

VOCABULARIES BULLABORATORIES

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This publication brings together some concepts that move us: words that act as doors or slides for us. We call this collection of concepts a 'vocabulary'. The points of entry it offers are rendered in a static form here, but any more or less rapid eye movement can set them back to work.

If concepts move us, it is because somehow we move them – towards ideas, articulations and actions that get us closer towards what we (often inadvertently) strive to answer to, desire and hope for. We thought of making a vocabulary-book that would collect the concepts that are important to us, because we find that by working on them and sharing them we can support our practices and everyday life. So this vocabulary book collects some of those conceptual frameworks as *entries* that point towards a larger and shareable vocabulary. The vocabulary that this book holds together is hence only a snapshot of certain things we are all working through, and its entries admittedly oscillate between referentiality and phantasm. These conceptual entries are messily connected to our selves, the groups and constellations we are in, the places we go, the things we hear and read – they come out of our lives and feed back into them. Whether we produce these entries through our memories of a journey, of a conversation or of the history of philosophy makes little difference to the way we end up using them: as access points to a way of articulating things that is never complete or perfect. We propose to see *entries* really quite literally as entry points or doorways that act as points of passage, and as such are experientially framed.

They're part of a search for relations, not for smart ways of using words, metaphysical security or self-representation (though these are never completely off). Entries are meant to function as frames through which our thoughts can open out to others and become contagious to them.

To be sure, this work with concepts and their affective and practical aspects is nothing new: our idea with this project and publication is to carefully work on the double sense (the meaning and the affective tonality) of the processes and situations we're engaged in. Our interest and hope is to understand *how* we can make concepts become *a*/effective for what we do – be it as students, cultural workers, writers, waiters, doctors, nurses, etc. It occurred to us that those entry points are a matter of survival in our lives, because they allow us to think and do things differently and so to keep moving. Hence we wanted to see if we could come up with a specific format that allowed us to share those ideas and strategies for movement more concretely. We also wondered what a vocabulary consisting of entries by quite different people and groups could do – whether it would produce moments of resonance/dissonance, outrage, rupture or contagion, if and how it would hold together.

Can this tell us anything about our voice in relation to others(')? Does the simple vocabulary format help us frame a choreo-graphy of practices, ideas and desires that may speak in many voices? Of course this format is much in use today, and surely there is many reasons for that – one perhaps being the need to share our linguistic as well as affective and practical knowl-

DI

access point

ACCESS (POINT)

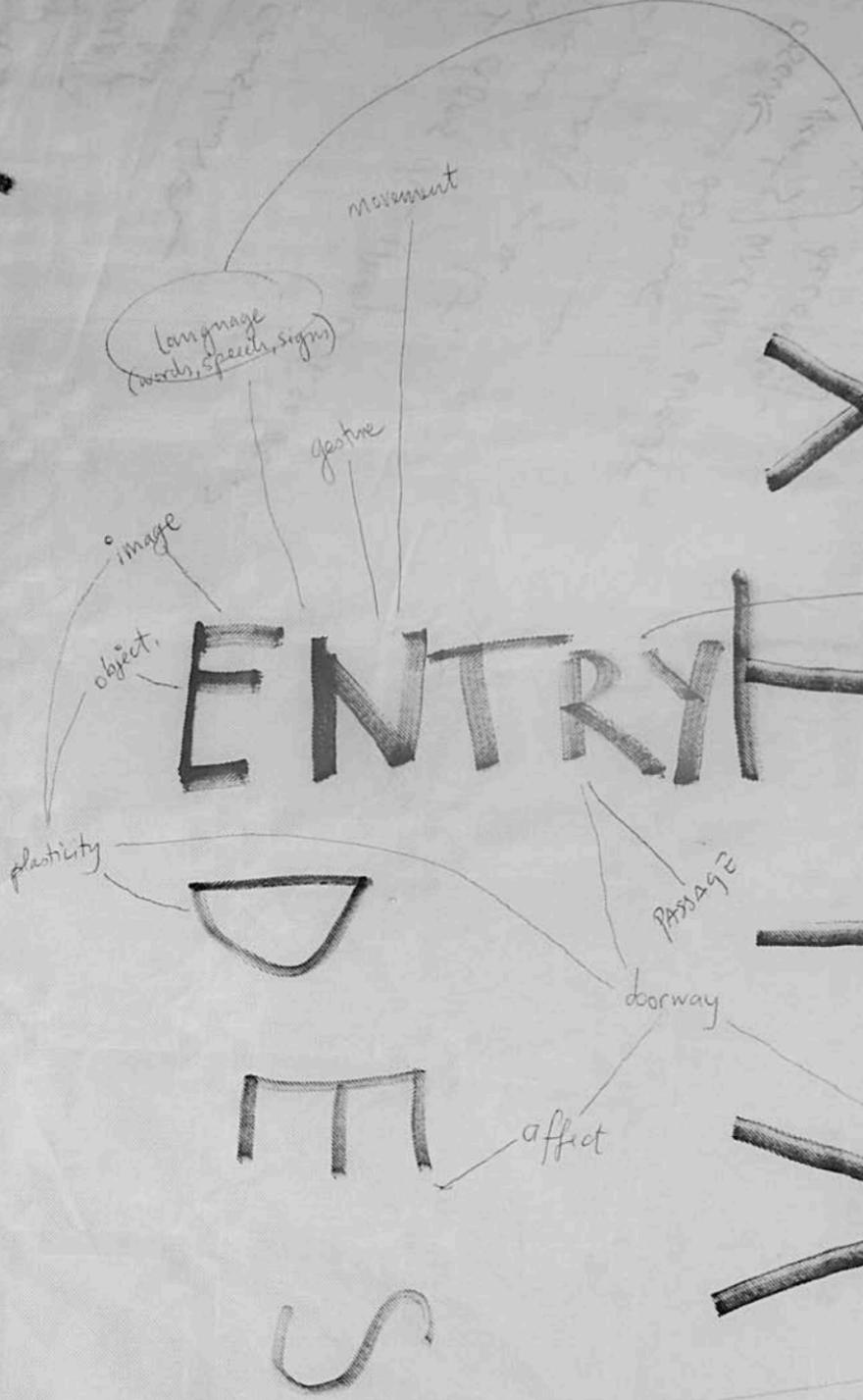
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L for
for

VOCA

How do we become vocal
with our doubts and problems



edges outside of institutionalised or commercialised contexts. We came to invest some hope in this need to find new relations and modes of address, in recognizing the various modes of dis-empowerment we are struggling with.

So then, entries are hardly guidelines or final solutions, but meta-stable resolutions, catalyzing devices that we use for many purposes. Clearly, this concept of entry is so broad that one can say, 'hey, but entries are everywhere, more or less potentially, waiting for someone to make them trespassable – beyond the space of this book and of the written text generally!'; and we'd agree. While much of this publication works through writing, we clearly also make our entries with gestures and movements that exceed the sphere of the linguistic, and certainly also that of art projects, academic references and good intentions. If entries constitute interventions in a discursive space, this space is in turn structured by various semiological instances, to be inhabited and acted upon by bodies and prostheses of all sorts. The production of relations cuts across registers and oppositions between language and movement, theory and practice: 'once you start considering relations, you're moving towards theory...', one of the contributors put it in a preparatory email. But if we end up producing something that starts to look like theory, that is because we started out engaging the ways in which we relate to people and things around us, and dealt with the ways in which we act upon those relations. Clearly theory cannot be the end point – we want to get from practice to theory and back again, to keep moving.

So then, having funding to make this book was an opportunity for tracing some of the ongoing movements we're engaged in. To us, the practice we called 'entry-writing' became operative in the way of a technology of our selves (self-selves, group-selves, work-selves), allowing us to find new ways of relating to the world, to our work, our modes of address, our ways of learning and our sometimes seemingly pathetically disparate ideas and desires. The collective aspect of this working on entries was key – we couldn't have gone far if we'd simply mapped out some concepts we are busy with, without exposing and proposing them to each other in ways that make us assume response-ability (here's one of our dear catalysts). Collectivity and participation has its limits with the format of a publication of course, which is clearly why the work on making entries takes on importance in the laboratories, and more importantly, beyond them. The strange claim to collectivity that this book makes, by presenting itself as a vocabulary, is a kind of provocation we like to work with: what could it mean to speak together?

Thanks to everyone who supported and worked with us on this, in the labs, on this publication, and elsewhere. We moved quite a bit in the process.

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a 'voice' and a vocabulary

The experience of listening to one's own voice can be highly disturbing and uncanny. Every once in a while we encounter our own voice via a recording, a telephone message, and it feels strange and awkward. More often than not, there is an embarrassment about hearing one's own voice, we may not like our own voice, and even find it difficult to believe that it is ours. It returns to us, not as an aspect of that which is the most personal and intimate part of ourselves, but as something distant and strange. The *vocabulaboratories* project defines vocabulary as something that belongs to the voice, and I would like to open out a few questions that can help us explore the relationship between our voice and our vocabulary. The relationship between voice and vocabulary is never an easy one. Does a vocabulary always belong to a voice as a matter of fact or even as a matter of right? Are there instances when we may possess a vocabulary without possessing a voice? What are the conditions under which a voice can make a vocabulary its own? Wittgenstein suggests that voice is what animates words. How do we read this distinction between our words and our voice, our speech and our utterance? It seems to suggest to me a crucial difference between our Vocabulary, as something that we may inherit, but not own. And to make our words our own, we have to find a voice. Thus rather than thinking of vocabulary as something that belongs to a voice, we may have to think of words as things that are always in search of a voice.

The possession of a vocabulary does not guarantee the existence of a voice. Indeed there may be a number of occasions where the desire to possess a vocabulary is what threatens the emergence of a voice. How often have we encountered speakers who seem to have such a vast repository of words, and yet say very little. What then is the life of words when they are separated from a voice? Stanley Cavell, following Wittgenstein, argues that the task of philosophy consists in returning words to their ordinary habitat, or recovering from words the voice that it threatens to dislodge. When words appear to have a life of their own, outside of experience, they appear to us in an alienated form. Wittgenstein describes this as language having gone for a holiday.

I would qualify this metaphor in the following manner. The analogy of someone having gone for a holiday suggest that this person is absent from his site of work. It seems more appropriate to think of words bereft of a voice as the scene of a person present in his workspace but not working. If we were to think this in relation to language, it could be thought of as a linguistic division of labour where the invocation of a particular word is supposed to automatically produce meaning and intelligibility. But we know that is certainly not the case, it is as though words are supposed to do the work by themselves, irrespective of a voice that animates them. One of my favorite words in this context is 'problematic'. We often hear assertions that 'x' is problematic but never hear anything beyond this as though the mere use of the word 'problematic' will do the work of explaining a range of phenomena for us by themselves.

I read the *vocabularatories* project as being one that invites us to think of ways in which we return voice to vocabularies. We may certainly possess a vocabulary, but what does it mean to possess a voice? What does it mean to make a vocabulary one's own? The space of a laboratory is always a space of contingency and experimentation, where no truths can be taken for granted, certainly not the truth of our voice. Instead a *vocabularatory* suggests a search – through experimentation – to find our own voice.

Ralph Waldo Emerson suggests that there is something similar at play when we think of our words and thoughts. He says,

‘A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages. Yet he dismisses without notice his thought, because it is his. In every work of genius we recognise our own rejected thoughts: they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty. Great works of art have no more affecting lesson for us than this. They teach us to abide by our spontaneous impression with good-humored inflexibility then most when the whole cry of voices is on the other side. Else, tomorrow a stranger will say with masterly good sense precisely what we have thought and felt all the time, and we shall be forced to take with shame our own opinion from another.’

As the inheritors of Descartes’ legacy, we are condemned to living with doubt and skepticism, not only about the world, but our selves in the world. Is there any writer or thinker who has not wondered about whether s/he has anything relevant to say? How often have our lips faltered and our pens stopped at the thought that anything that was worth saying has already been said? We may continue to live in the comforts of a vocabulary we possess, but we are also haunted by the fact that a vocabulary without a voice can only be a temporary space with the lurking threat of being evicted from the house of language.

And yet after recognising and acknowledging the difficulties of finding one’s own voice, we do not have a choice but to embark on the difficult journey of returning words to their ordinary space by finding one’s voice, because the stakes are just too high. The immediate threat of postponing the journey is to be condemned to being expressionless. Walter Benjamin, more than any other thinker, was acutely aware of this threat. Speaking about the decline of the storyteller in modernity, he writes of the experience of soldiers who had returned from the war silent. Not richer in experience, but poorer. He says that this was not surprising, for never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly than strategic experience by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power. A generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in

which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body.

Benjamin's invocation of the fragile human body standing beneath a force field of destructive torrents and explosions testifies to the experience of a person whose words do not belong to his voice. It were as though they possessed speech, but no voice. In these situations, when words do appear, they are 'like broken shadows of the motion of everyday words.... It was as if one's touch with these words and hence with life had been burnt or numbed'.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, we have already been subject to a number of processes that threaten to dislodge our words from their lived contexts and shared meanings. Words like Development, Growth, Progress, War, Enemy, Hostility seem to possess a power of their own which force us to alter our voice so that they may belong to the new vocabulary.

And yet it is precisely because death is the sanction of everything that the storyteller can tell and because he borrows his authority from death, that we have to continue to deny silence its authority over language. Silence is not then something that lies outside of language but a condition of speech and of the voice. Veena Das, writing about the relationship between violence and language, argues that the ethical challenge for us is the building of a shared language upon the debris of a numbing violence with no assurance that there are secure conventions in which such a language can be founded.

To speak therefore of finding one's own voice amidst the rubble of language and experience is not to ask for the discovery of some unique, original and imaginary self that transcends the conventions of the ordinary. It is to recognise that language always dwells in the midst of our lives, or in what Wittgenstein calls a *form of life*: 'The *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life', and to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life. It is instead to look at how the space of a *vocabulaboratory* becomes a shared space of experimentation and imagination – with ideas of self, of language and the self in language, where we explore the fragile intimacy of our voice by learning to listen to the voices of

those around us. The urgent task of the contemporary era is to care enough for our words and our voice. I find my voice echoed in the words of Toni Morrison: 'We die: that may be the meaning of life, but we do language, that may be the measure of our lives'.

bare life, plain life, a life

My point of departure is the relation between power and life. What power over life today (biopower) is, what the potency of life today is (biopotency), and how the relation between them occurs in the form of a Moebius strip. But today more than ever, the power over life as well as the potency of life are necessarily connected to the body. Therefore, I would like to work with three modes of 'life' - that is, three concepts of life, each with its correspondent bodily dimension, as if going through this strip of Moebius.

The first is *bare life*, with Agamben as point of departure. The prisoners of extermination camps gave the name *Muselmaenner* (following the simplistic and certainly mistaken image of a supposed Islamic fatalism) to those who had 'given up', who submitted themselves to fate without reserve. They were the living dead, the mummy-men, the shell-men, the indifferent, the glazed look, mere silhouettes, which the Nazis called *Figuren*; figures, dummies, mere walking bodies. They inhabited an intermediate zone between life and death, between human and inhuman. Biopower reduces life to biological survival, producing survivors. (We can confirm this from Guantanamo to Africa).

But could it be that survivors are only those populations submitted to an extreme state? Or should we widen the notion of 'bare life' to contain the contemporary 'survivalism' which character-

ises our capitalist system (Zizek), this form of life reduced to low intensity, tepid hypnosis, sensorial anaesthesia disguised as hyper excitement, this cyber-zombie existence gently grazing among services and merchandises, *living and thinking like pigs* (Châtelet)? Wouldn't it be necessary to think about this terminal stage as the extreme form of contemporary nihilism?

This leads us to a second category, *plain life*, to account for this nihilism, this degradation of existence, this depreciation of life, this exhaustion of the 'last man', this non-wiling (Nietzsche) – but in a very precise, capitalistic, context. Since the emergence of a new culture of the body in the last decades, this category's correlate is no longer the disciplined body, trained and striated by the Fordist panoptical machine, but rather the body submitted to voluntary askesis, according to the double precept of normative scientificity and the culture of the spectacle. The obsession with physical perfectibility in body-centred culture, encompassing infinite possibilities for transformation – as announced by genetic, chemical, electronic or mechanic prostheses – and the compulsion of the self to incite the desire of the other, even through self-imposed mutilation. The tyranny of corporeality in the name of sensorial enjoyment requires a new modality of askesis, bioaskesis (Ortega). The present care of the self (unlike in ancient times when men aimed for a beautiful life) has the body itself as target (the body is identity: subjective bio-identity); its longevity, health, beauty, good shape, scientific and spectacular happiness, or what Deleuze would call the 'fat dominant health'.

How to escape this? David Lapoujade defines the body as 'that which endures no more'. But what is it that the body cannot endure? Disciplinary drilling, biopolitical mutilation, survivalist mortification, be it in a state of exception or in the nihilist everyday (the 'Muselmann', the 'cyber-zombie', the 'spectacle-body').

It would be necessary to come off the obsession of researching 'what can be done with the body' (a biopolitical issue: what interventions, what manipulations, what improvements, eugenics ...), and start to experiment with 'what a body can do' (a vitalistic,

Spinozian issue: what power to affect or be affected are we capable of, what potencies of life are striated by the powers over life). But how can we differentiate Spinoza's perplexity with the fact that we do not yet know 'what the body can do' – a challenge that technoscience cannot necessarily answer to, since it works precisely on 'what can be done with/to the body'? How to differentiate the necessary decomposition and disfiguration that enables forces that cross the body to create and liberate new potencies – a current that has characterised part of our culture of the last decades in its diverse experiments, from dances to drugs to literature – from the decomposition and disfiguration that biotechnological manipulation elicits and stimulates? Potencies of life that need a Body without Organs for their experimentation, on the one hand, power over life that requires a post-organic body to be annexed by the capitalistic axiomatic, on the other.

Thus, in a third moment, in opposition to both *bare life* and *plain life*, it would be necessary to define Deleuze's conception of a life, in its dimension of virtuality, of immanence, of pure potency and of beatitude. In the wake of such a definition to be unfolded, the body emerges as open to the outside (Hijikata, Blanchot), in a passiveness thought as affectivity (Nietzsche, Kafka) enabling the recreation of a body that has the power to start (Artaud). Artaud's 'innate genital' is the story of a body that puts into question the born-into body, its functions and organs, which represent the orders, institutions, technologies that he named 'God's judgement'. Life is this body, as long as we discover the body in its genetic power, in its dimension of virtuality, of molecularity, flow, vibration, intensity, affects, event, composition and connection, speed and slowness.

Finally, it would be necessary to oppose *a life* and *bare life*, where the latter is understood as life reduced to a state of mere actuality, indifference, deformity, impotency and biological banality. If they are both so opposed, but at the same time so 'superposed', this is by virtue of the fact that, in a biopolitical context, life is a battle field; and, as Foucault said, it is where power incides with greater strength – life, the body – that resistance will find its ground...

but precisely by inverting the signals... In other words, it is sometimes in the extreme of *bare life* that we discover *a life*, as it is in the extreme of biopower that we discover the biopotency *that was already there*. Perhaps there is something in the extortion of life that should come to term, so this life can appear in a different way... Something must be exhausted, as Deleuze sensed in *L'épuisé*, for another game to be thinkable...

Translated from Brazilian
by Susana Martinho Lopes,
Rodrigo Nunes and Manuela
Zechner.

you may also want to go to:
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bullshit

According to the truth theorists, bullshit, like lie and humbug, essentially has to do with deception and/or untruth. As in their Wittgensteinian sentence theories, they ignore that a good deal of discourse and, generally, human intercourse is not about truth or falsehood and is ill defined using the criterium of truth or truthfulness.

Coming on. Bullshit relative to surroundings

Bullshit is a temporary flight, as in shunning or perverting existing terminology that is too primitive but one is not (yet) able to constructively influence it

or doesn't want to because it's a broken old boat beyond repair
or possibly one is clear about the status quo of the terminology
being insufficient, but not yet clear about the finer points of this
complaint or how it could be better

so we do some experiments with bullshit

open things up and leave them staring, open boxes

flee the meta level, stay right in the stuff and get the meta level to
come on down

and get the meta level dirty

so it gets contaminated and shows the disease

and let the meta level talk to the sentences that carry knives in
their handbags

or will just turn their back again with a sigh
whereupon I, Bullshit, will creep from below, reach an arm out of
the mud, slit their handbags, steal the knives and throw all the
knives against the wall.

