and complete each other, and could take turns of leadership, while always showing respect.

PITROLO: So are you suggesting we appoint a director? Oh, directors! The world is full of directors! Aren't we getting tired of them? I like having a steering group and not just one person in charge. Do you think that's possible?

TANZINI: But how can we organize ourselves if there is no one in charge? No leader? What do you think, Signora Facchin?

FACCHIN: Why don't we consider having an open, flexible structure allowing for us to take turns and change roles?

PITROLO: And what if the person in charge was an artist? I would love to see an exhibition where that would have actually happened!

(Pause)

PITROLO: We mentioned our exhibition should carry a prize: some form of recognition for the work produced by the artists. But what kind of prize?

TANZINI: What if, instead of a traditional prize money, we offer a salary for a certain period of time that would enable them to prosper but also encourage and act as a vehicle to develop their art practices?

FACCHIN: I agree with your idea of providing artists with some sort of public recognition. We could also ask the artists to produce a public work of art for the City of Venice. You know how much I respect your opinion, Signora Tanzini, but I absolutely cannot agree with you on the salary. You see…I believe that an artist needs time to find herself, to work on improving herself, needs to be, almost dejected and downcast …

PITROLO: I'm sorry, Signora Facchin, what is it you think an artist needs? To be hungry for money?

FACCHIN: Perhaps that is what it means to be an artist?

PITROLO: But why not just allow artists to pursue their ideas rather than have to worry about paying the rent?

FACCHIN: Well you tell me, do you know any rich artists?

PITROLO: No!

DAMIANI: I am not an expert in this field, but if we really have to offer prize money, I would rather reward collaborative or collective efforts. Take the example of our friend's, Signora Bevilacqua La Masa's "Sorelle d'Italia" initiative, or other collectives that favor female associations. What do you think about the issue of the prizes Signora Cavorsi?

CAVORSI: Well, the first question that springs to mind I want to put to you too, is whether prizes have a meaning at all, what do they represent? Are we rewarding artists on the basis of aesthetic excellence or their artistic sensibility? Or do we want to acknowledge the civic impact of a work of art?

ONGARO: I do share similar concerns, Signora Cavorsi. I also don't understand why we need this prize. If we really need to have one, how can we ensure that it will be awarded democratically, that the outcome is not influenced by certain individuals, or a particular committee?

DAMIANI: Personally, I would avoid a public vote that is open to all, unless it is only those members of the public who support the exhibition we are planning.

CAVORSI: May I ask why?

DAMIANI: I wouldn't want there to be any political pressure during the voting process from all the usual people we have already mentioned. I believe otherwise we risk some sort of coercion.

CAVORSI: I believe it is essential and crucial to ask ourselves who would determine the quality and value of the work of art. Why can't the public be part of this process, maybe through groups that represent all levels of society?

PIERLEONI: What do you mean by including the public? What are your ideas? Are you thinking for example about education programme meant for people who don't have the same knowledge about art that we do? What do you have in mind exactly?

DAMIANI: It was what Signora Cavorsi and the rest of you said, actually, that got me thinking. Perhaps we need to ask ourselves what is the value and the purpose of art in general, not just in terms of this exhibition. What can be achieved through artistic expression? What role should we give art within the context of society?

(Pause)

FACCHIN: I heard from our dear Signora Bevilacqua la Masa that the City Council has been discussing how to use the funds collected from the exhibition ticket sales to build orphanages for the children of Venetian laborers who died as a result of accidents at work, or for those of sailors who died at sea. Do they also plan to consider all those neglected places in Venice, like the Lazaretto for example, which has been allowed to go to ruin?

TANZINI: It could be used to host projects that are open to the Venetian people, not only during the period of the exhibition, but also between one and the other. That would be culturally dynamic and raise some funds perhaps through a public programme even.

FACCHIN: Precisely, we need to create an event, something alternative, which targets the less well off.

PITROLO: That is why I would like to include live arts in this exhibition of ours. Live arts do not need to be locked in a museum; it can search for its own audience, not the other way round. I believe that both performance – intended as a means of communication – and the spoken word should be part of our event. Both have an effect on visitors and continue to generate meaning even when the artist is not there, when the Biennale exhibition has been dismantled and the pavilions closed.