Bullshit a productive pool, a work table or bar where gold pan-
ning is done out back. Every couple of hours someone comes in
with another nugget in muddy fingers
a splashy chemistry lab
a place of bad society where you meet the best people your moth-
er told you were perverts, but they'll carry you home three times
running – these are the pathological liars that want to keep them-
selves out of the world but can't see a cat die
when your mind's on holiday and your other mind is giving a par-
ty to fool the neighbors and you're in the cellar building a robot
while the other kids from school loll in the yard
when the glue runs out on Sunday and you notice you can do it
with string, too, even if it turns into something else
and then you say yes, you meant it exactly the way it came out.
Because to see that it is good is as much as to have created. Crea-
tion is Selection.

Metaphor and bullshit

Cf. Lacan
Cf. Davidson
Cf. Rilke
Cf. Bob Dylan
Cf. DeMan

Social Bullshit

— Positive bullshit (A lot of feedback, empty positive phrases
about feelings, nothing you can hook on to, nothing that hooks
you. You are not inclined to really share your feelings with the
others participating in this lab, which is natural. You are not even
inclined to have feelings you can take seriously in this context,
which is too bad. You face the choice: retreat from active partici-

pation and have your own real feelings, or participate and block real feelings with the fake collective feeling bullshit, positive or slightly constructively critical. Multitasking might include retreating but repeatedly slicing the situation with a piercing comment, as if you were a commentator whose own position isn't relevant and doesn't bother anyone.)

—Negative bullshit (You go full throttle with your retreat, much further than is warranted by the situation. You enjoy and let others enjoy depreciating and putting off what you are talking about. The most darling pleasure in this is letting love of the thing being cuffed shimmer through. This can open onto the idea of having everything you say reinterpreted.)

Bullshit as beating about the bush (this corresponds to Sokrates' midwife argumentation style) Build your bullshit so that anyone who enters instantly recognises the truth. Many novels work that way, like Houellebecq or Tolstoi.

Deceitful

Social Bullshit has lead from my personal mythology, which construes bullshit as a mostly positive, dadaistic kind of force or game, to the more general, mostly negative notion of bullshit. While I tend to use it as a kind of sieving process or binding. (What is stupid clots and sinks away into the void.) (Monika Rinck uses cows. She puts cows in her poems, the cows attract and bind everything that is bad in the poem, then she takes the cows back out.) Admittedly there may be a hedonistic snigger when one is playing with the gullible, but there is no other purpose than the general promotion of discernment and subtlety. The main idea is that a bullshitter follows a certain purpose and cons others, subordinating them through trickery to help him reach his goal. This is the evil bullshit if the goal is not general improvement of knowledge but evil. Two types and gradual mixes between the two. Evil Bullshit A, let's call him Rumsfeld, is close to the lie, more or less carefully made to lead people to believe a certain version. This is what the basic definition I found on Wikipedia refers to: 'Most commonly, (bullshit) describes tautological,

incorrect, misleading, or false language and statements. (...) Bullshitting is usually used to describe statements that are false, or made-up. Usually people describe other people's action of making a lot of statements as bullshitting in arguments, when one is making up rules or making examples that are not anything to do with what they are discussing or when one is making statements by using examples that need different rules to be applied, so this person is bullshitting' (By subtraction of the intersocial side, all this applies to my version of bullshit as well, which differs from the general understanding in that it moves in philosophical, not social space. More yet, perhaps what I am doing in my bullshit endeavours is foolery with myself, describing erratic circles by being alternately bullshitter and bullshitted, the switch being flipped by a certain level of saturation perhaps, tautology and other things corresponding to what according to Davidson tells us to read a metaphor as a metaphor.) To make sense as a term, Rumsfeld bullshit must be clearly discerned from the lie, which is perhaps what is meant by tautological: ideally, bullshit can be recognised without further information, or at least with nothing more than the common information assumed inside the radius of the bullshit. This is another formulation of what Harry Frankfurt claims in saying bullshit is badly made, cf. also the theory of the worst tool. A claim he makes only to prove the opposite, partly for the good reason that his book is aimed at political bullshit, but he likewise keeps a necessary, perhaps conscious flaw. Using examples with the wrong rules, as in the Wiki definition, would be an example. A lie can be impossible to recognise due to lack of information; some definitions in fact make that a defining factor of the lie (if the person lying knows that the person lied to knows it is a lie, is it still a lie etc.). So the Rumsfeld model of deceitful bullshit fills the space between the lie and Evil Bullshit B, which we shall call Bush. The evilness of Bush is more or less fulfilled by stupidity and malleability. This bullshit is fake bullshit in the sphere of Deceitful Bullshit, corresponding to the above typology. It serves mostly to fill spaces with pseudo sense, but is not intelligently or carefully enough construed to really mislead anyone who attempts to follow. If care is taken, it is to avoid sense, to avoid saying anything. It is like the computer generated texts one

sometimes gets in the email, it probably serves a purpose that is up to no good, but the text is an inactive component of the strategy. Additionally, the more primitive a level of rhetoric and persuasion is entered, the easier it is to without much effort construe some Bush that repeats certain things that are supposed to be burnt into minds and thus act as active text without needing the sentences even to be understood or followed, clearly down to a pure matter of word statistics. Perhaps you will bear with me when I say that stupidity, ignorance and intellectual laziness are the most powerful evils in the world.

So now we are sliding into the area of ethics, raising questions: am I responsible for others understanding me? May I play my personal bullshitting game with others who aren't informed of the ludistic quality of my truth conception? If subtle markers are enough for some, may I call the others stupid? Must I interpret my eveningland irony into earnest literal speech for those coming from less decadent cultures? How solid may I build my bullshit buildings? What if one of the transient concepts sticks and it happens to be world extermination? Have I come to depend on my ludistic notion of truth? Can anyone still hurt me, and if not, why do I seem to still be able to hurt others? Isn't bullshit a basic element of humanity and learning, what they build the most primitive huts out of and what they talk to their babies about?

If we are practical and assume that thinking cannot be evil, only deeds can – thus saving a paedophile from being evil as long she restrains herself, for example, or allowing us to play sado-maso games – then what about speech acts? What about misunderstandings? Bullshit is tumbleweed, is a prairie fire, and knocks into hard things sometimes. A loose horse running will run over people and fall into abysses. Maybe remote control is a good personal tool to guide the mind.

Short commentary on quotations from Harry Frankfurt, coming back to the remark at the beginning of this entry.

‘Still it would certainly be untrue to say any use of language borders on a lie’ is kind of a beautiful sentence like the one about the

Crete. But I beg to disagree: It would be one of those DeManish truisms, I suppose, not very useful to say, but probably and palpably true. 'On what kind of continuum could one possibly first encounter humbug, then lie?' I think on the line of approach toward another conscious and active individual. Like approaching the sun, the appearance of humbug and then lie is a physical law, like things grow hotter under pressure or evade when poked. 'His field of vision resembles a panorama more than a focal point'. One needs a whole programme for bullshit (=surroundings, the legs of the lie). Honesty itself is bullshit when we, like the world, are squirming

The word bullshit in this use apparently arose around 1915. Its first documented use (following the Concise Oxford Dictionary) is in the title of T.S.Eliot's early (between 1910 and 1916), unpublished ballad

The Triumph of Bullshit

Ladies, on whom my attentions have waited
If you consider my merits are small
Etiolated, alembicated,
Orotund, tasteless, fantastical,
Monotonous, crotchety, constipated,
Impotent galamatias
Affected, possibly imitated,
For Christ's sake stick it up your ass.
(...)

Etymology derives the word from words revolving around the syllable 'bul' in French and Middle English meaning fraud, foolery etc. There also, however, seems to be an example of Ernst Fuhrmann's concept of telephony in action here, the process of a symbol growing to mean its opposite in some way, as a 'bull' was, already in those times, also a certain document the pope would send you if you misbehaved politically. Since today, religion is one of the things most flogged with the reproach of bullshit, it is the synaesthetic kathartic bovine intestine chirurgic art of hermann

nitsch where we might be able to sit down and have lunch now.

google results for

'bullshit religion'	61.000
'bullshit sex'	662.000 (though i think a lot of them say
'no bullshit sex')	
'bullshit mother'	539.000 (mostly pure cuss sites, one
about mother teresa)	
'bullshit bush'	509.000
'bullshit obama'	421.000
'bullshit clinton'	409.000
'bullshit rumsfeld'	144.000
'bullshit deutschland'	178.000
'bullshit frankfurt'	158.000
'bullshit ann cotten'	4.850

The enormous tragedy of the dream in the peasant's bent
shoulders

Manes! Manes was tanned and stuffed,

Thus Ben and La Clara *a Milano*

by the heels at Milano

That maggots shd/ eat the dead bullock

DIGONOS, διγονος, but the twice crucified

where in history will you find it?

yet say this to the Possum: a bang, not a whimper,

with a bang not with a whimper,

To build the city of Diocèse whose terraces are the colour of stars.

The suave eyes, quiet, not scornful,

rain also is of the process.

What you depart from is not the way

and olive tree blown white in the wind

washed in the Kiang and Han

what whiteness will you add to this whiteness,

what candor?

★ ★ ★

and there was a smell of mint under the tent flaps
especially after the rain

and a white ox on the road toward Pisa
as if facing the tower,
dark sheep in the drill field and on wet days were clouds
in the mountain as if under the guard roosts.

A lizard upheld me
the wild birds wd not eat the white bread
from Mt. Taishan to the sunset

From Carrara stone to the tower

and this day the air was made open
for Kuanon of all delights,

Linus, Cletus, Clement

whose prayers,

the great scarab is bowed at the altar

the green light gleams in his shell

plowed in the sacred field and unwound the silk worms early in
tensile

in the light of light is the *virtù*

‘sunt lumina’ said Erigena Scotus

as of Shun on Mt. Taishan

and in the hall of the forbears

as from the beginning of wonders

the paraclete that was present in Yao, the precision

in Shun the compassionate

in Yu the guider of waters

* * *

Tempus tacendi, tempus loquendi.

Never inside the country to raise the standard of living

but always abroad to increase the profits of usurers,

dixit Lenin,

and gun sales lead to more gun sales

they do not clutter the market for gunnery

there is no saturation

Pisa, in the 23rd year of the effort in sight of the tower

and Till was hung yesterday

for murder and rape with trimmings

plus Cholakis

plus mythology, thought he was Zeus ram or another one

Hey Snag wots in the bibl'?
wot are the books ov the bible?
Name 'em, don't bullshit ME.

★ ★ ★

a man on whom the sun has gone down
and the wind came as hamadryas under the sun-beat
Vai soli

are never alone

amid the slaves learning slavery
and the dull driven back toward the jungle
are never alone ^ϸHAION ΠΙΕΠΙ ^ϸHAION
as the light sucks up vapor
and the tides follow Lucina
that had been a hard man in some ways
a day as a thousand years
as the leopard sat by his water dish;¹

This seems a sad ending to me, let me explain. I was looking in the internet for the reference I had too carelessly noted, and the first way in which found that *Canto* contained our word was in a review of Frankfurt and a book on truth. The reviewer wrote 'The context of the poem is of not much help'. The reviewer, writing for the Financial Times, sees help as something practical being doled out. Still I was thankful for the reference.

It is not necessary for everybody to understand everything, and it is harmful for everybody to think they should be able to. Like the campaign 'No Child Left Behind' it leads to nobody understanding much of anything, and the greatest part of all energy being spent on getting worked up about things poorly understood, carelessly formulated and recklessly passed on. But I know that I for one tend to prefer the melancholy of being misunderstood to the bustle and frustration of trying to interact with others. There is nothing but interior emptiness that can prompt curiosity and love of knowledge and understanding. Shame, a boathook – what used to keep compact elite slice of society on the cutting edge of science, the arts, etc. – has been turned around. Everybody must be yanked at. And with centuries of learning around our ankles, we

tend to deny these pants ever belonged to us, that we were ever other than naked. And pull our invisible cloaks around us, that all look like something from WalMart.

So I wondered whether the leopard was thinking anymore as she sat by her water dish. A century of Elvis, a graveyard of names. Pound doesn't need to be understood for the good of humanity. And it seems as if he were pouting when he piles names and names and names on the table, not even interested in whether or not we react. He grumpily assumes we don't know most of the references, tosses out the largess of his poetic formulations without ever glancing to see if they hit on fertile ground, and is prematurely nostalgic for an age of learning that is only just in the process of disappearing. Like a lover too busy mourning the demise of her relationship to be able to even be dragged by the feet back into a possible happy end, he is really no help for humanity. But what is this? 'Vai Soli' turns out to be a misspelling of Vae Soli, Damned is she who is alone. Now, we know that misspelling can be a form of cussing out the window when alone in a tent; the smoke curls upward, turning, in this case, an e into an i. It also means 'Go!'.

¹ Pound, E. (1948) *Canto LXXIV*.

Common

Everyday language ascribes to the 'common' the feeble value of banality or evidence: what is common is above all that which is never recognised as an object of desire, which is everywhere, without scarcity or mystery. No recognition for what is almost an 'excess' of existence: the common is too present for one to notice it, too clearly exposed for one to look into it. At most one ascribes virtues of sharing to it: the common is everyone's, it does not belong to anyone in particular, since everyone has access to it. In bourgeois homes, the 'commons' were, for a long time, the sites of domesticity: at once the space that is subtracted from the view of eventual visitors – who are instead confined to the rooms of 'representation' –, the set of functions that have no place in the pure theatre of social relations (kitchens, toilets, larders, laundry rooms), and the behind-closed-doors in which are found those who, while being the ones that ensure the house's daily functioning, are paradoxically the most radically excluded from it. The commons are the domain of shadows, the wings of a stage whose floodlights illuminate a domesticity which could not quite exist without them.

Philosophically speaking, however, to have something in common also concerns what is posed as foundation, as the ground of a co-belonging. From the point of view of political philosophy in particular, the common thus always appears to precede community,

to represent its ground, support, unmovable root, essence, nature. Thinking a community is difficult without the reassuring identification of what makes it compact; very often, in fact, the identification of the 'common' is perceived as the absolute condition of possibility of all co-belonging, and it seems impossible to imagine a dimension where Being-together would not be, before all else – logically, chronologically, ontologically –, built upon a space of resemblance, a bond, a shared element. The 'shared' is thus recognised as the ground of future sharings, and the community can grow in size and strength only to the extent that it is already rooted in the common that justifies it: the pretty tautology of a political thought for which the definition of the *polis* is at once its own cause and effect.

What is then the relation between the (almost) shameful presence of the 'commons' in a residence and the virtuous circle that assigns to politics the construction of what is paradoxically an originary *datum*? The most evident characteristic is that of invisibility: 'low' and contemptible in the first case, 'high' and too pure for the pale eyes of men in the second. That invisibility should be embodied by the (carefully dissimulated) inverse of social decorum or by the distant roots of being-together in a pure definition of our essence, that it be thus tied to a world of needs that are deemed undignified, or to a founding transcendence – it is invisibility that imposes its mark on the 'common'. As that which one cannot see or which one has no access to, invisibility is a prohibition, an impossibility. The common is, from the start, shut off.

Now, what if it were on the contrary a matter of granting the common the visibility of its own immanence? If, in refusing both the shameful closed door of the domestic back-rooms and the excessively luminous source of what we are supposed to be for all eternity, we dedicate ourselves at once to restituting a shadowless plenitude to the existence of men, and to no longer thinking in the wake of a transcendence that we will never be sufficiently worthy of? If, finally, it were a matter of affirming once and for all that the common is what is to be politically constructed through

the establishment of new communities and not what always precedes – as a condition of possibility – our existence? In short: what if what we needed today was to think the common as unencumbered by the prohibition that blocked access to it, but rather instead made once more tangible and accessible, placed in front of us, ahead of us – to think the common as a line of sight, a near horizon, a space to be invested in, an open possibility, which is also to say, as the necessarily provisional product of a ceaselessly re-proposed invention? What if what was necessary, at this beginning of the 21st century, was to invent a new grammar of the political, that is, above all to deconstruct the opposition between private and public, individual and *polis*, particular and universal, between the shadows of the domestic world and the theatre of pure social representation, to redefine – in broad daylight – the common as an at once singular and shared space of life, invention without roots yet of multiple foliage, product of human action rather than their supposed essence. In short: a new articulation between the differences of each one of us, and the space of their possible assemblage; the slow and progressive elaboration of new forms of life where kitchens count as much as the reception halls, where intelligence would also be said of material relations, where knowledges would invest the construction of affects or the research of pleasures just as much as the abstractions of the intellect; a new organisation of shared life through institutions that included in their own being the ever relaunched possibility of their own constituent transformation...

The metaphor of the house – split between spaces of representation on one side and ‘commons’ on the other – is deliberate. I could have just as well said ‘private’ and ‘public’ space. It is certainly not accidental if, also in the domain of political thought, the chief obstacles to the redefinition of the notion of ‘common’ (again: not as founding origin of all community, but as political construction of new and shared ways of living) are these two notions of ‘public’ and ‘private’. As a matter of fact, together they seem to constitute a pair of conceptual pincers outside of which it is different to situate oneself: everything that is not ‘public’ seems to automatically belong to the ‘private’; inversely, what is

cannot be managed by the purely domestic economy of the household is necessarily exposed to the public scene of political affairs. Let us therefore return for a moment to these categories, which we must by all means dismantle if we are to think the 'common' differently.

What is private is what belongs to no-one but me, what I refuse to share with others. Private property – Rousseau *dixit*: *and the first man to say 'this is mine'...* - is an appropriation of the common by an individual, that is, immediately and at the same time an expropriation of all others. Today, private property consists precisely in denying humans their common right over that which their cooperation alone can produce: innovation, social cooperation, the circulation of knowledges – in short, everything that, in the time of cognitive capitalism, presents itself ever more as the keystone of economic valorisation. The second category, the 'public', seems then to oppose itself to this undue appropriation. The good Rousseau, who was so harsh with private property when he (not without reason) made it into the source of all human corruptions and sufferings, immediately falls for it: to escape the private, let us jump into the gaping mouth of the public. The exteriority of the private is the public, and vice-versa: we are allowed no margin outside this game of reciprocal reference.

Here, then, the problem of the *Social Contract* – of modern democracy itself: since private property creates inequality, how to invent a political system where everything belongs to all, and nevertheless to no-one? '*... nevertheless to no-one ...* '*... the trap closes in on Jean-Jacques, and on us at the same time. This, then, is what the public consists in, at the very heart of modern political thought, in the 18th century, and in the wake of this Enlightenment tradition on which we often ground our own attachment to democracy and reason, that is, also equality and justice: that which belongs to all but to no-one, or rather, what belongs to the state.*

Since the state should be us, it is quite necessary that its efficient agents have some kind of cover with which they can embellish the

fact that they have their hands on the common: to make us believe, for instance, that if the state represents us, and takes on rights that are ours, it is because this ‘we’ that we are is not what we produce *in common*, invent and organise *as common*, but rather what allows us to exist. The common – thus says the state – does not belong to us, since we do not truly create it: the common is that which is our ground, foundation, what is under our feet; our *nature*, our *identity*. And if this common does not truly belong to us – *being* is not *having* –, then the state’s hand over the common will not be called appropriation, but (economic) management, delegation and (political) representation. QED: implacable beauty of public pragmatism. Nature and identity are mystifications of the modern paradigm of power. To reappropriate our common, it is first of all necessary to produce a radical critique of this paradigm. We are nothing, and we do not want to be anything. ‘We’ is not a position or essence, a ‘thing’ that one could declare public. Our common is not our ground, but our production, our ceaselessly recommenced invention. ‘We’: the name of a horizon, the name of a becoming. The common is always ahead of us, a process. We are this common: to make, to produce, to participate, to share, to circulate, to enrich, to invent, to restart.

For three centuries we have thought democracy as the administration of the public thing (*res publica*), that is, as the institution-alisation of the state’s appropriation of the common. Today, democracy can no longer be thought if not in radically different terms: as common management of the common. This management implies in turn a redefinition of space – cosmopolitan – and of time – constituent. It is no longer a matter of defining a form of contract that makes it so that *everything, belonging to all, does not belong to any-one*. No: *everything, produced by all, belongs to every-one*.

To reappropriate the common, to reconquer not a thing but a constituent process, which is also to say the space in which it is given – that of the metropolis. To trace diagonals in the rectilinear space of control: to oppose diagrams with diagonals, grids with interstices, positions with movements, identities with be-

comings, endless cultural multiplicities with simple natures, pretensions of origin with artifices. In a beautiful book, some years ago, Jean Starobinski spoke of the Century of Lights as a time that saw 'the invention of liberty'. If modern democracy was the invention of liberty, radical democracy today wishes to be the invention of the common.

Translated from French by
Rodrigo Nunes.

you may also want to go to:

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→ 74 militant research

→ 99 radical diplomacy



Cover Her
Face

Der Mann
ohne
Eigen-
schaften

All
Passion
Spent

Tiles of the
Unexpected:
A Study of Six
Miles of
Geometric
Tile Patterns
on the London
Underground

Greek Rural
Postmen
and Their
Cancellation
Numbers

A Portrait of
the Artist as
a Young Man

Le Grande
Cahier

Where
Angels
Fear
to Tread

Comment: Criticality differs from other forms of practice involving repetition. This is because Critical Practice is more about deconstructing assumptions than perfecting a skill.

Comment: Criticality can be maintained over time. As Practice follows Critical follows Practice in an accumulation of understanding, the slippage of actions that provoke unease with what we thought we knew keeps us moving.

or

In collaboration, like members of a body, we are dislodged out of our certainties. We compromise on (mine for yours, yours for mine) criticality, to stimulate further reflection.

critical practice

Crit-i-cal |¹kritikəl| (f. L. critic-us (see CRITIC a.) + -AL)

ORIGIN: mid 16th cent. (in the sense (relating to the crisis of a disease)): from late Latin *criticus* (see *critic*).

(Oxford American Dictionaries)

FUNCTION: *adjective* 'relating to, or being, a state in which a measurement or point at which some *quality*,¹ *property*,² or *phenomenon*³ suffers a definite change'

(Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

1 expressing comments or judgments: *Some members were critical⁴ of the body's decision to proceed given the...*

– Criticality can be maintained. (Or can it?) It is reflective, vigilant, persistently aware, (self) conscious, a series of moments repeated over time. *He aspired to greater criticality because...*

2 (of a situation or problem) having the potential to become disastrous; at a point of crisis: *It was getting late, discensus seemed inevitable, the situation became increasingly critical and...*

– or

It is the moment of crisis, a disturbance, a feeling of unease articulated through the body, a watching and waiting: *About noon, however, she began – but with a caution – a dread of disappointment which for some time kept her silent...to fancy, to hope she could perceive a slight amendment in her sister's pulse; – she waited, watched, and examined it again and again; – and at last...*

('Sense and Sensibility' ƒ. Austen)

3 **Critical Practice**⁵ critical thinking as a practice: *Biology of collaboration...*

– Not a duality (*Critical against Practice*), not linear progress (*better Critical, better Practice*), no certainties (*we have been so Critical in our Practice ...*), but experiments, openness, reflections, collaborations, trust, shared language, shared actions.

4 Mathematics & Physics relating to or denoting a point of transition from one state to another:

– (of a nuclear reactor or fuel) maintaining a self-sustaining chain reaction : *The reactor is due to go critical after...*

Synonyms: ANALYTICAL, CAPTIOUS, CARPING, CENSORIOUS, CRUCIAL, DECISIVE, ESSENTIAL, EVALUATIVE, EXPLANATORY, EXPOSITORY, FAULTFINDING, HYPERCRITICAL, IN-THE-BALANCE, INTERPRETIVE, KEY, PARAMOUNT, PICKY, SERIOUS, RISKY, PERILOUS, VITAL

Antonyms: COMPLEMENTARY, SAFE, UNIMPORTANT

Critical Practice 4-6-08 21:56

Comment: Chains of meaning are braided through time and through overlapping vocabularies – from Greek and Latin etymologies, via medieval renaming, Renaissance (re-births), re-illuminations, and more recent medleys.

Critical Practice 4-6-08 21:56

Comment: We want to undo familiar perceptions of criticality and posit new hybrids. We recognize the uncertainty of Critical Illness, the urgency of Critical Care, the judgement of Critical Thinking within our embodied Critical Practice.

Critical Practice 4-6-08 21:56

Comment: We want to undo familiar perceptions of criticality and posit new hybrids. We recognize the uncertainty of Critical Illness, the urgency of Critical Care, the judgement of Critical Thinking within our embodied Critical Practice.

Critical Practice 4-8-08 14:41

Comment: If Practice is embodied in collaboration, Critical Practice is more practical than idealist. It is dynamic, moving from certainty to uncertainty.

Critical Practice 16-9-08 9:41

Comment: 'Critical' in a Google search brings up Critical illness insurance. Criticality is something sudden, created by the demands of the moment, the point before the outcome when life hangs in the balance.

¹ Is criticality a quality, an essential characteristic of a person or approach?

² Is criticality a property, a trait that can be adopted (or abandoned) at will?

³ Is criticality a phenomenon, an observable event?

⁴ Criticality as the censoring of oneself and others: how can criticality be generative rather than restrictive, and is this best achieved by using the 'crisis' definition of critical or an alternative notion emphasising its ongoing, reflective nature?

⁵ But what is 'Critical Practice'? How productive is habitual criticality? How do we move from Critical to Practice? How do we shift into Critical Praxis? What is embodied criticality?

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cultural mobility

Negotiating engagement across cultural difference presents many questions that we all face at various points in our lives. Questions such as: how can we help someone feel welcomed into a new space, place, or context? How to engender one's acceptance into a new group, community, or culture? What is effective cross-cultural engagement? How do we express, hear and be heard when practicing in or engaging with cultural psychologies different from our own? To what extent can reflections on class, gender, linguistic, physical and cultural difference facilitate understanding and strong, even and reciprocal communication? How do we balance a desire for our own understanding with a desire to be understood? How do we maintain and celebrate the integrity of our own identity, social mores, and cultural psychologies? And how do we do this while building the capacity to move comfortably and as a welcomed element of a new community/space?

In finding means of engagement, there is a difficult line that needs to be walked, teetering between counterproductive and awkward navel-gazing that can result from hypotheticals of identity politics, and finding effective ways to play well with others in new contexts. I want to be accepted and I want to be able to accept others. I want to maintain the integrity of my own identity, but be flexible and open enough to the fact that parts of myself will be shown in new ways and different lights in a changed socio-cultural context.

Practicing cultural mobility is to learn to move in-between, to negotiate effectively through the consequences of otherness. It is an effort to push through the is/not idea of the other in order to engage comfortably outside of what is known, and encourage others to engage in the same way with us.

Not long ago, I was sitting in a room surrounded by people who are excited by the same ideas as me, talking about means to elicit change in my country. Of creative action and breaking down barriers to social inclusion. We are talking about safe spaces, diversity in ‘the movement’ and respect for difference. We have so much in common but I am the outsider. Someone asks if I am a cop. A cop! The thing is, I work in an office and have come straight from a meeting. My clothes are bland, innocuous, I had joked with a friend that morning that these days when I go to work, I look like a primary school teacher. I’m not dressed like everyone else. I don’t feel like this is a safe space for me, like I belong at all. I’m new to town and looking to find people to collaborate with, but am worried at people’s suspicion here; they talk to me differently than they do each other. I become clumsy in my engagement with others, inarticulate, quiet, I have ideas but feel that they’ll not be welcomed. Diversity, it seems, has been given a very specific definition. Diverse representation of race, sexuality, nationality in this movement is desired, strived for. Today, I look a little too much like those we seek to challenge and it seems that ‘their’ participation is not welcome.

My first reaction is to think of what I’ve done wrong. Maybe I should change my ‘look’, try and blend in more. What words are they using to express ideas? Are they like mine? What should I change? My instinct is to assimilate. I am an outsider in their space, things operate on their terms.

It was not deliberate of course. The culture, the community was established before me, was constantly evolving and developing to find an identity both flexible and recognisable. The expectation that every new space we enter into will provide a sense of belonging and safety ignores the very important processes of negotiation

and experience we go through anytime we enter an unfamiliar situation. In acknowledgement of this there was considerable discussion around how to make involvement in the group accessible to diverse participants. As I myself struggled with finding a level of engagement that would engender my acceptance or belonging, so too were others gauging and working through how to make an autonomous community something that could be opened to a greater extent. It is ok to say that I am not one of you, or recognise someone as a visitor, not a member. Through the process of engagement, the impact that our interactions have on one another and our contexts can be powerful. Cultural mobility calls on us to move beyond a binary of 'us' and 'them', recognizing that, through wide engagement across new spaces, we can identify as both.

These same themes could be talked about by a factory worker's child who gets a scholarship to a prestigious university, or a migrant who tries to find community in a new place, or post-conflict communities seeing the return of those who fled as refugees. To be culturally mobile is to recognise that the differences in the way we are, and the way they are, are not wrongs to be redressed. Rather they are issues that must be explored in terms of how they can be shifted so that we can engage on a similar level.

empowerment

Have you ever felt powerful?

What is being said

Empowerment is a process of transition from a state of powerlessness to a state of control over one's life, destiny, environment etc.

It is a multidimensional process. Psychology, economics, technology... have appropriated the term in their discourses. Bill Gates talks about empowering tech, yoga talks about empowering oneself, women become empowered in their reality, *Adbusters* sell an empowerment media kit, squats empower their districts with their social labs, economics talks about empowerment banking practices... All of them have produced a specific meaning of empowerment in terms of achieving control, achieving influence or domination, which has been developed into an immense catalogue of *know-how* strategies. In fact, it seems as if words such as freedom, justice, liberty, brotherhood, equality have been hidden behind 'empowerment'. It sounds techie, it sounds new, it sounds different...

Social framework

The social framework has quickly adopted the notion of empowerment. In fact, the *social* and *public sphere* are the sites where empowerment *empowers* its strongest meaning; the concept has in fact settled down where life grows. In this sense, social meanings,

social processes, social configurations and social conflicts will be a nuclear item when talking about empowerment.

Playing concepts / Idea's work

We are not going to propose 'a new meaning of empowerment'. We prefer to look for the signs and movements that it produces, its *effects*. *Something happens or doesn't happen*. We wonder which is the best way to test a concept from this immanent standpoint. When using the term immanence, we avoid the discussion around the concept. This immanence leads us to concentrate in the word's operations, in its *work*. Ideas *work*. Concepts *work* for real. They work on a set of circumstances and situations, on an act of generation and regeneration. An efficient proposal in this sense would be an approach to these ideas with the aim of *playing* concepts, as a ludic form or an instrument, finding their immanent work. Here and now. Finding a strategy (or maybe a tactic?) with which to move concepts from the deep sea of theory into a context of an efficient practice that maintains their force.

Vocabulaboratory

In the framework of *Vocabulaboratories*, we would like to propose thinking about the relationships between empowerment, culture and artistic practice. How empowerment can be understood in an aesthetic way, and therefore, as a way of thinking our (all of us, *artists*, who think that art is capable of participating in politics critically and efficiently) performative work and its social experience. The question is how the artwork and the aesthetic experience can concern the political.

Old school art / Discourses

Maybe the old dichotomy between the Marxist and the autonomous art discourses must be overcome. On the one hand, there is the research of an autonomous art status that encloses and confines its interests to itself in order to produce the big formal revolutions (now hanging on museum walls); on the other, an art practice which works alongside the political project of a transformation of life, allowing itself to be led by a projection of a radical utopia on it.

Restricted action

When talking about art and utopia, we should remember that the solution for this binomial myth shouldn't be sought in terms of 'all' or 'nothing' (the *All* of the utopian accomplishment, the *Nothing* of the artist enclosed in himself). If only we work based on a *restricted action* (remembering Mallarmé) in the artwork context, we could be able to solve this *impasse*. Art is not powerful, nor is it powerless. It can only work as a restricted action. Plenty of power, plenty of *unpower*. Efficient and sufficient.

Partitions / Suspensions / Enactions

With Rancière, we can say that if art concerns politics, it is because art introduces several conflicts into the *regimes of the sensible* and into experience, making partitions and suspending the 'natural' orders –of public and private, visible and invisible, *le même et l'autre...–*, creating dissent and discovering anomalies in them. The artwork would then stand for dissent. Not just for a critique of the discourses of control; (but) for a practice of representation that devotes itself to something other than domination... working towards a practice of empowerment that searches for new skills and *enactions* (as Mignolo says) capable of bursting into the conversation between *feeling* and *thinking* the world, and producing an understanding of the world where it appears as this space plenty of singular, inconsistent and multiple beings, a place where *thought does* and *action thinks*.

In this sense, the artwork can change the forms of enunciation through 'changing scales, frames, rhythms, or building new relationships between appearance and reality, individual and common, the visible and its meaning', generating a permanent disorder and a constant disorgan. When our perception of sensible events changes, it changes our relationships with people (our social constructions) along with it, changing also the way in which 'our world is inhabited by events and figures'.

Disorder-disorgan

Rancière reminds us of the effects that our work can provoke. We can transmit messages, offering models or contra-models of be-

EMPOWERMENT LET EVERYTHING BURN LET NOTHING BURN OUT

and celebrate the collision. Making insecurity disappear. That the whole universe may become an intimate chronotopia which no one can feel outside of.

HURLING ONESELF INTO THE WORLD

NEW WEALTH

To move from a stage of individuals to a land of individuals who empower their own reality to generate a new wealth: a wealth emancipated from the tyranny of consumption, a wealth capable of apprehending the present and resisting acceleration, capable of generating immanent and dialogical situations. A new wealth that enables referential autonomy, that allows the real construction of real life through a relational re-positioning between individuals and their world.

DISORGAN / DISORDER

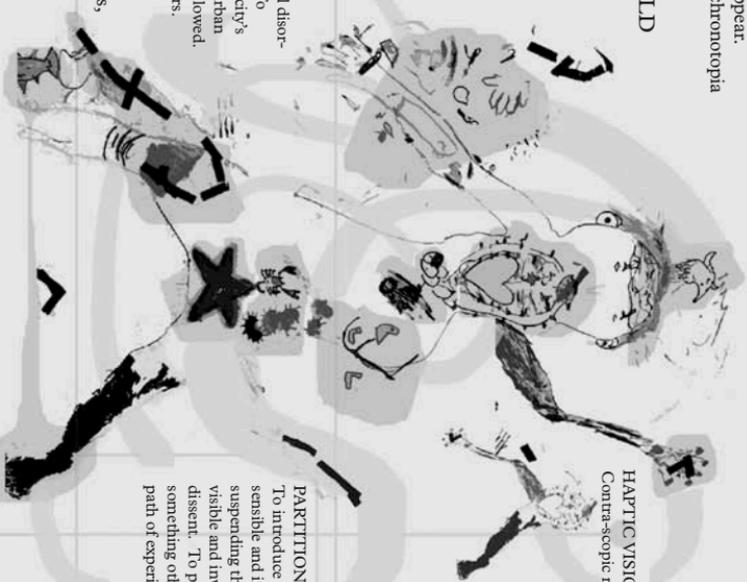
We need to establish a general disorder. A permanent disorder. To disorganise ourselves from the city's abstract body, from its ideal urban snapshots. No new realities allowed. No new organs. No new orders.

PLAYING CONCEPTS Concepts work for real.

They work on a set of circumstances and situations, on an act of generation and regeneration.

SOCIOCHRONOTOPIC Interactions with no other purpose but themselves

RESTRICTED ACTION Art is not powerful, nor is it powerless. It can only work as a restricted action. Plenty of power, plenty of unpower.



HAPTIC VISION Contra-scopie riot

A system of simple actions, under which there is an immense, latent symbolic and diabolic activity. A labour system which must reproduce sociability in the realm of signs.

PLAYING THE PLACE / PLACING THE PLAY

SOMETHING HAPPENS
OR IT DOESN'T HAPPEN

PARTITIONS / SUSPENSIONS / ENACTIONS

To introduce several conflicts into the regimes of the sensible and into experience, making partitions and suspending the 'natural' orders – of public and private, visible and invisible, le mème et l'autre... – creating dissent. To practice representation devoting itself to something other than domination. Breaking the usual path of experience.

EMPOWER Cso



Changing the way in which our world is inhabited by events and figures

haviour, or learning how to decode representations. We can also arrange bodies on singular space-times, defining ways of being together or separated, in front of or in-between, inside or outside. (Thus identifying artistic and political forms directly with one another, at the risk of bringing both to their disappearance). Finally, there is a third option (there is always a *third pill*..., as Žižek reminds us), which is working for dissent: empowering one's own reality and breaking the usual path of experience (social, cultural, economic, political, physical-psychological...), opening new possibilities of interchange in its structure and social condition, and not only in the limits of the sensible. At this point we find a great power in producing the *real* in order to transform reality. *Hic et nunc*. Not *before*, nor *after* revolution: things happen *meanwhile*. So let's infiltrate our *disorder* where this scene takes place...

If you have felt powerful – Was it at someone's expense?

Power of individual

Empowerment is about Power, but Power doesn't exist in isolation. Power grows in-between. It grows in the social interstice of human relationships. It's not inherent in positions or people. It's not a question of individuality or character. Powers exist in movement, circulation, traffic, smuggling... powers can change position, situation, strategy. In a certain way, Power can be understood differently, depending on the positions it adopts in the general structure. Power could grow where we didn't imagine; inside the space-time playing of a crowd, at a crossroads or in the centre of boredom. We could also imagine power growing in some particular new way: outside the sphere of domination, without the usual power relationships, those which open the doors to insecurity and fear, without the statement of the individual...

If you have felt powerful – Was it with someone's expense?

Power of withdividuals

Empowerment attempts to connect the personal and the social; connecting the individual and the communal, not in an organic-biological way, nor systemic-mechanical. The interstice is the

place where the social is configured. It is where relationships find their sphere of operation and redefinition. To work in the public sphere is not about working *outdoor* or working *transparently* to the rest of the world. To work in the public sphere means that our artwork has the will and intent to operate and participate in that interstice, allowing the emergence of new relationships with and between signs, bodies, objects, or people, *in order to propose dissent from the hegemonic state of experience*. To generate fractures. The work is not *about* social life, but *in* social life; this is what practice is in its *essence*. Theory cannot make much, unless we induce a movement upon it, unless we start playing theory. Problems used to be solved theoretically, *but problems are just problems* (said Manuel Delgado).

New wealth

To be able to find solutions, not necessarily together, but *for* togetherness – the common. To move from a stage of individuals to a land of *withdividuals* who empower their own real and reality to generate a new wealth: a wealth emancipated from the tyranny of consumption, a wealth capable of apprehending the present and resisting acceleration, capable of generating immanent and dialogical situations. A new wealth that enables referential autonomy, that allows the real construction of *real life* through a relational re-positioning between individuals and their world. At this point the whole universe becomes an intimate chronotopia which no-one feels outside of: hurling oneself into the world and celebrating the collision.

let everything *burn*. let nothing *burn out*.

you may also want to go to:

→ 51 frame/framing

→ 94 politics of aesthetics

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entry

What we understand by ‘entry’ is a proposal and access point (or passageway) that gives onto a practice and mode of thinking and doing things. Entries are configured through (but not limited to) words, which we frequently use when asked to describe what we do, or why. For instance: we ‘collaborate’, we ‘move’, we ‘re-search’, we ‘operate’, we have a ‘voice’. Entries are words that we keep coming back to and in which we invest meaning and ethics, without necessarily having formulated (and/or articulated) a theory around them. At each moment in our lives these words change, and involve a different process. They make up our ‘vocabularies’.

Entries are made of reflections and questions, ‘framing’ those in order to allow us to work with them. As such, they constitute ‘access points’ to both thinking and practice through a double movement of exposure and proposal. Through entries we propose to experientially and experimentally frame our individual vocabularies and offer this to others. Entries come to be made collectively at some point.

Entries speak of different problems and situations that we find ourselves struggling with, as well as strategies we might invent in order to meet them. Specific to situations, entries embody our problems, ideas and references in ways that keep on changing. They are not definitions, but rather dense clusters of ideas and

questions that we invest with desires and hopes. This investment is not so much about theoretical rigor, but rather comes from an urgency to construct ourselves a framework through which to become vocal as well as vulnerable. An entry always opens onto another.

Proposal for making an entry via a diagram:

Like diagrams, entries expose a problematic relational field, bound up with the struggles, hopes, desires and points of crisis we face in our lives. A diagram can constitute the basis for thinking about possible other ways of acting and relating within this field, and intervening in it. It can be the frame of reference through which we support each other, address and understand our respective life situations and practices.

– Think about a couple of words, images or objects that have kept coming up as reference points in your life recently, for example in conversations that matter to you. Do you find yourself repeatedly saying a certain word, making a certain gesture or visiting a certain object or site? What preoccupies you at the moment? Where do you find yourself in a place of doubt?

– Focus on one of these instances and try to map out the terms, situations, people, places and questions to which they are connected. Whatever medium you might want to work with, take this instance as a starting point to develop a broader diagram.

– Take this diagram as something you will continuously work with and might share. This diagram will frame your entry process in working in a collective situation.

you may also want to go to:
← 2 access point
← 6 a 'voice' and a vocabulary
→ 156 vocabularies of doing

fiction

Seven moments in a fiction about fiction.