TANZINI: The performing arts appear more inclusive for the general public, especially the population of Venice. What is most important, however, is that these events are affordable.

DAMIANI: Don't you think Venice could become, by working through the idea of performance as a means of communication, an incubator for that kind of thought process…

CAVORSI: Maybe we could consider this slightly rocky terrain as something worth exploring with regards to the future or even an unfulfilled present; posing questions about the future that is not seen as an experimental aesthetic form but rather one that dwells upon the uncertainties, the unknown and that therefore…

ONGARO: I believe that one way to address the wider public would be to introduce

ourselves and explain our proposals and why we want to organise this exhibition. We represent the opposition in terms of the conventional narrow-minded male concept of exhibitions. We are suggesting something totally different.

DAMIANI: Indeed, this idea of an exhibition in dialogue with the public must therefore, according to Signora Ongaro, fulfill our multi-faceted, polyphonic project as an alternative to the single minded, individualistic and categorical approach represented by the City Council.

(Pause)

FACCHIN: I heard from our Mayor, Selvatico, that the City Council had recently met and was, indeed, discussing the possibility of dedicating the Giardini to an event, that will possibly become a permanent fixture. The rumor has it that building of the large pavilion inside the Giardini is due to begin soon. I fear Venice will symbolise a new type of imperialism.

PITROLO: I am also wondering whether these national pavilions, if they are in fact built, will only be utilized for a part of every other year?

TANZINI: Wouldn't it be better to use what is already available, between one exhibition and another, if that were even possible? We could, for example, propose something that would benefit the citizens of Venice, or perhaps young and emerging artists.

FACCHIN: Yes. But we can't be so utopian. We really must consider practicalities. We need money!

PITROLO: It's a bit of a thorny issue for me, as I don't have much sympathy for collectors. I don't like the idea of owning a work of art and taking it home where the rest of the world will no longer be able to see it. But…Should we invite them?

FACCHIN: Absolutely! Collectors are vital to our event. In a way, they are the kind of people who nurture artists. They help them advance to a point where they can also reach a wider public; that's a healthy form of ownership. They need to own that work of art and keep it close by. So no, I absolutely wouldn't do away with collectors.

DAMIANI: As you know, this is not my field. But I imagine collectors would be interested in having their name on the programme or being mentioned in some way, as that would mean that in years to come they would be remembered. Signora Ongaro, perhaps you would confirm if this...

ONGARO: I think that it is also important that we don't spend all the funds we receive to promote the event – on advertising and such. So we need to think about alternative ways, adopting other measures in order to publicize our exhibition – ways that don't, perhaps solely involve advertising.

(Pause)

DAMIANI: Signora Cavorsi, might it be possible to shift attention away from the involvement of collectors and focus instead on the idea of a collective endeavor?

CAVORSI: I don't believe that economic contributions from a wider community will be a problem once the importance of art has been grasped. As we have already discussed, I think we will be able to count on that if we provide the tools that will make it possible to understand how art benefits society and the community as a whole.

PITROLO: Good, I think this is an excellent thought to conclude on. The bells are telling us that for today we must stop here. I thank Signora Damiani for her hospitality and all of you for your ideas, and I look forward to our next debate.

CAVORSI: Thank you Signora Damiani, for having hosted this very fruitful meeting. I hope you will accept my invitation to hold our next meeting at my house.

PIERLEONI: How lovely! Yes, with great pleasure, thank you Signora Cavorsi.

CAVORSI: Thank you all for sharing your views and listening to one other.

DAMIANI: Dear Signore, thank you. Our conversation will provide food for thought…

PIERLEONI: Well then, that's decided. We will meet again next week.

CONVERSATION

Clarissa Ricci with Felicita Bevilacqua La Masa

RICCI: Good morning Duchess Bevilacqua. Apologies, I'm out of breath. It's pouring! I'm totally drenched. Nevertheless, spring properly begins today. How are you Duchess? Tell me.

BEVILACQUA LA MASA: Dear Signora Ricci. Thank you for visiting me. I feel stronger today. Glad to see you here. We need to talk about some important matters

close to our hearts. Fill me in. Are they again meeting at Caffè Florian? Selvatico, what is he saying?