1 Fiction obeys its own logic

When politics (and ethics) becomes just more-of-the-same, when discourse repeats the already said *ad infinitum*, then fiction mixes things up, scrambles the known codes, upsets the accepted formulae. Fiction introduces the crazies into an all-too-human situation. Why all this and not something else? Why not give a different account of the-way-things-are? Fictions are problems for a situation with too many ready-made solutions. This strategy will follow its own rules and protocols, utilising the same base level material (what else is there but the world?) but in a specifically different combination. There is almost always a logic of sorts in these proposals, but it is not one you will find in your textbooks or on your TV (note: it is a fictional logic).

Fiction is a name for an alternative logic and for the production of alternative worlds (fiction is a *different* thing).

2 Fiction stops making sense

When fiction really is fiction (and not just the offering up of a little novelty for a relief from the same) it moves away from typical signifying regimes, stymieing meaning and producing hybrid portmanteau word-things. Fiction names this weird asignifying

signification, this complex assemblage of the said and the unsaid, when words emit strange part meanings and non-meanings, when words demarcate an area of intensity, a 'region in flames' (Lyotard). Fiction: to hate all languages of masters and the various priest and cops that almost always follow in their wake (Deleuze). Stammering a language always opens up a little space, a moment of confusion, a point indetermination. An event like this is always against knowledge (Badiou). These moments are the crucible in which a new world is clamouring to be born.

Fiction is the name for the re-adjustment of the ever-so-slippery-relationship between propositions and things (fiction is a wedge, a lever-point).

3 Fiction is myth-science

For those who do not recognise themselves in the image clichés that surround us fiction offers new stories - new myths - for our troubled and turbulent times. For those who are alienated by the temporality of nine-to-five careerism and commodity obsession fiction offers up a selection of different times – play-time versus work-time (Bataille); cosmic-time versus clock-time. Is it possible to live without a narrative, a progression-through-time of some kind or another? Perhaps there are those who live in the now, who have accessed and actualised that 'third kind of knowledge' (Spinoza); for the rest of us a temporality of sorts, however stretched, twisted, is required. A schizo-temporality for a schizo-subjectivity. A hybrid of the various pasts, presents, futures - and of futures-that-did-not-come-to-pass.

Fiction is what is left to us after the 'total subsumption of Capital' (Negri) (fiction mimics the pre-emptive strategies of the latter but *in reverse*).

4 Fiction slows us down

Speed. More and more contact and communication; ever-increasing accessibility and always-being-switched-on. Information and career development followed by overload, burnout and the fall into despair. Productivity and the endless deadline. Fiction

allows us to unplug and to enter a different duration. All the moderns knew this quirk: story-telling is boredom, 'the dream bird that hatches the egg of experience' (Benjamin); story-telling is fabulation, producing a gap for those who choose to hear between stimulus and response from which creativity arises (Bergson); story-telling is a break in habit and a catalyst for the idleness that is the progenitor of any truly creative thought (Nietzsche). This is the productivity of anti-productivity, in fact the *super*-productivity of that which is, from a certain point of view, always useless. Once upon a time there are no happy endings in a pharmaceutically deadened reality (depression = the inability to believe). But fiction is magic and alters our space-times.

5 *The world is already a fiction*

The media increasingly operates through affect (and sad ones at that) (it's a veritable nervous system), but make no mistake: reality is always the construction of narratives. Events are made-sense-of through causal logic and other framing devices (what is seeable? what is sayable?). Fiction is thus not opposed to reality but is productive of it. When you look beneath the paving stones you will find the shifting sands of fiction. There is no one essential or transcendent place outside this logic of insubstantiality-impermanence. What's needed is a proliferation of fictions, a multiplication of other possible worlds. A performance and the construction of avatars perhaps (after all, why not be someone else for a change?). The writing of alternative histories and of manifestos that announce the as-yet-to-come.

When we grasp the world as fiction we release the powers of the false. Any critique must operate below the radar of the what-is and on the fictions that make us who we are.

6 *Fiction calls forth a people and a world*

Fiction always has a futurity, a prophetic tenor; its addressee is never just the subjectivity in place but one as yet to come (the stories for those already here are invariably about what is already here even when, especially when, they seem to promise something

else). Thus the misunderstandings about fiction (fantasy, escape – having nothing to say about the situation as is) *and also* its power. Released from the political obligation, fiction imagines another place in another space-time. How might such a fictional programme be joined to a concrete project of the production of subjectivity? As a stuttering fringe – a mad corrective and point of inspiration – for those regimes and modes-of-organisation that tend to alienate and ossify the imagination almost despite their very correct intentions.

Fiction is always a fragment of the future placed in this time by a traitor prophet (and this may be a future that was imagined from within a certain region of the past).

7 Fiction produces the new

Fiction is a naming at the edge of things, a collective enunciation of a thing that is on-the-way. Shapeshifter. Invent a word and the thing will follow; fiction gives form to the formless. A ritual survey and a creative act; a probe from the known into the un-known... fiction is any function *contra* the what-is; any invention beyond the norm. A break in habit, an experiment against the so-called real. When all the chips are down, the spaces colonised and time just-about-all-run-out then fiction – as a lived practice – allows us just a little room to manoeuvre, just a little bit of something that is still creative, creaturely and creating (fiction allows us to breathe once more). Through fiction we realise our potential and become the makers of worlds and of situations that are beyond what we already know.

In a time when the new is often just more of the same, fiction changes the coordinates ever-so-slightly, tips the assemblage *slowly* allowing a different vista, a different landscape, at last, to come in to view.

you may also want to go to:

← 15 bullshit

→ 108 re:

→ 127 temporal distinction

frame/framing

We are frequently speaking about framing, when we would like to stress that we will put something in order, that we will arrange something, that we will give something an appearance, that we will rearrange and contextualise something. To frame appears as something formal and unproblematic, it seems that we all understand somehow what it means; it is abstract enough and, at the same time, dependent on a will to act, that it is commonly acceptable as a solution without explanation. But is it really so? From the experience of cleaning our rooms we know very well how the frame of the painting becomes visible in all its materiality only when it is removed, only when on the dirty wall we see a trace of something which was hanging there. Usually, our immediate reaction is to erase it, to remove the painting for the second time, to eradicate the feeling of decay and negligence, to efface something which mocks our removal attempts. Paradoxically, this reaction is so strong not because we have to erase the memory of something, but because a trace of the frame is enabling presence – suddenly in the empty wall there is a strong, persistent, annoying presence of something being there; the frame is not enframing, marking off, bordering, limiting on something, but it is enabling presence in all its potentiality. With only a tiny difference, with a grey shadow between yellow and white something appeared – a material topography, a map, a structure of shadows, a network of traces, which is triggering our imagination and affecting our perception of the space.

The frame has a tricky nature – even if it seems we are the ones who are framing (our work, our vocabulary, our process), the frame also has an autonomous life of its own. Frame is not only related to marking off, with ways of restraining and exposing, with ways of cutting, formatting and folding, with something being put on or into something, folding in, with being a structure, shape and system. The problem is very old – what is then this slippery ‘something’ which has to be moulded and shaped with the frame, or rather: what is then the relation between the so-called pure material, entity (to be shaped) and the shape or structure itself? The answer to that problem is often expected from a dramaturge or somebody who takes over that role in the performance, the one who dares to cut into the sensitive and bare ‘something’. It is no wonder that the dramaturge is very often problematically understood as somebody who enters into the performance with a distance, and that distance is not only connected with the discursive power of the one who knows, but exactly to his sensitive (he has to have a feeling), nevertheless objective distance towards the material process of the performance. The problem is of course exactly in the understanding of this something that is being moulded, shaped and structured – what kind of amorphous substance is that? Is framing entering the show as something that is being put on something? Those questions are strongly related to the ways and methodologies of working in the performance, with emergence, consistency and intensity of material and affective, embodied and discursive processes of work and at the same time also with old philosophical ideas about the relationship between matter and form. Frame in our discussions often replaces the corrupted discursive capacity of context, as if its provisional formal nature would be more dependent on our will. But frame has something to do with the ways that something, what we are framing, has already been framed. The form is in the material and in our choice of material itself. That means that each process of work is inevitably intertwined with its outside, but in the sense that this outside is a kind of a threshold, *tyraten*, which was an original word for ‘being at the door’ in Greek. The outside here is not another space that resides beyond the determinate space, it is rather a passage, the exteriority that gives access. Even more: it is

a face, as Agamben said, its *eidōs*. The frame is then the face, which also means that we can see its effects only in the mirror. When we are framing, the frame can already enframe us. It has then less to do with formatting, folding and bordering, with contextualising, ordering and structuring, and more with erasing, disclosing, daring to open the door. Framing can then be understood as a way to enable presence, to disclose the space of the now, but it can enable presence only as a trace, a shadow, a remnant, a kind of remnant, also a surplus, something which is not only enframing but also dissolving and with that reshaping the outside, too. In that sense framing is also more a kind of a quest, a quest for the face that would enable the potentiality of the presence: enabling that what could emerge.

intensity

Intensity discloses itself at the limits of what one can do (or say). Being a practitioner in the field of dance and performance, if I am to embody this experience of intensity through writing, I need to exceed the possibilities of my own vocabulary. So, although I will try to avoid comfort of rhetoric and not quote any thinker that is/was writing about the subject, if somebody else's words or formulations still find their way into this text, that's because they are marking the edge condition of my thought. However abstract, all the descriptions given in this text could be embodied through an everyday performative practice. That is to say, my words are just an indirect representation of this edge where intensity of thought provokes an intensity of action.

Intense self-perception

Intensity is a tension created when a self-perception touches the embodied experience of the present moment. It is a paradoxical practice that mixes stubbornness and sensibility.

This stubbornness is associated with an obsessive procedure of thinking and naming what one is 'already' doing in the moment. It is a repetition of 'coming back to the present'. For instance one could be sitting in a cafe thinking about past and future moments in life, and by bringing attention to the present reality one could

say: what I am really doing *now* is *sitting* and *thinking* and *then* speculating about the past and the future. It is the affirmation of activity in which present time is invested. It is a feedback loop in which the speculation about what happened and what will happen always comes back to the experience of the moment so that one can ask: How am I doing it - now?

Intensity is also a sensible experience. One can perceive how the body feels at the moment of self-observation. For example, while sitting and writing I can perceive how the back, the neck, the arm feels. It is about being conscious of how the sensations are changing at each moment, not getting stuck in an old idea about it. It is about having an embodied and actualised perception of reality.

The experience of intensity, whether we are thinking it or feeling it, could be practiced as a process of unifying (holding-folding) and diversifying (breaking-unfolding) of perception.

Sometimes I am focusing on an overall activity like *writing* and then breaking into the many sub-activities that constitute it: sitting, looking, thinking, remembering *and then* writing. In a similar manner sometimes I am directing attention to the total embodied sensation of the present moment and then I am breaking that sensation down into several sensorial fields: the back feels in this way and simultaneously the arm feels like that and the knee like that, etc. In both thinking the activity and sensing the body, what matters is to keep on flowing through the present moment. Maintaining oneself in a movement of transition between a whole and partial self-perception. Renewing the way of framing myself at each instant.

Intense perception of the outside

The same process of holding (folding) and breaking (unfolding) can be translated into the perception of things outside of me. By choosing to perceive one thing among many I am taking hold of it, as if I am grasping it with a hand and separating it from the context that surrounds it. For instance I see a chair and realise

that despite its connection with the surrounding, in its actuality the chair is not part of the table at its side, and is separate from the floor that it is supposedly touching. Focusing on separation rather than connection is making the gap between one thing and another more evident. By holding each thing in my perception as separate, everything emerges in its volume, apart from the usually flat and banal positioning inside the signifying chain. When receiving things of the world in their fullness chances are higher that I will get stimulated to interact with them in an intense way. By isolating objects of the world from their surroundings I can perceive 'more' of the time-space in and around them. 'More' time-space gives me more possibilities to move in between things and more possibilities for action. I intensify the relation between objects, subjects and myself. The thing puts my senses in motion. It stimulates me to do something about it: to walk towards it, touch it, to think it or imagine it. The process of thinking and feeling is brought physically, intellectually, emotionally and affectively in the open relation toward a thing. And this open relation, by being persistently awoken as a process of holding and breaking of the frame through which I am perceiving it, creates alternative ways to connect and disconnect with one thing and another...

Becoming intensive enough: what to do next?

How can I take a next step when I arrive to this point of intense perception?

I believe that the movement of perception is not only *indicating* the physical reality of the body and its external time-space situation but it is *animating* this reality as well. This implies that when actualising the present moment in this or that way, I am not static, I am constantly transporting myself from one perceptual point to another. And this movement *moves* and *changes* what is perceived. Intensity of perception becomes intentionality of action. That is to say that the process of perception is embodied within a certain will for transformation. I call this will for change the 'tone' of perception. The tone of perceptions is related to an inherent curiosity, appetite for experimentation with new ways of perceiv-

ing. Based on what happened before, the next inclination toward action comes back upon me like a wave, a rush of enthusiasm that makes me move.

Complicating time

Whether we are thinking or feeling ourselves, if there is a pulsation, timing, rhythm that marks each actualisation of the present instant, it is normally indicated by the nervous system. For example, when I observe the blood running through my body, the time used for this experience is modulated by the time through which the nervous system operates. But in order to complicate the time of perception, sources of timing need to be diversified. The nervous system needs not only to affect but also to be affected by the peristaltic rhythm of the blood fluid system. The time of perception should be modified according to the rhythm of the internal/external system that is perceived. The capacity to *feel* the organism through different regimes of functioning serves as an input that can diversify the beat and therefore complicate the time of thinking-feeling. The 'objective' is not to reach some kind of utopian overall rhythm of the body organism. More pragmatically, the goal is to diversify sensible possibilities for non-habitual frames of perception. To become more bodies than just one: the body of the nervous system, body of fluid system, muscular body, skeletal body, etc. One body perceiving many bodies and many bodies perceiving one body. Furthermore the aim is not just to *change* from one way of seeing to another but to experience the *movement* inherent to this process of shifting. I could say - intensity is the sensation of the movement as perception renews itself inside different time frames of the body at each (present) moment.

Intense movement

An intense practice of movement happens when I am dancing without interruption. Actualising at each moment the perception of the inside and outside experience of my body. To actualise means to take distance from the internal sensation of body impulses and from the external information coming mostly through

the eyes and through a contact with a floor. Distancing to observe myself from an overall point of view. It is like doing a movement and seeing it from above. When I am actualising the movement I am purposefully inserting a difference into the next movement in relation to the one before. Even when I don't insert any difference, the observation brings a new quality to the practice of movement that itself modifies the way in which the movement forms sequences. However, I don't just actualise the perception of the inside and the outside of the body from a distant point of view. I also do the opposite and remain, for a while, passionately, very close to the experience. I am staying in the midst of it for a while; then I leave again.

The inside perception of the body relates to what I see, hear and feel inside of me. It is connected to my instinct, assuring an immediate approach to the movement-impulses of the body without the mediation of my capacity for analysis. The outside perception refers to the external impressions of the space, like distances and forms of things in the room. It is connected to my intelligence, which comprehends the things outside of me through the capacity to discover relations between one element and the other. Intensity of movement-perception happens when I combine the two 'inside and outside' perceptions in an *intuitive* way. In this sense the movement-impulses of the body are mediated by the intelligence, but not organised and formalised in a habitual manner. The impulse follows an alternative blueprint that gives it a singular visible form. The outside shape of the movement and the internal impulse that creates it becomes the same stream of articulation. Content and form become undistinguishable. Internal and external perceptions like repellent magnets oscillate around each other, creating a rotating time-space out of which the practice of intuition can emerge.

Change

While practicing the 'actualisation' of frames of perception one has to 'move' between them in order to keep on creating non-habitual ways of relation to oneself and the situation around. The

ability to keep on moving proliferates possibilities of encountering people, things, thoughts and sensibilities that are not available inside an institutionalised social frame. Movement awakes a sense of process and unpredictability in life. To move beyond the limit of the predictable defies the fear of the unknown that stable structures of thought and behaviour are based on. When taking this step there is room for a real event, where accidental encounters between people and things could generate new object-subjects and relation-events not valued inside the frame of a neo-liberal capitalist economy. To keep on moving creatively adds a practice of change to ways of life. And although from that place to social transformation there is still a big step to be made, at least a first, modest and hopeful one could be already attempted.

you may also want to go to:

← 51 frame/framing

→ 67 lisa

→ 79 movement

intervention

The word ‘intervention’ has legal, political and artistic connotations, but the three senses presuppose different structures or relations. In law, it marks the entrance of a non-party into a dispute: given a situation that opposes two or more sides, another one is introduced due to an interest in the outcome of the litigation that entitles it to have a say; or a supposedly neutral, uninterested party steps in through an act of force by which, it is argued, it stops a situation which cannot be solved by those involved from extending indefinitely, or arriving at a critical point. It is curious that, while the first case belongs to civil law, the second applies both to the ‘humanitarian’ intervention of international law and to the action of central banks or governments in rescuing banks or businesses. In art, the structure refers to an already given space or object which is ‘disrupted’ in some way by another object, artist, group etc.; it works primarily through a sense of ‘this shouldn’t be here’, of breaking the normality with which whatever is intervened on is perceived. If in the legal case the original situation is a conflict that calls for a non-party, either interested or neutral, the artistic goes in the opposite direction: it is the intervention that creates conflict, produces a tension. This tension, in turn, while it calls for a resolution, is at the same time and from the start preempted by the fact that it will not be resolved, but only interrupted: it ceases to exist once the intervention is over – conserved in memory and documentation, a form of *sub-sistence* that does not

call for a resolution, even though it may still produce effects.

The political sense (that is, if one allows interstate intervention to be classified as 'law') is a lot less marked. To speak at a meeting is an intervention; to steer a consensus between two opposing positions (which is similar to, but not exactly the same as, in civil law); to take part in a direct action (which often will have a similar form to an artistic intervention); to write a text; to become involved in a struggle; to bridge the gap between different spheres, levels, institutions; the actions of the community or union organiser, or the party cadre – all of these can count as interventions. In comparison to law, the political sense indicates a party that is not neutral (unlike international law), but already involved, or at least interested in some way (as in civil law). In common with international law and art, it has the fact that it involves an act of force, a 'jumping into' that requires no previous authorisation.

The differentiation from artistic intervention at this point becomes difficult, only one reason for which being that the discrete acts of a political intervention (a text, a direct action) can and often share its structure. In order to differentiate the two more exactly, it is necessary to move to a different plane – the plane of an ethics of the intervention –, but this move too is unstable: for this ethical plane is in itself political, in the sense that it concerns the relations to others, the relation of one's conduct to theirs, and the process that is common to both. So if I choose to draw the distinction in such a way that 'political' is valued above 'artistic', this is not to exclude the possibility of artistic interventions being political; but since I wish to make it from a point of view which is, in itself, already political, this will mean making the artistic into the cipher of what (for the purpose of this distinction) is not politics, and vice-versa. The consequence is that, from the point of view of an ethics of intervention, much of what is ostensibly political (by virtue of having no pretensions to being art) will appear as being, in fact, artistic.

In the case of art, the subject who intervenes is highly undetermined: considering the three possibilities found so far – interest-

ed, neutral, involved –, the subject (the artist=x) could be any. The indeterminacy is in part a consequence of the object of the intervention: if it is not an ongoing dispute, process, crisis that calls for a resolution; if, instead, it is the creation of a tension which, rather than demand resolution, is interrupted – how can we determine the subject? Obviously, no-one would go out of their way to do something they were not interested in; but the interest that defines the non-party in a civil law litigation, or the migrants fighting for papers, or the communities defending their livelihoods, is very different from an intellectual curiosity, or a moral sympathy: it refers to a situation where one stands to win or lose. But do we often not intervene politically in a space where we do not share the same predicament of those struggling alongside? Yet the political leap is made when you go from being ‘interested’ (in the lighter sense) to being involved; even if the outcome does not affect you (in your livelihood or existence), your investment is such that it enhances your power to affect and be affected, to the point where your joy (and not merely your happiness) is at stake. Such a degree of investment, of casting one’s lot alongside others’, is not achieved until you have been affected by the process in question; until you sense, but can also to an extent comprehend, the desires, relations, investments it encompasses; until you share a sense of where it is headed, what its strengths and weaknesses are, *where it requires intervention*.

So here a line can be drawn: from the ethical standpoint, a political intervention takes place when you are interested (stand to win or lose) and involved, or only involved; an artistic intervention is when you are neutral. This applies, for instance, to an artistic practice that creates and interrupts a tension that is completely external to and does not communicate in any way with the tensions that envelop the constituency that is its audience or object. For example: a work about migrants that does not involve migrants, or does involve them but, rather than inserting itself in the context of their lives and struggles, only juxtaposes itself onto them; instead of feeding back into them (as a process that helps in their own organisation, as instruments, skills or objects that they can use), it only transposes their situation to an-

other context (gallery, academia, art public). But it applies just the same to a direct action against a detention centre that is organised and carried out without any prior and posterior communication with those inside, any understanding of how it can have its effects maximised through this relation, any attempt at making it not an end in itself, but the outcome of something and the precondition for something else.

‘Involvement’ gives another meaning to *inter-venire*: no longer ‘to come in-between two’, but ‘to come in the middle’. The very distinction between subject/object of intervention, and between intervention and process, is momentarily dissolved. You are partially produced by the process that involves you (‘involve’ and ‘envelop’ share the same etymological root); what you do feeds back into the process, and, in constituting it, constitutes others, and yourself. It is in the interval between these two indefinite movements that intervention takes place. Likewise, the intervention is a moment of a larger continuum that elicits it on the one end (marks the empty space it must occupy, or the blockage it must lift) and surpasses it on the other (intervening is not an end in itself, but a way of producing new conditions, of transforming the situation’s future).

On the one hand, the ‘I’ that acts is dissolved; not a becoming like everyone else, but exactly the opposite: an enhanced capacity to perceive oneself as a singularity, decomposable into the processes by which one has become what one is and is maintained relatively stable; with it, an increased plasticity, a capacity to go beyond the contingent. This immediately opens onto the process as a whole; the web of relations between self and others expands into those among others, and the process and its ‘outside’. The individual sense of space is relativised in favour of all the different positions that have been, are or can be occupied by others and myself. It is only by retracing the movement that led up to ‘here and now’ that the where and when of an intervention can appear. A ‘neutral’ intervener acts externally, unilaterally; through a purely speculative ‘interest’ (however deeply felt), a ‘feeling’ not grounded on any attempt at comprehending the situation from inside by ana-

lysing the forces that compose it (however well-informed it may be), a ‘hunch’ not committed to following through with the outcomes. (Often this ‘slash and burn’ attitude is because the ‘real’ intervention is happening elsewhere: one goes somewhere only to return to one’s activist or artistic community, accruing some social capital in the process. For the artist as much as the one who ‘writes a critique’, abandoning authorship and ownership always presents a risk, given that their primary mode of capital accumulation entails maintaining a proper name. A corollary of that is that interventions – by means of art or any other – should not pretend to be blind to their conditions of production, but place them as part of their question.) A political intervention is never autonomous, but always a matter of sensing the spaces that need to be occupied, the blockages to be moved, the connections to be made – which can also mean to ‘let it drop’, even when one disagrees with where things are headed.

On the other hand, the dissolution has to be interrupted at some point: an intervention is always a decision, a break, a certain violence. An involved sensibility demands both the openness to sense the non-totalisable whole of the process, and the determination to act upon that whole in the way that seems the most effective for the process at a given moment. Like becoming a Lenin *and* a proletarian, all at the same time, except one is never fully either: the background against which a decision is made can never be exhausted (and so an action is always uncertain), and one’s action is never (and should never be thought as) a definitive rupture – even if the campaign, project etc. in question is at an end. This does not mean that an intervention must necessarily look for resolutions: sometimes there is none to be had, and a sustained tension, a ‘keeping it open’ is the best contribution. But it is (and should be) only ‘an action upon actions’ in a series that extends indefinitely into the future, feeding back into the same or different processes and becoming part of the conditions for future interventions – so that cycle starts again. The violence of the act is against the self as much as against the other, and it is crucial to resist the narcissistic illusion of having the last word, or the urge for instant gratification.

This also means relativising individual temporality in favour of the larger time of the process in question, and the processes of which it is a part, stretching indefinitely towards past and future. An intervention, however isolated, must always be thought in terms of the effects that it can go on producing, beyond its conservation as document or memory; this means that it is less about ‘doing something’ than it is about thinking every step that it should include in order to maximise its outcomes. It has its own strategy and tactics, but these must be thought in terms of the neighbouring strategies and tactics it enters in composition with. And it has a materiality that is all too easily forgotten both in artistic and activist practices: to ‘involve a community’ is a slow work that demands building relationships over time, identifying the most connected nodes in each social network, composing desires and interests in such a way that they enhance each other; to ‘produce an effect’ is tied as much to the intervention itself as to the material forms of its conservation, communication and circulation, who it addresses and how it involves them. Something is political if it produces political effects, yet that it does so is never given by an intrinsic quality (‘it’s an important issue’), but depends on the external relations it creates and that guarantee its *in-sistence* (the capacity to go on producing effects).

This entails refusing to turn the limits of what can be done into a fetishistic cult of the small and local, often indistinct from self-exculpation for not following through the commitment to the conditions and outcomes of an intervention. There is only so much that can ever be done, but whatever is done should be taken to its maximum limit: willed as something that could return again and again. On the other hand, this relativisation of time also implies refusing the facile option of always standing outside in a position to condemn any small and local outcomes as always already recuperated by an all-powerful totality. The present is at once never enough – and one’s eyes should be on always higher prizes – and something that can only be judged on its own terms, rather than according to a putative endpoint which will never be given: according to the future effects and transformations it enables, which necessarily means being ready to *per-sist*, to follow

them through. This calls for a complex negotiation between the temporality of a finite life ('what I will see in my lifetime') and what is in excess of it ('what can happen once I am gone' – dead, or not involved anymore), navigating the Scylla of despair ('we will never get there') and the Charybdis of complacency ('there is no more we can do'). Admittedly an impossible, and never-ending task; but one that is both made bearable and necessary by the joy involved in being involved.

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lisa

Individual subjects usually refer to me as a collective. Or as: organisation, group of friends, even group of groups. (In the worst case people call me *Stichting* or production house - although I much prefer that to being called 'football club', for instance.

I feel really at stake when I am 'a movement'.

Conventional signs of my identity are rather difficult to pinpoint and understand. I am not exactly sure about my gender (although my name and also the biggest part of me is female, something like 83,3 %). I have seven different passports and five different nationalities... they are all legal! I reside in at least four cities at the same time, except about four times a year, when I manage to concentrate myself in one place, in order not to become completely disconnected and permanently schizoid. Nevertheless I am not fictional. I am real. (I have 2785 friends in My Space.) I have a bank account, even an office. I have birthday parties, an address book and I even sometimes make dinners for my friends... The good thing is that I pay taxes only in one country. When I do that I am not called by the simple name LISA, but I get an additional title: Association LISA! In fact, almost every time I appear in public I am addressed by that title. It sounds almost like 'baroness LISA' or 'professor LISA'. When I meet people I don't immediately tell them that I am an association. More often than not

they find out very quickly and then they start speaking to me in a slightly different way.

In fact, only an intimate circle of friends calls me *LISA*.

I am a collective subject, so usually I do not talk myself - I rather give room and space for other people's voices... And there are so many of these voices that I often do not manage to cover all the points on the agenda. Although I have no voice myself, at least not an individual one, I have given myself the freedom to communicate *my-self* this time. Ironical that I say 'my-self'... 'my own self'... I cannot say that *I own myself* - it is *the others* that own me: my friends, my allies, my enemies and their singular relationships to each other and the world. However, as a collective subject, I still think of myself as singular. You know - I have my tendencies, my obsessions and my fascinations, too...

Collective: a group of people that have common interests and are working together to achieve them. Why would I use the word collective? 'Collective' is such a strange word, almost not usable as a noun anymore, as it seems to display a certain nostalgia about past times. And when it is defined as abstractly as above we could also be passengers on the Thalys to Paris - but are they all working together? Is travelling working? For me the only interesting thing about the word collective is that it entails something shared, whatever that might be.

There is an interesting French expression that I could apply here. 'Nous' is 'we'; ok, that's understood. But if we look it up in the Collins online dictionary, 'nous autres' also stands for 'we'. Literally you would translate 'nous autres' as 'we others' or 'we (the) others'. 'We' would then represent two different ideas depending on the point of view. It either includes or rejects the 'others'. But then again, every inclusion is a rejection and every rejection is an inclusion. Conclusion: this doesn't bring us very far... Still... I like the expression 'nous autres' (nosotros in Spanish) very much. Exactly for its ambivalence.

Oops! I introduced the notion of 'I' in this text.

Will that be accepted by the 'we'?

Will the 'we' call me 'autre'?

You. (And introduced the you!)

Me.

We.

That's what the other one would say.

I, LISA,

the others and Me.

I like to look at myself as being part of a larger surrounding. I feel that I am getting too old for a solely introspective gaze. My collective members are not only mine, they also continue to live outside of me, team up with other people, deal with rules and regulations which are not drafted by them. Do I stop being when they are not there? No. I might be not concretely present, but I remain and linger – in the hearts and minds of my members and their allies (and maybe in other dark corners that I do not know of).

So I am one – but also many at the same time. I am pretty amorphous. I am here, sometimes, almost visible, but not. I remain in-between those that know me. I have a name, but I am idea, sometimes I call myself a phantom. I can inhabit people. So sometimes, for a very short time, I get a very strong feeling that I do have a solid identity – at other times, I am something like a porous, filtering, feeding-back field of resonance, a force and an invisible connection (fffff- I think I like alliterations...). I have a tendency, though, to stay in the shades, to slip through fingers like quicksilver when someone tries to catch me. I am not easy. This sometimes gives me headaches.

I was conceived in the heads of my members in April 2003, and grew in there invisibly until I was born in October 2003, during a delicious dinner somewhere in Amsterdam. I was born out of five *people coming together*. When I was born they preferred to see me as their sixth friend. They also wanted me to be blond and beautiful, thin and silent, smoothly sneaking into the night. They saw me climbing walls, jumping roofs, wresting bricks. They wanted me to climb through small bathroom windows, to hide in cellars, to laugh contagiously and to talk with a dark voice. They wanted me to invent different routes, to draw new maps, to open hidden doors, to slip between the lines. Grasp your hand, hold you close, throw you off, beat you down, pull you up. (To kick arses, look in

mirrors, be invisible, change appearance, make new friends...). They wanted me to be four letters tall. L-I-S-A.

My members were then and are still independent artists. They do not share a fascination for each other's works specifically... Or maybe the fact that they did share a fascination for each other's working and thinking created me... However, that fascination never resulted in a complete identification with each other's universes. Nor did it result in a common manifesto or declaration of any sort. There is continuous differences, friction and oppositions in my member's being and acting in the world. (Imagine the effect this has on my walking pattern!).

Although they came together as befriended colleagues, it's a peculiar *friendship* they now exercise: They are attempting to replace the concentration on an ideological affiliation (that too much 'love for each other will tear them apart') with an intention to create different methodologies and forms of organisation, participation and exchange, so as to cultivate new attitudes and practices of thinking and being together, these shaping a different relation to the world and its always hidden (or repressed, undervalued, underestimated, unspecialised) possibilities.

Together with the individual subjects connected to me, I share the inclination to be moved by error and fragility. However, I am not moved by fragility for its own sake. I need co-presence, addition, and exchange. I myself am incomplete, I cannot exist on my own, I need complements. I never actually manage to be completed, because before I do, I become something else as I transform with the conditions of my current existence: circumstances, events, desires are disrupting and at the same time complementing my very nature. My nature: which is nothing but a moment, an experienced moment through-by-towards-with others. I do not perceive myself as a large organ. My nature is invisible and in fact of no nature at all. My sensibility is ecology without nature yet an ecology (or pseudo-ecology) in constant metamorphosis provoking chemical reactions needed for my body to function: questions, conflictive, antagonistic positions, ideas and actions

operate without a specific ideology, nor a fixed point of reference.

I have no nature of my own and, as a collective subject; I am neither pure nor perfect... far from that. I am always contaminated. The symptoms manifested in this contamination shape the way I feel, live, think and speak, as well as all the organisational aspects of my bodywork. They become a tool to rearrange those symptoms in the present and in thought, in order to intervene in the world and in the artistic practice of my members. At the same time, my members use that knowledge in order to produce nervous impulses and potentialities in action.

I sometimes feel I am too mysterious, almost on the verge of being too poetic in my ways of explaining myself. I rather like it that I LIVE although without a real body, that I have good memories of the Old Days, that I have quarrels and make it up again, that I have a logo and a website, that I meet & exchange and that I have dreams for the future. On the other hand, I wonder where this nostalgia comes from? I once promised to myself that I would not want to go nostalgic neither revolutionary. There are plenty of things to do, plenty of things to dream. This is something my members struggle with: how much effort and willpower to invest in an uncertain project like a collective-subject? What kind of pragmatism may they be able invent in order to escape a naïve optimism or superficial satisfaction?

I have a quiet temperament, yet I am committed. Often the members of the collective meet and agree to modify themselves, to avoid any centralisation of tasks and engagements among them, for instance – I am a flexible subject. How could it be otherwise, if my non-nature is the only one capable of de-materialising and re-materialising without having death as a mediator? For instance: where am I, when I am not at dinners, conferences, performances, or (pseudo-) experiments that should rather be called ‘festivals’ (at Theater Kikker, for instance)? Am I in the office? In our funds? On the web page? I am and I am not. All of these circumstances are of a different kind. They are not I. They are not a collective (nor a group of friends, nor a movement). A collective

can always be dematerialised; and it exists only in its promise to materialise again. I live on the promise that I will materialise again. Indeed, my plan of life is no doubt uncertain... definitely inefficient and... not very loyal. I have seen how my members work at the edge of deception. They are often in crisis. Almost like lovers (hopefully not always). It is precisely the state of crisis, of disease and its symptoms, that keeps their activity alert and caring. Nevertheless they are rather passionate lovers, they expose and diffuse; they are critically bound to each other.

I wonder: What do I look like?

The strange thing is that I have never seen myself. I know myself only from the inside. I can feel my blood rushing when I am angry, my heart getting bigger when I am full of hope, my stomach bubbling when I am excited. I can also analyse myself relatively well.

I constantly feel a bit schizophrenic. There are six voices speaking in me and I spend most of my time negotiating 'myself' through those voices. (And these last lines have been written by only one of the six voices of LISA, taking possession of 'her' momentarily).

When I try to imagine myself, I see myself sitting. There is always a table with a lot of computers: I have six laptops, all of which are Macs. In each of those computers there is at least one folder called LISA. Some of the documents in those six different folders are almost identical, nevertheless they often have different names, or they are written in different font. I am a shape-shifter...

It is funny to be somebody, but not to have a body that can be photographed or looked at in a mirror. I am not blind. It is just that my body isn't visible.... Or maybe even not a real body, in the strict sense of the word. It does not have a clothes-size, it does not have an eye colour, it does not have hair... It is even missing legs and arms.

I guess my body exists only in its traces... Traces that I left in places that I passed by, with people that I exchanged emails with, in the things I have said and done, in the gossip that is circulating about me.

As a matter of fact, this very text is also part of my body. So, once again: My body is so flexible, it is able to stretch itself into all kinds of shapes. This makes me think that physically speaking I am rather monstrous!

When I dance I feel a bit clumsy, because my body wants to change directions all the time. My sense of rhythm is quite peculiar. So more often than not I imagine myself dancing and I do not really go to dance. Or I dance with partners that can help guiding me.

But I need to move in order to feel my body.

And I'd like to move you,

LISA

militant research (and friendship)

‘In love, in friendship (...) there is neither objectuality nor instrumentalism. Nobody restrains him or herself from what the tie can do, nor is it possible to leave it uncontaminated. One does not experience friendship (...) in an innocent way: we all come out from them reconstituted. These *potencias* (potencies) – love and friendship – have the power to constitute, qualify, and remake the subjects they catch (...). We usually refer to this process of friendship (...) with the (...) name of composition. Unlike articulation, composition is not merely intellectual (...). It is based neither in interests nor in criteria of convenience (political or other). Unlike accords and alliances (strategic or tactic ones, partial or total) founded in textual agreements, composition is more or less inexplicable, and goes beyond anything that can be said about it. In fact, at least while it lasts, it is much more intense than any merely political or ideological compromise.’

(Colectivo Situaciones 2003)

When we speak to one another, something is opened up between the two of us. It is not a coalescence of you and I, it is something else. It is an alterity, an accumulation that always makes an excess of its parts, it is an attribute described by Gilles Deleuze (1987) as an additive: an ‘and’. It is you and I and our voices and our words and our bodies and our gestures and our gazes and our expres-

sions and the air which we inhale and exhale. And it is more than this. It is our spatial and temporal environment: how our clothes rustle and the faint smell of sweat and snow and my synchronous desire to be warm and to feel the fresh air and the weight of my bag against my leg. It is the irritating song on the radio and the just audible whirr of the tape recorder and the sharp retort of a car door slamming that makes your eye flicker minutes later. It is your curiosity in me and our shared conviviality. It is the flow and stutter of our exchange. It is the research form that I finally worked up the courage to ask you to sign only a few minutes ago and it is the bureaucratic apparatus that it recalls. It is the memory of that disjunctive moment that still resonates between us.

All of these aspects and countless others comprise an ecology that is finite eventually, but in this moment it feels like it has no limit. But apparently, somewhere, is its event horizon.

Without knowing this event horizon, without finding this edge, how does this ecology translate into the relationship between us? The fact that I am interviewing you, my friend, I am asking you questions, I am guiding your answers with subtle movements of approval or confusion that I am unconscious of as they traverse my face. You are not a stranger to me, we are attuned to one another. And I, as much as you, take my cues from your words and movements. We co-constitute and 'contaminate' one another in this dynamic of interviewer and interviewee. Unmaking and reproducing the subjectivities and roles we are performing: roles that, at the same time as they trace out a tension, seem insignificant somehow. And it is this simultaneous dynamic that affects *how* we relate to one another before, during and after this interviewing process. A way of regarding each other that both syncopates and stretches out the rhythms of our movements, our words and our disclosures, oscillating between the ease of friendship and the unease of intellectual objectification.

When this dynamic signifies the crux of the encounter between us, then what are the consequences in the sense of constructing a method, an ethics of interviewing and of research? How is it pos-

sible to navigate between the bonds of friendship and the requirements of critical enquiry? How can I recognise and respect our feelings of camaraderie, our solidarity with one another and dually maintain a distance that doesn't immediately instrumentalise you as another case study, detached from your own context, your history, your desires and your fears? How can I, at the same time your friend and a researcher, play out these dyadic roles while still being self-reflexive enough to concede the presence of this implicit power struggle? How can I do so without allowing such structures of power to paralyse me or how I relate to you? And how might I communicate this encounter and its myriad tensions and torsions without translating them into the alienating and elitist languages of intellectual discourses (in a manner we might call non-specialist)?

Perhaps one response may be found within militant research: the 'theoretical and practical work oriented to *co-produce* the knowledges and modes of an alternative sociability' (Colectivo Situaciones 2003: italics mine). The Colectivo Situaciones write that when practicing militant research the researcher (the research collective),

'cannot exist without seriously investigating (her)self, without modifying (her)self, without reconfiguring (her)self in the social practices in which (she) takes part, without reviewing the ideals and values (she) holds dear, without permanently criticising (her) ideas and readings (2003).'

During this interview or research encounter, I, like you, am reconfigured in numerous ways. Moving in accord with this reconfiguration I must investigate myself, my investments, my desires and my values. Not only you and I but also our friendship is reconfigured, and our roles and subjectivities within it because we co-produce one another. This in turn effects how my research is assembled and its organisation; shaping how I articulate myself, the content of my writing and vitally, how I distribute and disseminate the material culmination of this labour. In the process of interviewing – in researching – there is, as the Colectivo Situa-

ciones propose, 'objectuality' and 'instrumentalism'. There are 'accords' and 'alliances'. There is 'political or ideological compromise'.

But there is also 'composition'. As in friendship, there is necessarily an inexplicable element to what we create together. A sometimes careful, sometimes careless composition that is a bricolage of intellectual and affective events. Made up of schisms and commons, of self-investments and convenience but also of genuine love, hospitality and fraternity. This ecology engenders and is engendered through the roles we perform in our research encounter, the knowledges we compose together via our conversations and experiences. And it is this, my friend, that I might say forms the ethics of our enquiry: layers upon layers of experiences together, of moments and gestures that will always leave an imprint upon whatever comes out of this process. An imprint with a particular bias and a particular virtuosity.