RICCI: The situation is confusing. In less than one month, a final exhibition proposal will be discussed by the City Council, so it is vital that your voice, Duchess, reaches the hearts and minds of the women and men of Italy. They must hear it… they must understand. The Councilors are thinking of organising an art exhibition. Their reason? To raise funds for an orphanage to be managed by the Congregation of Charity.

BLM: That is totally absurd! We must instead work to create dignified places for those who were victims of the Government injustice and for the revelers who found themselves without means at the end of their lives...

RICCI: Your kind soul has immediately grasped the situation. It's true, we are dealing with vampires. Yes! Those maritime companies, advertisers, hoteliers and street dealers of all kinds. What will become of Venice?

BLM: Let me share with you my innermost thoughts: the whole Venice has been protected and saved by the works of those who were once the young artists here. So we must not believe that it is we who must come to the aid of art, but rather that it is art that is assisting us in thinking about the future.

RICCI: Art must find a way to flourish in Venice again. Artists need to be given proper time, and as a condition feel that they are always welcomed.

BLM: Indeed! Time. Time is an emotional muscle. Images create emotions and bodies experience them, and it is in that moment that they come alive – as the living, breathing bodies feeling those emotions.

RICCI: A truly excellent way to think about time, we are almost able to touch it!
Creativity is an open space, one not immediately consummated or tailored to defend spurious privilege. It is, indeed, an open space… yet concave … intensely sweet like a vagina.

BLM: Like a sheath, a container. We must strive to make Venice a place that welcomes new experiences... This city needs to become an open house not only to the established, but also to the younger emerging artists.

RICCI: Great celebrations attract people to be festive. They give a sense of glory and eternal life. What do you think about setting up a house for artists? A place where art prevails?

BLM: What a marvelous idea! Somewhere small and modest perhaps; a practical initiative that is both useful and ambitious. Let's establish a Kunsthalle in Venice!

RICCI: This is perfect. In Munich, the Secession paved the way for experimentation. Might it be possible to run an art house free from commercial activities? Could dignity, genius, inspiration and the everyday needs of life coexist?

BLM: My dear Signora Ricci... Please, pass me that sheet of paper. I'm going to write my last will. I should like to leave this Palace to Venice City Council on condition that it can never be donated, sold or traded and in order for it to be used for the following purpose: to host young male and female artists, students who could come and study here for free. (Coughing). It will also host a permanent exhibition for Venetian art and industries. The Palace will assist young artists who are not allowed to participate in major exhibitions; those unknown, disheartened artists who do not have the means to continue on their own and are therefore often obliged to sell their work to those that would exploit them. The Palace must be named "The Work of Bevilacqua La Masa".

RICCI: Duchess, it is you who must take charge of this enterprise. Please, it is not only a matter to be set in your will, so put that paper aside. It is your voice that must be heard, your voice that will inspire us all. The world needs to bear witness to your hopes for art, artists and for Venice.

BLM: How I wish that I might never leave my beloved Venice and that my spirit might linger close to all the people I have loved during my lifetime.

RICCI: Duchess, I will write about all of this so that Italian women and men everywhere might be inspired. And, as we continue to discuss and prepare for this exhibition at the Giardini, we must also keep hold of this idea. The spaces you have imagined will be made available to those whose art is radical.

Script and Voice / Collaborating Team:
Lucia Cavorsi, Giulia Damiani, Valeria Facchin, Alice Ongaro, Carlotta Pierleoni, Flora Pitrolo, Clarissa Ricci, Silvia Tanzini, Francesca Tarocco


IMAGINARY
REPUBLIC

A speculative practice / from the vacant lots to the classrooms, the archives and the found libraries / the scenes that one makes / alone, together / capturing the materials at hand, or dug out of backrooms, or crafted by way of techniques of the rational irrational / what of the Utopian thinking — the Utopian manifestations ... (alongside the Ohio river, amongst the willow trees and left-over houses, built from the labor economies of Josiah Warren, the sharing of skills and time and the desire for more equitable relations) that one carries further, into the vague homes and defined arenas / beyond the periphery of the skin which Silvia Federici outlines — reclaiming the body as what is at stake / in contemporary capitalism / the body that labors, that works at community (whatever that may be) — "A true community can only be a community that is not presupposed" (Agamben, *Potentialities*) / and farther down the river, collecting pieces and possibilities: a *being in the field* which is to wait for others.