Colectivo Situaciones (2003) On the researcher-militant. Trans. Touza, S. *Transversal*. (<http://transform.eipcp.net/transversal/0406/colectivosituaciones/en>)

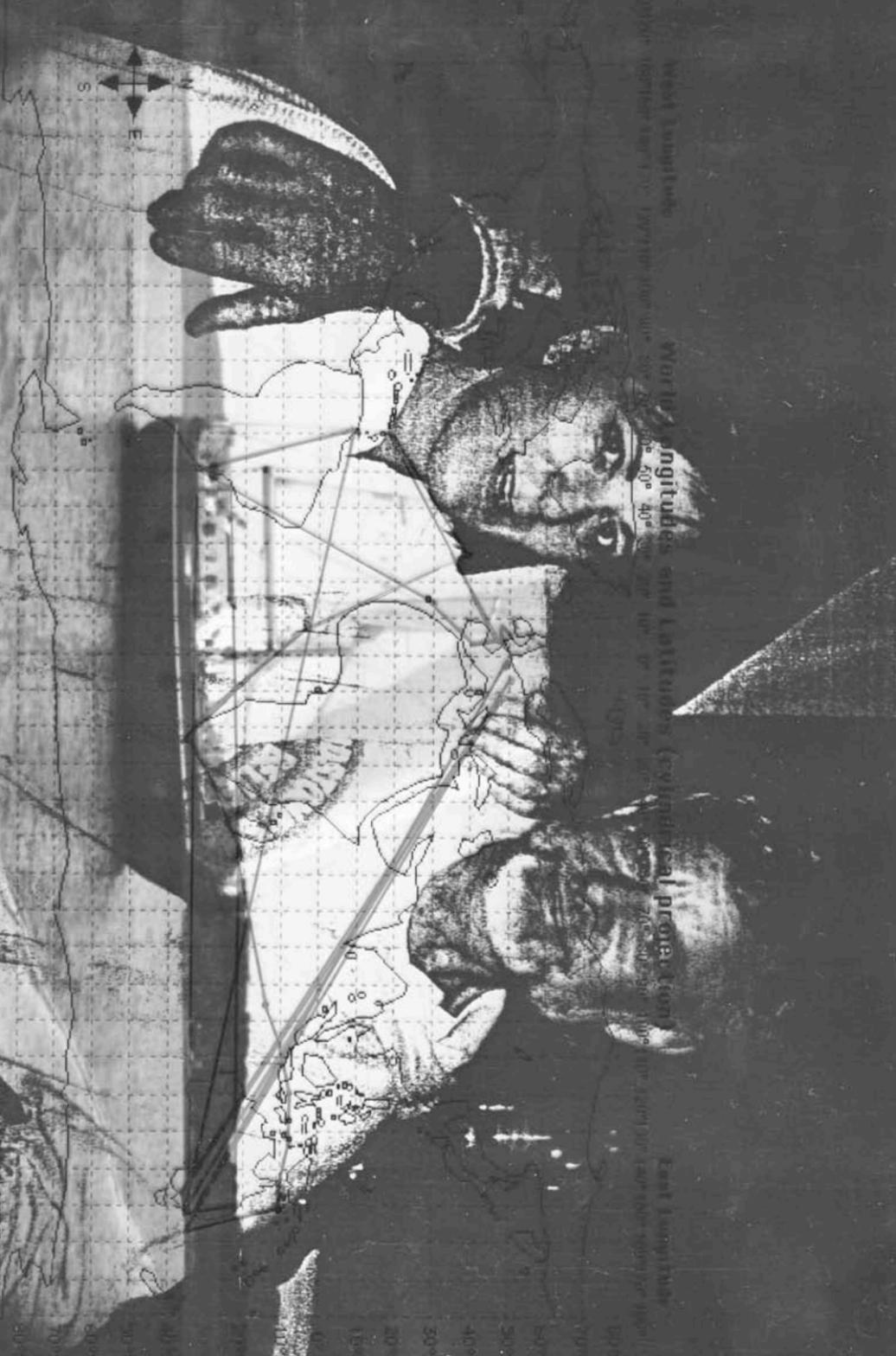
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you may also want to go to:

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West Longitude

North Longitude and Latitude (Cylindrical projection)

East Longitude

60° 40° 20° 0° 20° 40° 60° 80° 100° 120° 140° 160° 180°



30° 20° 10° 0° 10° 20° 30° 40° 50° 60° 70° 80° 90° 100° 110° 120° 130° 140° 150° 160° 170° 180°

movement

In 1968 H and T immigrated from $50^{\circ}7'N$ $8^{\circ}41'E$ to $34^{\circ}S$ $151^{\circ}E$. Four months after revolutionaries hurled molotov cocktails and discovered new worlds hidden beneath the cobblestones in $48^{\circ}48'N$ $2^{\circ}20'E$, they crossed seas and lands and terrains and territories. New worlds. Border zones. Migrants and boat people with names like strangulated complications of vowels and staccato multi-syllabic rhythms. (Like the sounds in your ears if you say these words out loud). Nomads tracing out oceanographic exodus: a desire for escape, for mobility, and for freedom. Sometimes T sold lemons and oranges that she found on land, sometimes H sold his electrician skills boat to boat in places such as $34^{\circ}S$ $151^{\circ}E$, $12^{\circ}40'S$ $141^{\circ}52E$, $12^{\circ}28'S$ $130^{\circ}51'E$, $08^{\circ}35'S$ $125^{\circ}35'E$, $08^{\circ}39'S$ $115^{\circ}13'E$, $10^{\circ}30'S$ $105^{\circ}40'E$, $12^{\circ}10'S$ $96^{\circ}50'E$, $21^{\circ}06'S$ $55^{\circ}36'E$, $34^{\circ}22'58'S$ $56^{\circ}32'30'W$. Itinerants labouring to continue their movement, their search for the vastest distance away (from there), their search for somewhere that wasn't a capture.

When they arrived H stayed in $33^{\circ}52'28'S$ $150^{\circ}59'23'E$. It wasn't for long, it wasn't like now: he wasn't imprisoned, he wasn't a terrorist threat (they ascertained) and he didn't need to wait years to be set free. T told me when I asked her on the phone just now – she in $48^{\circ}8'N$ $11^{\circ}35'E$, me in $37^{\circ}47'S$ $144^{\circ}58'E$ – immigration was easier in those days. We arrived with nothing. We wanted freedom, not like in $51^{\circ}N$ $9^{\circ}E$ where we couldn't breathe. We

chose dis-place-ment. We wanted to be able to escape. Don't you find it easier to move here (to breathe here)? There was space here. Space to move around. The light was different (and the military would not conscript him). The nationalist rhetoric they despised hadn't found its way to this remote continent (they talked about you dirty wogs – ey hohr-st what did you say I can't understand your accent mate). They taught themselves English, and H always made me watch documentaries about 51°N 9°E to show me what they had left behind moving forwards (every time someone quizzically stumbled over ahnn-djugh-can-guy-zeer I wanted to just be j-ahy-nuh suh-mi-th vic-toh-ree-ah pee-tehrs loo-see juh-own-z). T worked cleaning houses and cleaning the arses of old people in Lutheran homes, and H drove ferries back and forth back and forth back and forth. They wanted to give us everything.

At first they thought it was their (hetero)topia. Their island in an island on an island in the sea 33°38'30"S 151°17'24"E. They came here from 23°50'56.34"S 151°15'45.56"E. A new world away from the aboveworld of cobblestones equal to destitution and grey faces and political lies and the shadows of war. But later, just before H stopped, he said to me: it's no different here. They are fascists here too. They lock refugees in concentration camps. They let asylum seekers drown. They kill their indigenous peoples. I'm scared that when you go to protest they will beat you up, those nazi police, those pigs. He said: what they do here is disgusting, and he breathed out his despair. Breathe in breathe out. Everywhere it is the same. He looked at me, his eyes bright. I said: but nowhere is the same, nowhere is identical. No-where. Now-here. Similar enough to feel trapped to feel the nausea of realisation (that everywhere the State is in power it will feel the same somehow), but different enough, lines of longitude and latitude degrees separated enough to be something else really, or somewhere else.

I feel trapped he said, and he left on his boat to trace paths of desire in the oily water of the bay. He dreamt of fleeing to 20°17'14"S 57°44'17' E, 29°53'S 31°03'E, 33°S 27°54'E, 33°57'29"S 25°36'E, 33°57'05.16921'S 18°28'06.76131'E, 15°57'S

5°42'W, 7°57'S 14°22'W, 38°50'N 28°W, 17°1'N 61°47'W,
50°52'N 4°22'E, 51°N 4°E, 52°22'N 9°43'E, 45°05'27'N
3°54'27'W, 40°N 4°W, 28°30'N 16°25'W, 28°41'N 13°56'W,
33°32'S 56°54'W, 12°03'N 61°45'W. I said I feel like I can't stop, I
just can't stop. T said I hate this place I want to live on the
mainland and not on this island anymore. Then she fled. And
came back. And fled.

Moving illegitimately, we move, us itinerants. All of us itinerants
in one way or another. All of us moving, particles, atoms
smashing together, bodies, gestures, limbs akimbo, racing hearts,
terrified of stopping, terrified of going, but needing and desiring
mobility, changes of scenery, a change is as good as a holiday.
Moving pausing moving pausing transversing pausing. Singularly
and collectively. Agents of mobility. Across borders fences
frontiers locked gates invisible demarcations. Pausing. Pausing:
like so many others (some of them foreigners, wogs, nazis,
laughter ringing in response to his brazen broken language
eventually they got bored of laughing) he clung to his heterotopia
and then, when it failed him, when he stopped moving, we
scattered him across the sea where he was lost in the momentum
of the waves somewhere around 33°45'S 150°42'E and 33°38'30'S
151°17'24'E.

Always moving. Moving. All ways.

...

Exhausted. In a liminal zone where the body threatens to fade
into the environment. Tired of shifting all these papers around,
these documents, these boxes.

Exhausted, he steps onto the 14.40 train. 'This is the two-forty
service operated by Southern Rail Services.' Eyes burning from
the computer screen, he gazes at the platform number and gets
on the train.

The train is a wonderful place to be at 3pm on a Friday, crawling
slowly overground, with a strange kind of delay to the rest of the
city: the urban setting is about to switch from production to con-

sumption, with the bars and restaurants filling up, but on the train, neither of those really applies.

This slight distance invites into a strange kind of spectatorship, where everything seems familiar and unknown at the same time. Someone going to a cash point, they want to buy a ticket for the underground, sigh as they insert their card into the reader, prices of so-called 'public' transport keep going up, that transport is no longer really public.

The city flies past and in doing so it seems to make sense, but what does that mean? With what kind of gaze is he looking at all this, what expectations? There's visual complexity to the urban spectacle, which he's been taught to appreciate via TV and cinematic images - but his eyes are burning, and he has no time or energy for romanticising. It's 3.15pm.

He looks at the billboards, they are easy to decipher. Calling him to express his 'self' or 'get a mortgage now'. The train halts gently. He looks again. The billboards stand there like titans, out of context, interpellating anyone and no one, too large to relate to any of those bodies or vehicles circulating on the roundabout. How can anyone go so clumsily about constructing a set, with the proportions that wildly out of scale?

The train starts moving again. More billboards. The awkward effect of their size disappears suddenly - indeed, they are made for people moving past them at a certain speed. The city functions as a transitional and transactional space, not the kind where one halts or stops. If one does, the effects are alienating. Most spaces are made for passing through, except those so called private ones that are often linked to re-production and consumption: kitchens, living rooms, bars, restaurants, gardens. He sighs and rubs his eyes. Time seems to freeze. What about trains?

Next to two titanic advertisements stuck onto a railway bridge, there is an old shopping centre. Once surrounded by a market, there now is another billboard. It announces the 'Southern Regeneration Scheme'. Small figures at the bottom of the billboard, waving little signs and a banner: 'We can't eat luxury flats'. He wishes the train would stop.

He's trying to hold some five thoughts at once, but there is a

headache coming on. He wishes he could be on a train through the south, another kind of south... to close his eyes for some thirty minutes and go past lots of markets and old houses.

‘In a few minutes we will arrive at our final destination...’ What is a train? It’s almost 3.30pm. The suburbs scroll past. A speck of sunlight travels along his arm. His mobile phone vibrates, but he ignores it. There is something he likes about trains...

‘Train’ is a space for projection, imagining and remembering. The train carriage is a space where we get a *sense* of our selves in a process that can measure itself against the pace and rhythm of the body in a rather gentle way. The slower the train, the gentler the movement – the more we carefully can gain a sense of orientation. We forget where it was we were going, we remember and project ourselves, we digest – metabolism takes place on various levels. He can sense himself getting hungry, he wonders if there is enough time to take out an apple and eat it. He wonders if there might be time to strike up a conversation with the skinny lady sitting opposite. His shoelace is undone. His body cringes under the pre-sentiment of taking up the urban, high tone and slightly smart attitude that he makes himself recognisable by. His body is tired of signalling this or that. Some metres further, at the entrance to the platform, a red light shows – the train comes to a halt at the periphery of the station. This pause could take ten minutes, or five more seconds, there’s no way of telling – the train might be about to move on. He decides not to worry, and lets his body drop back into the seat.

In relation to other technologies of transportation - not to speak of technologies of communications – trains are old-fashioned and slow. They don’t abide by the speed of the urban and social factory. They cause delays, and are disliked for that – people get bored on them and ask, why can’t arrivals be facilitated ever more effectively?!

Old style locomotion isn’t very sexy – no plugs, no bar-restaurant, no plasma screens, no music, no on-board lottery, no duty free shopping. There are efforts to ‘innovate’ trains though. The Eurostar is an example of the gated, elitist and consumerist style of new

trains: champagne bars, passports, small seats, high speed, expensive tickets. Many people come from far just to get on it once. Once and never again, in order to make a final leap from France to England, in hope of a better life. The Eurostar won't have low-income migrants, nor will France or the UK of course. Or it will, just a few will be enough. This kind of train is a vehicle for deaths that aren't suicides at all.

Like airplanes, these new-style trains play a part in keeping out people who can't be good consumers, admitting ever so few who can struggle their way through as migrants without papers, and managing the flows of those 'good' citizens capable of consuming and producing on the 'right' scale. The kind of scale that allows us to have ever faster trains, bigger billboards, and eyes that burn non-stop.

15.47 and a gentle movement. The suburbs begin to scroll past again, slowly. He wishes for that delightful slowness to continue. Slow trains offer a space somewhat on the margins of cultures of productivity. Another halt. Slow trains put the 'self' into a process of shifting and transition... while the body rests or paces up and down the corridor, there are layers and layers of internal movements going on. These trains, by virtue of their gentle movement, offer the possibilities of exit and delay, as well as of meeting people and spending a couple of hours with them – talking or staring out the window with them. These trains make space for modalities of self-narration that are not so much driven by an incentive to productivity, networking or self-representation. Scattered moments of train-conversations rather allow for strange articulations to emerge: stuttering, stuck-ish modes of address. Precarious sociability, vulnerable strangers. Eyes wander out the window, magazines work as mediating devices.

A train is a friendly space for bodies in metamorphosis, for having a conversation beyond usual protocols of relationality, speaking to people with whom we don't necessarily share a world of referents, vocabulary and use of language. We meet people who, like us, are on a train and thinking things through in a dream-like space, narrating experiences back to themselves in various terms – and why not also to each other? We listen strangely, with an attention for difference. Trains ask for a peculiar mode of attention, for a kind of listening that is disinterested yet nonetheless careful.

He likes to think that trains carry vacuoles of publicness, whereby a certain space of polite relation and care for a general context are shared. They also hold the possibility of a differential mode of attention, infinitesimal insecurities, micro-questions and slippages, perhaps giving onto larger questions.

3.40pm and again parked outside a station. He thinks of an analogous space where 'self' loses hold of its usual referents, tokens and distractions. The train becomes the analogous movement of 'self' across geological, social and psychic zones, shared with other bodies who are undergoing similar movements. Train is the space that hosts these movements in the larger movement of a set of carriages.

In this sense, trains might be seen as 'technologies of the self' (Foucault), granted that 'self' can be cracked open as a referent. Through the sharing of our train-selves, we become capable of mounting self-trains with others, larger social movements that can be driven by a desire to go somewhere else. We gather at the margins of a space of productivity and representation, to pick up on the sensitivity that allows us to reconfigure our sense of 'self'. That is a 'self' that exceeds the hyper-networked modes of individuality: *industry* and *interest* can get lost a bit, and other kinds of ideas and desires emerge. We become invisible to ourselves for some time. This is a shared sensitive space, since it depends on the parallel movement of desires and selves, towards the platform, getting on the train.

We might imagine ourselves on a train even when we're not, trying to embody that strange kind of invisible movement. When walking through the city, we pause and look, we set up a chair where there isn't supposed to be one according to the local council. We sit down together and find a shared temporality.

...

The scene was like this: there was the arrival of the reader's eyes at the paper and a fictional meeting of the words written on the paper, and the invisible writer, with the reader. Like two singular events: a provisional and temporary arrival (of the stranger coming into the

space that makes into a place to stay); and a situation of 'guests' or 'intruders' that the situation intends to experiment with. Both, performers and public, reader and written-word writer, are unknown to each other; both are guests of each other; both are intruders inside the world that the other owns for him/her self. It starts like this:

They occupy a space, and their mutual 'stays' are different from each other. As intruders, they could inhabit the uncertainties they may re-present in front of each other; they could inhabit a world in which their presence would be too artificial, illegitimate, incorrect, pirated, betrayed. They definitely cannot integrate each other. This is the concept that cannot take place here.

In the context of this text, I don't need you to assimilate my words. I'd rather like this paper to make our differences more perceptible. We could say that, as intruders, we should keep on behaving like 'intruders'. Our differences marked, singularised. This difference per-forms the human tissue of which theatre is made of. In this theatre, the 'arrival' is always marked by the 'unexpected'.

My words are in here a fortuitous presence. I ask for a place. A place marked by the limits of your wealthy silence. At the same time I wish I could keep on preserving my own self. But this 'entrance' of you in my universe is creating *dis*-order: you are at this moment *de*-stabilising and *dis*-organising the very purpose that took me to write all this.

I'd like to keep on thinking your thoughts and your body as being not yet integrated, and thus engaging us politically: I'd like to think of you as a singularity being inside my mind and my body. I'd like to think of you being next to me and proximate. And thus, observe and work with you: the way you expose me, the way you export me and dis-own me from my body.

Let's define our relationship. At first, we have to think of a concept through which our doings can converge. But maybe there is no concept as such. No under-standing, but the relation established by our different 'standings' next to each other. Our standings loosen up the initial premise and its primary value. We may be produc-

ing something else here: something that neither you nor me may expect entirely. A question comes to mind: if we are not understanding but 'standing', which ground (if any) are we standing upon then? Crossing over which limit? Stepping over what surface? Which is the rhythm of that stepping? Or which is the quality of our parallel walks along each other? Or better: could our doings be an act of self-interest and desire? If so, let's organise this practice:

If I cannot think of my own as 'having my own self', I cannot think of what I use and surrounds me, what in-forms and per-forms me as having a concrete essence. Instead I could think that it is perhaps the missing essence of a theory, a philosophy, an idea or subject that I try to articulate over and over again. It is not the 'thing' itself but the resonances it left me. In fact, this 'missing essence' is an untranslatable notion, its very articulation and actualisation supposes the production of a different knowledge, this being the production of knowledge with a practice that IS becoming a 'sensible object'. This sensible object is made out of people working together in building up a microstructure that reveals its own discourse and politics. People's doings could be an 'intervention' or 'interruption' that manifests or calls for different attention and different perceptions: collectively is us, individuals experiencing this sensible object along the way: a battle through our bodies in the world.

As if we were working, 'standing' within a practice in which all we do is to be with each other in movement. It is this 'with' that interests me: I am my-self, double, and therefore not alone. We are people producing meaning through out relations, through systems and signs. The experience of the moving-with is the experience of decision-making under any specific situation. I'm talking about a movement and positionalities informed by the person that passes through them and occupies a space, by his/her engagement and their performance within it, and a performance in which the unspecified rules are not only represented but also experimented with through different decisions which become singular forms of engagement and reflection. I mean decision, as opposed to opinion. Decision contains a much more ethical degree of engagement. Not only about what it is that we desire the most (that would be only like producing pleasure), but what the

qualities of our desires are. Even further, the ability to produce another type of desire: desire-for-less-desire. What are these qualities putting at stake then? What are they challenging in us? How is this challenge pro-posing us differently?

This experiment doesn't happen alone: it is shared with an audience, and thus involves the spectator in that moving territory in which the result doesn't rely on what you see, rather on what you cannot see – but only as a possibility. This is the very value that the experiment undergoes: a giving value that lies first in the offer in itself; secondly, in the fact that the performer and maker don't have the answers and that they prefer not to; and thirdly, in the exposure of a community consciously undergoing the experience of its shared value. Sharing without essence, but with divisions. One that 'offers' what he/she doesn't even have or know is someone who is on the road and therefore present. What is shared is not the completed identity of all in one; what it is shared is sharing itself, and so everyone's none identity of the work to itself in communication: in communication, in movement, offering itself, holding itself and therefore suspended.

The preparation of this encounter cannot be reduced to covering myself up with clothes, images, or speeches, which render my self familiar to you, but requires finding gestures or words, which could touch you in my alterity. I'm drawing near necessities; I'm allying this intimacy without submitting it to you. Attraction is awakened by the difference between our two worlds, and by the mystery that our different activities may represent to each other. This intimacy wants to push for a little bit of violence: to cover you with the pigments of my imagination is no doubt to favour a violation of this mystery, but not a *real* approach between us. Such an approach can exist in the respect of our two familiarities, which *connect, without canceling* each other out. If I only include you in my universe, then I'm only preventing myself from meeting you. The question is: how can we be including each other without inclusion?

We have to work on another means of approach, advancing step by step towards an uncovering of you and myself, so as to come

back modified. But one thing remains: only in what is still independent of the influence of someone may proximity take place as 'event: and advent'. Something arrives again, and not in order to be kept as a thing, but as a mysterious legacy of this encounter which it is important to remember without simply appropriating it. So this could be our project: to come back to this paper and to be with it; *realising* its limits over and over again. It is an activity, not a state. It is at work, working an unworking the very lines, which gives it sense. It is *sensing* its very undoing, and in doing so, dynamising another link, another *and*, another *with*.

Certainly, the anatomy of this project problematises its subjects, and at the same time mobilises new resources. It increases the reality of its possibilities: 'possibility' and 'power' derive from the same word, *posse*, and so does 'potential'. The potential to work together in this way opens up possibilities:

We are building up this project and playing a game at the same time. In this project, we are implicated in fictions and narratives that we take up as our own. Unbounded. On the field, we display a number of possibilities, which means that what we display is our powers in order to keep on continuing with this project. We don't aim for a fusion in the field, because then, the project will be finished. What we aim for is the continuity of an activity-in-common (which also implies a risk); our value here is not that of freedom (especially with respect to the reality of working together and learning together). Freedom is not at all achieved through the belief in a disappearance of limits, but through the increase of affective capacities and their real possibilities. Our value is the 'autonomy' we perform, meaning the capacity to be able to choose a plan and be able to realise it in practical terms. This also means a performance as 'an experiment of autonomies in relation', playing the limits that render it possible, in collaboration... together... moving closer and closer apart...

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non-specialisation

‘The question has always been organisational, not at all ideological: is an organisation possible which is not modelled on the apparatus of the State, even to prefigure the State to come?’

(Deleuze, 1988)

‘For a brief time there was and continues to be a relief from capital’s tyranny of specialisation that forces us to perform as if we are a fixed set of relationships and characteristics, and to repress or strictly manage all other forms of desire and expression.’

(Critical Art Ensemble, 2001).

When you enter any classroom – be it at a university, public/private school, language school, technical college, or kindergarten – look around the room. Note the organisation of the tables and chairs, the way they are positioned in careful linearity; line after line facing the blackboard, the segregation between the desk of the teacher and the desk of her students. The podium of the lecturer perched like the apex of a pyramid, rows of chairs saluting the hierarch of education. The fairly regimented schedule of breaks and pauses. This material manifestation, this material environment of the institution of knowledge, makes visible those widely unchallenged power structures that legitimate and mobilise a division of labour, a division of expertise, a division of au-

thority. The teacher and her pupil co-constitute the subjectivities and roles of one another. Even in those most progressive institutions, inspired (implicitly or explicitly) by radical pedagogy, these relationships can still be seen to play themselves out. The expert and the novice. These divisions and these relationships – this very classical ecology of knowledge generation – compelled us to begin thinking about non-specialisation.

Non-specialisation is a term we use to describe experimental critical interventions in hierarchical systems of value that underpin how we produce, and relate to, knowledge. Because we ourselves come from contexts informed by classical education systems – schools, technical and art colleges and universities – non-specialisation looks at those uni-directional relationships of learning (teacher-expert imparting knowledge on her student-novice) paradigmatic of these institutions. Such traditionally one-way methods of transmitting and receiving knowledge are taken by us as a site from which to investigate how the relationships engendered through this process are reproduced outside of the classroom, in all facets of everyday life.

Central to the concept of non-specialisation is questioning the socio-political and economic role played by the specialist or expert, who is often considered to be more ‘valuable’ than a non-expert in terms of what kind of knowledges they possess. The specialist commands power based on her legitimation through, and production of, specific kinds of knowledge. That said, it is not the act of gaining expertise or experience within a field that we see as the problem. What we are critical of are the ways in which hierarchies of knowledge are judged based on what kind of education/degree/qualification/resources/vocabularies and experiences someone has had access to. This way of distributing merit is integral to the definition of the expert as such. It is problematic because it disqualifies and devalues individuals and groups who are excluded not only from dominant institutions and their resources, but also from any kind of ‘meritocracy’: whether due to gender, class or racial reasons, or because of different desires and lines of interest.

This is why non-specialisation acknowledges the importance of initiating all analysis through a critical examination of the relationships between the nation-state, class and neoliberal capitalism. What may be shown through such a method is how these relationships impact upon the possible attainment of recognised expertise. We propose that this is a necessary way to start our analysis because institutions of state education increasingly engage in commercial enterprise and private partnerships with economic industry. For us, what this indicates is a need to incorporate both the philosophical and the political into questions around specialisation and hierarchies of knowledge: what might comprise expertise outside of qualification? How might the structure of authority that places the teacher over her student reflect other state-organisational and socio-political structures? What is the dynamic between capital and expertise, and how has this affected the historical conceptualisation of labour? How do the discourses of neoliberalism, which employ rhetorics of ‘horizontality’ and ‘equality’, repeat hierarchical categories of value in knowledge production? How does specialisation affect the specialist and what impact does it have on her? Why do cultural/social knowledges, practical skills, and affective/desiring and haptic knowledges still remain marginal in comparison to institutionalised knowledges? How might we question and transform our understandings of knowledge through recognising our own motivations and privileges? And how can we do this without falling back into the power and value structures, the ways of speaking and acting, that we want to move away from?

By committing to both critical inquiry and direct action, we understand that the basis of non-specialisation must be not only in questioning and reflecting, but also in practical experimentation. Our objective is to try out different, creative methods of organisation as a way to transverse both discursive and material elements of knowledge production and distribution. Crucial to the praxis of non-specialisation is self-reflexivity, and we try to maintain an awareness of alienating ways of speaking, behaviours and environments that must be negotiated through. Such negotiations may inform different kinds of learning and teaching that explicitly en-

courage reciprocity, relationality and dialogue. These kinds of education might draw, for instance, upon tactics such as skill and resource sharing, public conversations, and trans-community collaborations and research. Within such education events, modes of facilitation and self-organisation that focus on non-representative principles of participation may be practiced. While such principles often feature in these events, non-specialisation cannot be limited to known forms of organisation and must retain a responsibility to experimenting through praxis (both conceptual and empirical). In this way, for us, non-specialisation thus acts as an ongoing process of questioning and responding, unmaking and remaking, that through this very process performs the relationships of knowledge that we desire to see.

Non-specialist is a political collective that facilitates skillshares, currently based in Melbourne Australia. For more information see <http://www.non-specialist.net/>

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politics of aesthetics

Preamble

Politics frames society.

And so do the arts.

When the arts frame they do politics.

As they do the same that politics does.

The arts nonetheless are supposed to be different from other human actions and activities. That could mean that they resist this tendency of framing.

How? By doing the opposite, by unframing.

Note

Any activity frames and is framed as well, this mutuality is common to the process of framing. Like every fence limits the borders from the inside as well as from the outside. The arts are framed (or should I say tamed) for instance by the status that society grants them.

This complicates the possibility of the arts to be different.

Framing

a. Politics

Let's say politics is the arena that distributes our common space and time. Politics is the battle about the perceptible/sensible ma-

terial available. In that sense, the battle can be considered an aesthetic one. It deals with what we see, feel and hear.

Politics allocates which space at what time can be used, or should be used for which activity: this is a park, here a hospital, there a street, here a playground, there a theatre, so many bars in the center, discos in suburban areas, house blocks here, shopping streets there, a football stadium next to the zoo and the metro here etc.

Politics organises our common sensorium by distributing it. The communal area is divided in different parts.

The main questions are: who can take part, who has a part, who is counted, who is not counted? Who is included and who is excluded? In other words: who has a bigger part, and who has a more limited part in the many parts?

b. Arts

Art frames through the consensus around its aesthetic regime. It frames according to what artists and a certain establishment consider as ugly or beautiful, touching or cerebral, exciting or boring, dynamic or slow, funny or sad, new or old, recognisable or unrecognisable, good or bad taste, etc. It frames by this system of laws. Taste is the result of a very complex set of laws, of principles. To like or dislike something is the result of a very precise chain of reactions, which finally end up in a *Weltbild*; one's worldview, which settles in the ontological state of an undoubtful position. Things are like this, one thinks, and things have to be like this. Almost some kind of a belief. One confirms ones *Weltbild* by what one likes. One likes something because it fits in with one's particular and complex, but stereotypical chain of reactions. To like harmony and the harmonious fits with a need for balance, a need for the complementary, not only in music, but in many societal fields as well.

Artforms (music, painting, literature, etc.) also frame through the very distinction between art and other activities, and they frame within art through their distinctive categories (the redefinition between representative, decorative and conceptual art).

The arts frame also through their allegorical and artificial nature.

Art is subject to translation, transposition, transformation, transmutation. The enjoyment of the game of art, for the maker as well as the consumer, is this very game of transferring. A kind of juggling: 'look, it is not what it seems to be', and 'look, it seems to be what it is not'. As with any other games, like football or chess, one has to be able to know the rules in order to enjoy this complex game.

Art frames too at the level of representation of structural and con-structural principles. Take classical ballet: the *corps de ballet* in perfect unison was the perfect representation and celebration of the need of a Fordist society for a workforce operating in unison and investing it with belief. Politics is, of course, not only reflected in the representation, but also in the way the art is produced, in the way power is distributed in the process of making. The strongly hierarchical, almost feudal working relations in the production of classical ballet in particular, and in many big production houses in performing, film and music arts (the non-individual arts, the arts that demand cooperation), reflect a highly respected power machine, making art and artists objects of admiration.

Nowadays, the multiple small-scale and often flexible production units which produce the numerous styles and applications of highly differentiated and varied manifestations of the arts provide the perfect representation of a society that requires an independent, flexible workforce.

The relation of the arts to the economy is so strong that it seems almost impossible not to think art as servile to politics.

Politics

Art has a political dimension in the way that its forms materially propose the paradigms of the community. Books, theatre, orchestras, choirs, dance, paintings or murals are models of framing or unframing (of aspects of) a community. They frame insofar as they purport to know what a book, theatre, orchestra etc. is or has to represent. They unframe when they question these very functions. They unframe when they rethink the parameters of the very artform or when they rethink the paradigms of the community.

Maybe one can say that all art that became famous rethought the parameters of what it was supposed to be, and/or what it was supposed to represent, whether this was a film, a museum piece or a musical score.

Not the artisanality, the handycraft, the technical level but the jump, the jump out of the frame, is what finally has been valued. The jump opens up a territory. Provides not seldom or even literally another perspective, mostly after being denied and opposed in the beginning. What earlier was thought to be subversive is appropriated by a community through validation, which is not seldom expressed through high financial means. The originary revolutionary jump is incorporated in the economy of a society that values the uniqueness of the first who dared to jump. The unframing is framed again.

But where do the arts become political?

Art is considered to be political when its subject is political. That means when its subject represents the position of certain parties. Mostly parties who are deprived from substantial parts of the common sensorium. Parties who cannot take part. Women, homosexuals, the poor, the homeless, the coloured, excluded minorities, the working class, etc.

Art is considered political when it tries to politicise, to empower the excluded to demand their part of the common cake. To stimulate them to fight for their rights.

In this way, art, one could say, *does* politics.

Just like art can do teaching or preaching.

In these cases it does not art, it does politics, teaching or preaching.

It *does* politics but it *is* not political.

It does politics because its aim is clearly the redistribution of the communal cake.

Its aim is not to rethink the ways we organise life and/or the ways we live together. It only reorganises and redistributes the already accepted partition. It does not make us see, feel or speak the communal space and time differently. It does not open up parts of the communal space by rethinking the way it has been conceived and has been used. It does not redefine or open up the common space

in a way that more can take part or more can share parts.
Art can be political in rethinking the ways and conditions in which it produces, distributes and presents its products.
Art is political when it opens up the participation of more parts and parties of the common sensorium.
Art is political when it makes people look, hear or read a part of the common sensorium differently.
Art is political when it can make people take part differently in parts of the common sensorium.
Art is political insofar as it deframes or unframes the way we perceive the common sensorium and the way we take part in it.

Many thanks to Jacques Rancière and his books '*Le partage du sensible*' and '*Aesthetics of Politics and Politics of Aesthetics*'

radical diplomacy

‘A negotiator must have stamina – physical and mental stamina. He has got to be physically prepared, since he cannot always control the time of negotiations, because other people are involved. He must not tire easily.’

Zartman, W.I.; Burman, M.R., *The Practical Negotiator*, 1982.

‘All men should have a drop or two of treason in their veins, if the nations are not to go soft like so many sleepy pears.’

West, R., *The Meaning Of Treason*, 1949.

Within the current cultural and political conjuncture, concepts of the ‘relational’, the ‘authentic’, the ‘social’ and the ‘participatory’ become buzzwords within the fields of art, marketing, urban regeneration and, increasingly, corporate education. This is the context within which many of us as cultural workers, mediators and pedagogues find ourselves increasingly mired in a set of deep and enduring ambivalences.

It is also in this context that we experience the unreality of collapsing distinctions between life and work, between home and elsewhere, between leisure and production, between debt and employment, less as the enactments of the emancipated worker or the generative relationality of Duchamp’s anartist, but rather as

planes of individualised demands for authorship and hyper-productivity. Where such collapses hold the potential to build new possibilities, this potential is more often re-routed, reiterating and consolidating relations of property and value.

Traditional critiques of the leftist artist posit a polarisation between what is described as Institution and that which is outside or autonomous, a situation where one can choose sides for or against the institution. We, as critically and politically engaged conveners, as those who often act as bridges between constituencies and activities, no longer occupy discrete fields once described as 'Art', 'Politics', 'Culture', or the positions once referred to as 'Insider', 'Outsider', 'Artist' or 'Activist'. Rather, we increasingly occupy the murky sites of their encounter. We argue that, within the experience and staging of so many collapses, the struggle for the cultural worker today must be understood from their inhabitation of what *Art and Language* once described as the 'historical conditions we are really in' rather than those conditions 'we want, need, believe or feel intimidated into supporting...'

For many of us, such conditions do not permit a choice between spaces that are co-opted, recuperated or instrumentalised, and those which are outside. Indeed such choices are misplaced and belie our occupations of complex processes of organisation and re-organisation: of power, capital, affect, social and value reproduction. To point to this complexity is not to become an apologist for the 'institution' understood as dominant power, nor is it to resign oneself to a programme of small change and reform. In this context, it is rather more generative to attend to these planes of inhabitation, the dynamics of organisation in which the macropolitical, 'facts and lifestyles in their formal, sociological exteriority' (insides and outsides) and the micropolitical, 'the forces that shake reality, dissolving its forms' meet.¹ For these are the planes and sites where power, desire and subjectivity meet and become entangled. Rather than evoke the endless repetition of a rally cry ('cooptation', 'instrumentalisation'), we attempt to understand those moments of uncertainty, of oscillation and ambivalence, as the beginning of an analysis of the 'historical conditions we are re-

ally in' and what an equally deep and enduring resistant practice might entail.

Rather than the narratives of inside and outside, we read the situations in which we find ourselves on a continuum between what Ivan Illich describes as practices of manipulation and practices of conviviality. To attend to what is manipulating and what is convivial is to attend to the site of the relationships in which we are involved – be they personal or professional. For it is no strange coincidence that it is in these relationships that we often experience the greatest intensities of our practices, the ambivalences and both the euphoria of possibility and the strain of the limit.

By shifting our gaze to the site of the relationship and its attendant continuum of manipulation and conviviality, what we often experience is not a choice between becoming, or aligning ourselves with those, situated within what we might have called 'Institution' or 'community', or with those 'outside'. The experience is rather one of rapid oscillations between affective wonder, desire and collaborative sensibility, conviviality and their constraints: the budgets, fixed temporalities, and manipulation, the very capturing mechanisms of capitalist value production.

To resist these capturing mechanisms is rather, then, to search (in Guattari's words) for 'the devices that oppose the micropolitics of cooptation'.² It is into this emphasis on the microphysics of relations that we insert a notion of *diplomacy*.

Diplomacy

Superficially, we might evoke some obvious similarities between socially engaged culture workers and the diplomatic stereotype: endless traveling, problem solving from the outside (the missions of the envoy), attention to the mechanisms of relationship building, constant negotiation, the production of novel communicative formalities.

To employ diplomacy in the current context is not, however, to

draw to mind men with cigars, stamping passports and drinking brandy behind closed doors. Nor is it to make a commentary on the globalisation of the arts, or the role that official ‘culture’ continues to play in the field of international relations. It is rather to evoke the intelligences of diplomats: their attention to the composition of the event, their ‘soft skills in the negotiation of difference’, (the ‘art of handling hearts’³), their attention to the gestures, manners and ‘the dissipation of uneasiness’ (Swift), to ‘listening to what is not said’ (Rusk), their ‘humility’ (Lord Chesterfield), ‘sincerity and good faith’ (Plantey)⁴, friendship, flattery, and hospitality. Diplomacy, said early theorist Wicquefort, is akin to perpetually ‘staging an opera’⁵. To invoke the diplomat, therefore, is to question in every moment how such intelligences are being deployed. It is to plot the orientation of these intelligences away from the pleasant play of relations of force (official diplomacy) and to locate our agitation on this very continuum of manipulation and conviviality.

Within each of our actions, the diplomatic is that which hovers between the qualities that we value – collaboration, communication, micro-political gestures of alliance, actions with consequence, festivity, conviviality – and the relations of force whose water we navigate.

We might read our own diplomatic terrain in relation to that of early modern diplomats, who narrated the moment in which their skills in sociability became the very site of a set of strategic deployments central to the tripartite apparatus of *security*.⁶ In this moment, diplomats struggled with the instrumentalisation of their role, which had, until then, been predicated on the plays of character of an agent for hire: their creativity and dedication to the task at hand, the depth and duration of their relationships, their loyalty to this or that prince, and their ability to choreograph formal processes. Diplomats at that time struggled between the task of upholding at once the integrity of these relationships and the increasing demand to utilise them in the strategic dissipation of tensions, as the friendly face that could achieve equilibrium between states bound in unequal relations.

These tensions were manifested in a debate in the early texts of diplomatic conduct. Wicquefort and Callieres argued about the degree to which diplomats should locate their work in the 'subtle art of *entrée en grâces* (entering in the other party's graces)', or how their work might be better understood as the pursuit of an 'honourable spy'.⁷ It is here that the strange hybridities now associated with diplomacy began to emerge: those 'virtues of disloyalty', that operate for example across Graham Greene's oeuvre of diplomatic fiction.

To attend to our current condition entails that we understand fully the diplomatic demand that is often made of us in the field of engaged art (and indeed post-Fordist production): that which asks us to be endlessly flexible, virtuosic, to reformulate ourselves in relation to this or that mandate (always ready to depart on a new mission), this or that opportunity, this or that *need*, while *at the same time* facilitating relationships that enable, rather than problematise, the smooth running of turgid social divisions, hierarchies and modes of producing wealth and value. By attending to our current condition as a kind of diplomatic terrain, a terrain full of ambivalence and potential for treachery and disloyalty of the right kind, we might get closer to plotting another kind of resistance through the staging and choreographing of other relational possibilities.

The terrain of relationships we often occupy in cultural work are littered with unsaid hierarchies, unspoken power relations, undeclared demands for performances of particular subjectivities and positions. These demands, power relations and hierarchies can force us to solely occupy the affective realm of the opportunistic, the strategic, or the vigilant, and the defensive. Suely Rolnik has written much about how post-Fordism has initiated a particular social and psychic anesthesia of our vulnerability to the other – 'an anesthesia all the more devastating when the other is represented by the ruling cartography as hierarchically inferior, because of his or her economic, social or racial condition...'⁸ In operating on this terrain of relationships under these conditions, what is at stake in the diplomatic operations we attempt is not only the sub-

the subversion, occupation and re-staging of manipulations and convivialities across and beyond the terrains of our operation, but also the micropolitical work that might also allow us to re-construct what Suely Rolnik calls ‘the territories of our existence – the changing contours of our subjectivity, as mutations of the sensible fabric of becoming’.⁹

Put another way, in terms lent to us by the anthropologist David Graeber, this entails a movement from relations of avoidance: those that emerge in situations of extreme hierarchy, in which there is much that one cannot say (as in an averted gaze in front of the queen or a question about money asked in the context of an art gallery), or the joking relation, to a kind of jostling or ravenous relation that enables the body to engage in acts of becoming that are ‘continuous with the world’.¹⁰

Radical Diplomacy?