Leave It in the Ground

Raimar Stange in conversation with Oliver Ressler

Critical populism

Today, if art wants to be more than just an image – like financially-affecting rich people, if it wants to be something other than a more or less vain intellectual game, and if art finally wants to take a sociopolitical-critical position, then art must above all be an actionist-understand aesthetic practice that is neither committed to a traditional concept of work nor to an oh so noble "uninterested pleasure". Only then can art develop again – the so-called avant-garde art was politically oriented right from the start, just think of Dadaism and Constructivism – and this is extremely necessary in the face of climate catastrophe, rampant neonationalism and anti-social neoliberalism. It is also crucial that this actionist-aesthetic practice speaks a language that tends to be understood by everyone and not just by a few elite better educated people. According to Chantal Mouffe, critical populism is the *conditio qua non* for any committed art that does not want to vegetate in the whire cube.

*

Raimar Stange: I'd like to start with a question about the production of the film "Leave It in the Ground". The end credits state that along with found footage you also used material you filmed yourself. How did this come about?

Oliver Ressler: The film was made for the Lofoten International Art Festival of 2013. I did some research during a first stay in winter in Lofoten in the North of Norway. I also conducted some research interviews, although I didn't use these in the film. When I stayed there for the second time in the summer I had a concept and I did some location filming with an idea at the back of my mind about how the film should be narrated. When I edited the film I put this recorded material into a dialogue with the existing material. I found it challenging to use Lofoten as the point of departure for a film that weaves into a complex web of relationships issues like global warming, its regional and global consequences, the increasingly militarized response of the global North to migration flows caused by environmental crises, and the need for a new social beginning. Challenging because Lofoten is such an incredibly beautiful place, almost unreal. The plan to drill for oil there, in one of the last almost unspoiled parts of the earth – also a vital place for fish stocks – is just shameful. And the contrast between the beautiful footage of unspoiled nature and footage of catastrophes does add some tension to the film.

Stange: It's noticeable that there are quite a lot of cross-fades. Why?

Ressler: This was the first time I used cross-fades this way. I should explain here that

most of my film and installation work is based on bringing into the film-making process the spoken words of people involved in social movements. I do this with interviews or by documenting assemblies or by initiating discussions on specific questions. Before I went to Lofoten I intended to use that method for this film too, but I soon gave up on the idea. I had to rethink the parameters of the film-making process completely, and I decided to take a different approach. After many years of making films where the text came from the spoken words of the people I filmed, with the narration mainly developed through decisions on the structure of the content and by selecting, cutting and combining the sections to be used, I was now faced with writing the script myself for "Leave It in the Ground". I decided to set the flow of the narrator's voice in a dialogue with the flow of images that accompanies the spoken text and sometimes expands or interprets it. I always layered at least two, sometimes three images on top of one another, and after a certain time they dissolve into new ones. Long fades create the impression of a sort of visual mesh, out of which new images come into the foreground and are recognized one after another. Maybe the point was to open the text up to wider interpretation through the images. Lofoten's picturesque beauty melts into the picturesque images associated with the text, making a visual pattern that sometimes almost seems abstract.

Stange: Let's talk about the images a bit more before dealing with the text. Some images are close to kitsch, I would say. Borderline politkitsch [A compound of 'political' and 'kitsch', coined by the critic Benjamin Buchloh and applied to Anselm Kiefer – tr.]. We've seen enough of Tahrir square and dried up deserts and passing tanks and Obama signing some nonsense. Is the cross-fading partially an attempt to counter this kitsch element, to counter a general overexposure to these images?

Ressler: I'm not sure I agree with your description of the images as politkitsch. I made use of compelling images in this film, images with high recognition-value. But those images were always used in combination with a second and sometimes a third image, never on their own. The images arise from the visual image flow of the film, coming into the foreground and melting into the background again. For example, an image of the Paris Commune is combined with my footage of a campaign by environmental activists in Lofoten. Or images of Lofoten's idyllic landscapes are combined with images of a burning oil rig, with the oil running into the sea. Or ecological disasters are juxtaposed with stock markets. A melting iceberg slipping into the sea is linked to a sinking oil rig. The first image is commonly used to visualize global warming, while in the context of the film the sinking oil rig visualizes the desire to end oil production.

Stange: In terms of the text, there's a discrepancy here, the contradiction between the serious narrator, who could be a BBC narrator, and another text that's borderline cynical in places, elsewhere close to parody, and turns almost theatrical when the narrator starts to whisper or shout. How would you describe the text yourself? Is it literature?

Ressler: Yes, I think it can be called a kind of literature. I spent quite a long time thinking about what sort of voice should narrate this text that I had written. In the end I decided on a voice which, as you said, would recall the narrators at respectable anglophone media outlets like the BBC. I was always bothered by the BBC effect – whereby opinions or interpretations become facts through the authority of the voice – and the way it forms certain ideas about how the world works. So it was important to me not to have a "stable" narrating voice in the film, but to allow for deviations, intimacy, emotions and outbursts of temper, all of which would be unthinkable in the sort of reporting that insists on "neutrality". Therefore towards the end of the film, when the necessity of radical change is formulated, the narrator's voice seems to escape its own corset and all the authority it conferred.

Stange: The closing credits mention Naomi Klein among others. Are there any direct quotes in the text?

Ressler: The closing credits mention three texts that I read while working on the script. The text by Naomi Klein is an essay that also appears in the book "This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate", which was published later. There are no direct quotes in the film but I adopted some of the writers' thoughts. Some general arguments come from the texts, and there may be one or two subordinate clauses in the film that can be found in the texts. Once I knew how the film would be structured and what it would address I started working with language quite freely. I also involved the British writer John Barker in the process of working on the text.

Stange: One of the exciting things about the text for me is that it contains a kind of heteroglossia, as Bakhtin would call it. There's strictly factual material and there are polemical lines like 'even politicians have their hands in their own pockets'. Then there are stories that are almost funny and at the end there's this almost prophetic appeal. But what would you say if someone said it's ultimately an agitprop film?

Ressler: I think we live in times in which agitprop films are necessary. I wouldn't apply that term to the film myself, although there are elements of agitation in my artistic work in general and probably in this film too. As with my other films, I produced "Leave It in the Ground" with political intent, with a clear agenda. The film makes that quite obvious, I think. It's a call for a total reversal, for a new social beginning guided by ecology, in order to fight global warming effectively. I don't think that can happen within the existing system of representative democracy and a neoliberal capitalism where politics is enormously influenced by transnational companies and the super-rich. And yes, of course there's an element of agitation in staking such a gigantic claim.

Stange: I have no problem with that. But when you as an artist create something like that and when I as a curator exhibit it, we are often confronted with the question: how is this art? Which is why I'm asking you: how important is it to you that this is art?

Oliver Ressler, “Leave It in the Ground”, 18 min., HD, AT/N 2013. Courtesy the artist, àngels Barcelona, The Gallery Apart, Rome.

Ressler: It's very important to me that this is art. I am an artist after all and my works are shown in art settings; they are being shown in art institutions like this one. But they are also shown at film festivals. "Leave It in the Ground", for example, was screened at the Tromsø International Film Festival in Norway. The works are shown in political contexts, social movements use the films for their activities and events, and also in order to mobilise. "Leave It in the Ground" was presented at the 6th World Conference on Ecological Restoration in Manchester. That is to say, my work comes from an artistic context, I insist that it be seen as artistic work, but I am also interested in making the work easily accessible in other contexts, which definitely includes those where the technical conditions for presenting it aren't perfect. The point is also to establish alliances with the various movements that ultimately have to bring about the social changes the film calls for. And the film also expresses a lack of trust in representative democracy, because democratic social change can only be achieved through social movements.

Stange: Considered as art, the film is also a hybrid in some way. Right now there are two opposite polarities, exemplified by the last Berlin Biennial and the one before it. At the 7th Berlin Biennial Artur Zmijewski organized what was clearly an activist event, but then the next one, under pressure from the Bundeskulturstiftung [German Federal Cultural Foundation], was very conservative, centred on single works. There are two polarities, to put it simply: on the one side are works – sculpture and painting – and on the other is what could be called activism or cultural activism. Your works stand somewhere between the two.

Ressler: Yes, my work doesn't fall in any obvious way into either of the categories you describe. Some of my artistic work is tied quite closely to social movements, while other works are different and are primarily shown in art contexts. If I show works that came about through the involvement of activists as multi-channel video installations in art contexts, I make sure there is also a single-channel film version of them, so that they are available to activists and social movements for their events. Depending on the strength of the movements and that of my (or my collaborators') connections to them, the circulation of my films results in events and presentations. Some of the films have been shown more often in these contexts than in art settings.

Stange: I do have a problem with that. Isn't it superfluous to show a film like this to environmental activists? Of course they would hopefully agree with everything it says, but shouldn't it be shown somewhere entirely different, rather than inside an environmental activists' campaign or demonstration?

Ressler: Some of my films are used in the run-up to large demonstrations or events, in the mobilisation for them. There are often very young people in the audience who are not yet closely connected to the relevant movements, and the films are also used because they are informative. The films I made on the so-called alter-globali-

sation movement were often used in the mobilisation for demonstrations and blockades against upcoming summits. "Leave It in the Ground", however, does not feature speaking activists, so it can't be used so well for mobilisations.

Stange: I have another question: the term 'counter-public' [Gegenöffentlichkeit] has been used in the art scene since the 1980s or thereabouts, and your works are surely somehow part of this. What does it mean when someone talks about a 'counter-public'? Does it imply faith in the Enlightenment model even now? And is lack of enlightenment really the problem? After all, people these days know what they're doing when they're driving SUVs.

Ressler: I don't use this term 'counter-public'. I think we agree here that the problem today is not a lack of information but rather that information leads nowhere. Simply imparting knowledge will not lead to social change; unfortunately it just doesn't work that easily. I think social change can only be achieved by strengthening political movements around the world. That's why I work so much with oppositional movements in my films.

Stange: I would be interested to know how you choose the themes for your work? Because an artist is always caught somewhat between two extremes: either you're the truffle pig – that is, you find a theme so exclusive that no-one ever thought of it before – or else you're somehow within a mainstream and you jump on the bandwagon. And maybe that's not so bad, jumping on wagons… But where do you stand?

Ressler: To some extent I have been working on certain themes for many years. Global warming is one of the first themes I started working on as an artist, just after I finished my studies. I made my first work on climate change in 1996, a project at the Salzburger Kunstverein called "100 Jahre Treibhauseffekt" (100 Years of Greenhouse Effect). It revisited a text by the Swedish scientist Svante Arrhenius, who found the first scientific proof of a man-made greenhouse effect 100 years earlier in 1896. He never won much recognition even though it's now known that his calculations and hypothesis went in the right direction. The issue of global warming has appeared in my work ever since. Sometimes as the central focus, sometimes as a discourse connected to other issues. In 2000, for example, I dealt with the debate around sustainable development, which was widespread at the time and was also a response to global warming. But many themes run through my artistic work, including racism, migration, capitalism, forms of resistance and alternative social forms. These have been central issues for the last two centuries and – depending on local context or conceptual approach – they can lead to artistic work of many different kinds.

*This text is a shortened and edited transcript of a conversation between Oliver Ressler and Raimar Stange at the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau (Munich, Germany) on July 14, 2015, forming part of the exhibition series "Facts & Fiction".

Biographies:

Octavio Camargo is a composer and theatre director from Curitiba, Brazil. He is also Professor of Composition and Aesthetics at the School of Music and Fine Arts of Parana since 1992. He holds a Master in Literary Studies from Universidade Federal do Parana. He has presented a number of performances of the Iliad, developing a unique approach to the work, including a 24-hour performance at the Festival de Curitiba in 2016. Camargo has also presented installations, site-specific and social activism works, including Surface Tension Curitiba, 2006, A day in a life, Munich, 2008, We Live in the Samecity, Los Angeles, 2011, The Imaginary Republic / The Autonomous Odyssey (with Brandon LaBelle), Bergen, 2018.

Tatiana Fiodorova is an artist from Chisinau, Moldova. She is also active as a teacher, curator, and cultural manager. Fiodorova's work includes artist books, installations, live performances, public art, video and digital media. The content of her works tends to reflect the contemporary world in response to current issues: social, political and aesthetic. Very often she touches upon issues related to the local conflicts and problems of Moldova, such as the integration of Moldova into the European context and the problem of identity for the citizens of Moldova.

Rhiannon Firth is a researcher, writer, activist and educator focused on utopias, social movements, pedagogy and community organizing within, against and beyond crisis and disaster. She works as Senior Researcher in Sociology at the University of Essex, and completed her PhD in Political Theory at the University of Nottingham in 2010. Theoretically, she is informed by anarchism, poststructuralism, autonomism and utopian studies.

Architectural theorist and philosopher, writer and critic, Hélène Frichot is Professor of Architecture and Philosophy, and Director of the Bachelor of Design, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning, University of Melbourne, Australia. She is Guest Professor, and previous Director of Critical Studies in Architecture, School of Architecture, KTH Stockholm, Sweden. Her recent publications include *Dirty Theory: Troubling Architecture* (AADR 2019) and *Creative Ecologies: Theorizing the Practice of Architecture* (Bloomsbury 2018).

Brandon LaBelle is an artist, writer and theorist working with sound culture, voice, and questions of agency. He develops and presents artistic projects and performances within a range of international contexts, often working collaboratively and in public. His books include *The Other Citizen* (2020), *Sonic Agency* (2017), *Lexicon of the Mouth* (2014), *Diary of an Imaginary Egyptian* (2012), *Acoustic Territories* (2019; 2010), and *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (2015; 2006). He is Professor in New Media at the Art Academy, Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design, University of Bergen.

Marysia Lewandowska is a Polish-born artist based in London. She has been exploring the public functions of archives, museums and exhibitions resulting in projects involving the property of others. Amongst them are the Women's Audio Archive (2009), *Undoing Property?* with Laurel Ptak (2013), *It's About Time* at the 58th Art Biennale in Venice (2019). The Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw has included the Enthusiasts Archive in their collection.

Gerald Raunig is a philosopher and art theorist. He works at the Zürich University of the Arts, Zürich and the eipcp (European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies), Vienna. He is co-editor of the multilingual publishing platform Transversal Texts and the Austrian journal Kamion. He is the author of *Art and Revolution*, *A Thousand Machines*, and *Factories of Knowledge, Industries of Creativity,* all published by Semiotext[e].

Oliver Ressler is an artist who lives and works in Vienna. He produces theme-specific exhibitions, projects in the public space and videos on issues such as global capitalism, forms of resistance, social alternatives, racism and global warming. His work constantly tries to blur boundaries between art and activism.

The Sala-Manca Group is a group of independent Jerusalem-based artists that creates in different fields: performance, video, installation and new media since 2000. Sala-Manca's works deal with poetics of translation (cultural, mediatic and social), with textual, urban and net contexts and with the tensions between low tech and high tech aesthetics, as well as social and political issues. The Sala-Manca Group is Lea Mauas and Diego Rotman, artists born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, who live and work in Jerusalem.

Raimar Stange studied philosophy, German and journalism in Hanover. Today he works as a freelance art journalist and curator in Berlin. Stange regularly publishes in magazines such as Kunst-Bulletin, Zurich; taz, Berlin; Camera Austria, Graz; Artist, Bremen and artmagazine. He is currently curating exhibitions on topics such as climate change and right-wing populism.

Joulia Strauss is a supercat, shaman, multi-media artist, sculptor and political activist. She stands for adisciplinary art and for the unity of technology, science, activism and art in Berlin and Athens. She is also a founder and organizer of Avtonomi Akadimia, Athens. Her work was presented in cultural institutions of the central and peripheral Europe. She is focused on education as an art form and on the relation between art and revolution.

Manuela Zechner is a researcher, facilitator and cultural worker. Her main interests include subjectivity, movement micropolitics, care feminisms, migrations and ecology. She is currently doing postdoctoral work on childcare commons and the micropolitics of municipalism (AUTH Thessaloniki), as well as on care and ecological crisis (ICTA-UAB Barcelona).

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