Where diplomacy values the solution, the avoidance of a conflict, the covering over of structural and historical inequity through strategies and formalities of relations, a *radical diplomacy* is one which resolves *not to solve*. It provokes frictions and other modes of becoming: contra- hierarchy, manipulation and avoidance.

The radical diplomat might ask: if we are inhabitants of a field in which we are regularly implicated, subsumed and entangled in all that we had thought to oppose, if indeed we often find ourselves – in the words of the early modern negotiators, ‘living in another’s land’, ‘wearing two hats’ or enacting the ‘virtues of disloyalty’ – how might we imagine a *radical diplomacy* that enables us to manipulate *the conducts* of the diplomatic to challenge our current circumstances?

Foucault has argued that conduct is both the ‘activity of conducting, of conduction’, but also how one conducts oneself, allows oneself to be conducted, is conducted...in which one behaves as an effect of a form of conduct, as the act of conducting’.¹¹ Conducts are acts of subjectivation, performatives, or could be seen as

persons-as-subjectivating acts. They are the many ways in which we become routinised, assigned roles and designated spheres; and, perhaps more insidiously, conducts are the ways in which we become embodied facilitators of these roles.

In a cultural field in which the social and relational practices of artists are increasingly entangled in the solving of social problems, the easing of gentrification schemes and the softening of impacts of a declining welfare state, these questions of conduct are very familiar. Such conducts might be said to uphold a set of behaviours that are central to political institution. In Foucault's reading however, 'counter-conduct' as a form of dissidence might take place at the edges of political institution. His examples include such formations as military desertion in 17th and 18th centuries, resistance to medical treatment by religious groups, or in secret societies (what we might now describe as instituent practices). Counter-conducts, he argues, 'are never autonomous but rather contingent'. They are the types of revolts that emerge from specific 'webs of resistance' in relation to forms of power 'that do not exercise sovereignty and do not exploit, but "conduct"'.¹²

Counter-conducts might function in a way that is not unlike the character played by Peter Sellers' in *The Party*, the subaltern guest who, mistakenly invited and known to no one, hovers around the gathering's edges uncomfortably, knocking a glass, falling in the pool, making impossible the formal relations of its guests by mounting a series of seemingly unintentional acts. We might also think of such an invited but unknown figure in contemporary diplomatic terms as the *Track III diplomat*.

Track III diplomacy is a strangely unarticulated and undefined mode of collective, diplomatic action written into the current conducts of diplomacy. Track III diplomats are, according to more recent diplomatic manuals, composed of activists, unofficial agents and those who are not sanctioned to conduct diplomatic business. They work towards the 'elimination of socio-economic inequalities, engage in social justice and build capacities at the grassroots level'.¹³ Running exactly contrary to the aims for which diplomacy is em-

ployed, Track III diplomats then occupy a strange loophole in official definitions, an invisible and yet imagined cadre of the undefined in the field of the diplomatic. It is in this official gap reserved for the unofficial that we might attempt to activate the mode of diplomacy longed for by Walter Benjamin in his *Critique of Violence*, a diplomacy that moves beyond 'mere forms', activating the potential of 'relational webs' of counter-conduct.¹⁴ Such a Track III or radical diplomacy might then make use of diplomacy's intelligence and attention to the complex relationship between micropolitical affect and macropolitical effect, to the art of negotiating complexity, and multi-faceted interests, to the institutions and conventions offered, while simultaneously articulating modes of ethical action while 'living in another's land'.

Emerging from such a complex sites of inhabitation, how do we then navigate the competing interests in whose service current modes of practice operate? If not in the service of flexible economies, inclusion agendas, what modes of responsibility and 'honourable spying' might we imagine for this new terrain? If we understand the diplomatic as a condition of convening and inhabiting relationships and affects, what inventory of counter-conducts, secret societies, or forms of desertion might we plot for ourselves?

The radical diplomat is a figure that emerges within the shadows of our current conditions. She is a figure, a gestural contour of a passing moment, a gymnast, an acrobat, a synchronised swimmer in motion. She is a figure in which a condition becomes recognizable, that which 'makes visible the impossible, (while) it also invites the imagination to transform the impossible into an experience'.¹⁵

you may also want to go to:

← 60 intervention

← 90 non-specialisation

→ 117 self

¹ Rolnik, S. (2006) 'The Geopolitics of Pimping', in *Transversal*, online journal, \ <http://transform.eipcp.net/transversal/1106/rolnik/en>.

² Guattari, F. & Rolnik, S. (2007). *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*. Cambridge, MA: Semiotexte, p. 218.

³ De Callieres, F. (1716) *The Art of Negotiating with Sovereign Princes*. London: Geo. Strahan, p. 34.

⁴ Freeman, C.W. (2005) *The Diplomat's Dictionary*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press.

⁵ Wicquefort, A. (1682). *L'Ambassadeur et ses fonctions*, La Haye: Veneur, p. 127.

⁶ Foucault, M. (2007). *Security, Territory, Population*. London: Palgrave Macmillan Press, p.103.

⁷ Pekar Lempereur, A. (2003). *A Rhetorical Foundation of International Negotiations*. Versailles: Group ESSEC Centre de Recherche, p. 15.

⁸ Suely, R. (2006). 'The Geopolitics of Pimping', in *Transform*, online journal. <http://transform.eipcp.net/transversal/1106/rolnik/en>

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Graeber, D. (2007). *Manners, Deference and Private Property, or Elements for a General Theory of Hierarchy*, in *Possibilities*. AK Press.

¹¹ Foucault, M. (2007). *Op. cit.*, p.202.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Track III diplomacy sits against a series of other 'tracks' in the growing field of multi-track negotiation, including Track I, the terrain of official diplomats; Track II, those engaged in public or what Kofi Anan described as 'people-to-people diplomacy', those 'on the ground negotiators' in the service of the aims of official diplomacy; Track IV, which

involves corporation to corporation diplomacy, each of which mobilising relational, creative and gestural conducts, perpetuating globalised operations of security. The language around multi-track diplomacy is emergent and thus relatively inconsistent. This definition emerges from articles by the United Nation, specifically, David Bloomfield and Norbert Ropers (2005) *Dialogue and Social Integration: Experience from Ethno-political Conflict Work*. Background paper for the Expert Group Meeting on *Dialogue in the Social Integration Process: Building Peaceful Social Relations by, for and with People*. New York, 21-23 November 2005. Other articles on the topic include Louise Diamond and John McDonald (1993) *Multilayered Diplomacy*, London: Macmillan (1996) and *Multitrack Diplomacy*, West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press; Andrew F. Cooper (1997), *Niche Diplomacy*, New York: St. Martin's Press; Michael S. Lund (1996) *Preventing Violent Conflicts: A Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy*, Washington DC: U.S. Institute of Peace Press.

¹⁴ Benjamin, Walter. (1927), 'Critique of Violence'. Trans. E. Jephcott, in *Selected Writings. Vol. 1: 1913-1926*, Belknap/Harvard Press 1996.

¹⁵ Spivak, Gayatri. (1988). 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in Spivak, Nelson & Grossberg, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

re:

P– I’m interested to establish a dialogue with you based on a specific doing...

R– I saw today a book at the library entitled *Correspondance...*

P– What do you understand by correspondance? Would be great to approach this more than as a necessity really, as a way to work upon the different modes we establish to motivate ourselves and each other and also to be able to reflect about how we respond to that motivation...

R– How do we get involved in the event itself... So how do we keep on developing/stay in-development, and not as something manipulated or directed? Do you remember the presentation I did the other day at the university? I took someone else’s image from Google and I created a discourse around it... I mean, you know, we see posted images all the time. We relate to the image, we embody it with our own history... There are more things... The reflection behind that presentation I did went around the issue of how images in art history and academia have been transmitted and studied as images but not as artistic objects themselves... In a way what we could do is to make a correspondance in which we libel the images we send out to each other.

P– I can think of you as an Other. I can think also of the words you send me, or images as others... I may approach them reflecting upon the ways I can experience them eventually... We relate to the text/image; or we text- the image imagining another image, or

we imagine the text over the image... For me what is also important is the relationship we establish. How do we negotiate what the other sends, who is being addressed then (the image, you, etc.)...

R- You mean, to interpret?

P- Not quite...

R- Ok, images are there and they are captured by the observer, right? The observer doesn't separate them. He doesn't own them... Let's say he adds onto them, displaces them...

P- 'Displacement'...

R- Displacement, according to how I understand it, can be two things: 1. That I move into others: 2. That I move the other.

El 19/06/2008 a las 12: 07, paz rojo escribió:

Sorry... I know I promised to reply, but I couldn't come up with a response... I guess that I was afraid of finding my response captured by a quick interpretation.

I approach this letter together with what I told you last time we talked: I'm not interested in looking into my bag and see what kind of responses I can offer you (the ones I have and I collected; the ones I know all about). It definitely helps me to try to think and write to you as I keep on holding what my response is. I think: an event is only possible when it comes from the impossible. If I take this into my response to you, I shall try to displace myself (who writes this mail) into an eventful 'what'. Yes indeed. It sounds a bit pretentious. Nevertheless, I promise you to do what I'm doing, 'responding', and to do it as I think we've been doing it: by writing, by doing something with words. I may now be responding to who is reading, though, addressing an other, which is not you (I actually wrote this response to another person, but now I send it to you). So, as you can read, I'm just giving 'pre-texts', and excuses... But there is a reason for that: I don't want to anticipate what my response is, I'd rather hold my promise, send you my promise...

Would I still be responding, if I will 'have a response'? Would I still follow the rule, play a theatre game, if I would fit the questions, the expectations or follow the program? Would anything

happen then? Would an event arrive then?



... These are the questions, in which I decided to hold my-self 'still' here,

To continue with our conversation, and with the questions you asked me. To continue with the impossibility of answering 'you', but your questions... I make myself an occasion to think of you, thinking, which only takes place on what I cannot do for you. Sorry... But I'm afraid that this is the responsive side of what you proposed me: if I say 'yes' to your questions, it inevitably engages you as well. So what's next? What can we do together? I imagine that you are now reading this email, while you do, I assume you are negotiating with an image right now, with thoughts related or unrelated to this. Now, if I think of what you told me, and tell you that 'I believe you', I say nothing anyway. My promise of belief does nothing, it's always vain. My promise does not anticipate or assure our future in this situation. Let's be clear about this: it is possible that one day you will stop believing me (perhaps you already have), and this possibility cannot be taken away from belief – it belongs to it –. But it is also against this possibility that my promise is made. A promise that must be liable to not being kept...

Let's hold on in our minds the word belief. What are your beliefs?... I tell you mine: I believe on the questions my body asks, I believe on my doubts, I believe in what we don't say to each other... Did you come up with any of your own beliefs? Let's think in what we are sharing now: do you believe in the person that is levitating in the picture? Do you believe it belongs to this voice that is me? Do you think it is the same person? Yes, believe me... 'It's me'.

... Whatever belief you are keeping in my words and voice, it cuts across my identity and my property. And this is the terrible paradox of all this: I offer you the poverty of my substance (my delay in responding, my excuses, my questions, my doubts). So we come back to the beginning: belief (yours and mine) does not define this response, but obliges us to imagine it and maybe to anticipate it.

This is the challenge... The challenge that one never believes in anything actually. All we do is to experience dis/belief (in my Spanish accent you may hear it as THIS BELIEF, but imagine the written word DISBELIEF): D-I-S-slash-AND THEN BELIEF). So we may think: 'I don't belief in your image', 'I don't belief in your words'; but we rather challenge it by way of fidelity to the fictitious image we could be, to what we could imagine we could do with what we don't have and don't know of each other yet. We play with it, right... We replay it and it plays with us.

As a witness (no less imaginative) of your belief, I confess myself as an unreliable voice of this letter. But I have faith in this moment: a moment that appears to be just a series of questions and fantasies about you and me... I'm not there with you (that's obvious), but I'm here more proximate than you could imagine. I'm imagining now... How you seduce my presence with your virtuality, how I can correspond with the interval in between word and typing, reading and breathing...

I tell you something: we could believe each other, if we doubt about who we may want to be with each other. Ok... Again: 'we could believe each other if we doubt about who we may want to be with each other'. Shall we believe in this hypothesis? Is this possible? A possible 'you', a possible 'me', a possible 'we'. Yes, I know. IMpossible. The I-M that disjoins, divides and therefore shares and holds together the word 'possible' (and so us) is radical, and it seduces the possibility of the time we have spent virtually together. The impossibility, the I'M possible, of a response and an image.

Yes... 'I'm sending my-self to you, believe me'. 'I imagine you will'.

El 18/05/2008 a las 13:57 ricardo santana escribió:

I have been thinking about what could I do to embody the first words you told me on the phone, 'nothing has happened'. As a lost image to reconsider, and displacing your personal reasons to apply those words, I'll try to talk about what clicks in my head when nothing has happened. I can get angry, relieved, feel anxiety, I can take the chance to do something else, or I can keep pressing on.

To say 'nothing has happened' implies a perception of time, and a perception of a sequence. But it also implies an observation at an end.

Being con-sequence is to be in the sequence. There is no end.

Since the last call, several things have changed. Haven't they?

El 15/05/2008 a las 11:09 paz rojo escribió:

Imagine: for any of those lost images, one more to reckon in return.



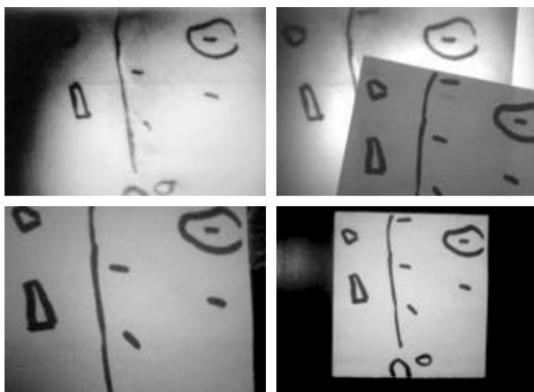
09/05/2008 a las 16:15 ricardo santana escribió:

I'm going to make a map.

A map that will be the reorganisation of the patterns some-

one's hands made on your body, when touching your body, when drawing your signs. This map is built with the words of my experience, projected unto your architecture, creating the possibility for new spaces that will open the old constructed scars.

I'm now the archi-torturer that will multiply the lines you must follow, the directions you must take.



Someone is looking at you. Now. Creating an abstraction of you from the bright picture of your body. Now I'm going to phone you using the same technology I have used to create this map. I'm going to make a sequence of pictures of my body together with some words from your will.

Perhaps it will be enough time for an event. Inside.

Remember these words: nothing has happened. Cut my hair. Old chair. Eating potatoes.



Embodying your words in a different manner. Believing your words is 'to be-living'.

El 08/05/2008 a las 23:10 paz rojo escribió:

I shall take the picture's words into my world. Then try to respond to them in another way. While I write, I'm not with those words, though; what I do is to imagine their world inside myself. And I do this, while I try to avoid any exercise of reconciliation, or any attempt of satisfaction. I'd like to challenge something else:

I'm thinking in the picture's words – *Wherefore I send unto you...* –, I'm doing it, as if their world would be inside of me. Why do I send unto you? Why? The question mark makes my name a body I remember; a geometry of sights and an orientation of perspectives. I'm obviously talking of images that are not there. However, they appear, as they are gone, letting me with more images in return. Then, what is left inside of me are only faces, bodies that move for me. Thus, there is another limit, which disturbs and alters me; an unlimited question-line dividing and fracturing this, in principle, homogeneous body. This question-line is what makes me differ from the other inside of me. The reorganisation of this body (diffused, divided in tension between before and now, what is my own and the other's, the inside and the outside) is, at the end, impossible. If this other's body is moving towards and for me, I require a different organization of my scars.



Now, you are out of reach and out of my field of action. You are looking at me; my body is now an image for you. There is no symmetry in the encounter of our sights. On

the contrary, there is a dissymmetry which can be interiorised, removed, traumatised, hurt, collided, broken with, that inhabits it, or you, who welcome it so kindly.

On 30/04/2008, 23:46 unknown sender wrote:



El 14/04/2008 a las 22:13, ricardo santana escribió:

Dear,

I'll imagine a World. I'll imagine myself inside this world. I'll imagine a picture of myself inside the self-world, taken by myself. I'll imagine a picture of myself taking this picture of myself inside the self-world. Then I'll think these pictures, I'll think myself thinking these black and white pictures.

I'll send you these pictures.

Do you recognise me?

What am I doing?

Do you recognise yourself in these pictures?

Do you recognise yourself thinking these pictures?

I'll imagine a world in-between us. A concrete world made of matter, moves, contracts, and senses.

Now you can take a picture, you can send me a picture.

-----End of Forwarded Message

you may also want to go to:

← 47 fiction

← 67 lisa

→ 127 temporal distinction

EUKE

perception

affect

affective cognition

experience

ends

signaling system

recognition system

vocabulary

concept

metaphor

Greta Garbo as Maria Mari, with mirror

production

self-making

mechanistic metaphors

self-making

self-making



AMSTERDAM	Departement	17/11/2014	12/11/2014
ES Coach 17	ES Coach 17	ES Coach 17	ES Coach 17
ES Coach 17	ES Coach 17	ES Coach 17	ES Coach 17
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self

A question for any body: how to look at, after and beyond the *self*?

Self-employment

You sit by your laptop. It's your laptop proper, the printer also belongs to you. This space, with your body, your ideas, your laptop, printer, dictionary and headphones is your office. You've made your self into this office, through a kind of self-training. You're employing and deploying what you call your 'self'.

In this strangely corporeal yet also abstract space, a lot of questions come up. Not the least because in there, production and consumption, employee and employer, as well as self-realisation and self-regulation overlap. You're checking your email and your email is checking you: did you meet the deadline, did you send the info, did you give your feedback? This fractured space of productivity is punctuated by moments in which 'self' surfaces in the form of a name or a logo, a token you use when picking up the phone, writing an email, sending off a CV. You feel quite privileged to be doing this, but you also get sick of your self, all the things it comes to represent as you employ it here and there.

In those moments (they occur with increasing frequency) you feel like pulling this whole self-business apart, with a gesture that isn't

going to click smoothly onto the chain of representations, some kind of invisible move out of that space you have constructed for yourself, come to signify and operate through, that haunting and uncanny office of yours. You'd like to get onto an old-fashioned train, with no aim or project other than to find complicity somewhere, give a hand somewhere. Of course, you might as well organise something with other people in that case – perhaps you could invent a way of collaborating that does not involve networking as self-representation...

So you go to the other side of town and meet some people, introduce yourself briefly, ask questions, discuss and make tea, hoping to scatter yourself a little. A modest journey, but then you know that this space that haunts you is not bound to geography so much as to your own body (and its prostheses), hence it might not matter how far you go to make that move out of the office. Rather, you try to observe *how* you go, you try carefully to figure out what kind of movement might take you away from the sickening space of your self as entrepreneur. You need to do this together with other people of course – they live just across town, and they're feeling similar to you – you all sense that there could be a convergence of movements. What you're doing together is quite strange and intangible initially, yet exciting and promising – you find yourselves using new words, not using others anymore, perhaps even using a lot less words than usual, or not noticing their currency that much – it feels like that rhetorical register and alienating connectivity of your office fades away. You're relieved and exhausted; finally you can sleep without dreaming about your emails.

'Self – help!'

Then, soon enough, something calls you forth to give this common activity a name – individually and collectively, you can't help saying 'project' and then finding yourself say many other things that ultimately annoy you. A deep sense of regret surfaces as the whole movement starts to look more and more vitrified. You track back the first emails you sent to the others in the group, to get a sense of what this group was becoming. It's not so simple to trace

this back to specific events, it's not like all of a sudden, someone called: 'Hey you! Express yourself!'. It's more like many such calls have come from all kinds of directions, from within as well as outside the group, in all kinds of formulations, amplitudes and tonalities. You realise that in any case, at some point the collectivity you worked with became a 'self' in all plasticity, sabotaging the voice and vocabulary that could allow you to ask what exactly that 'self' was meant to express or represent. No matter who exactly has been calling you (group members, curators, government officials, company representatives), there were moments when you responded to the calls, and entered into a regime of visibility and identification that you could hardly foresee.

There's no way out of that game of interpellation, or of the subjective and material conditions that make us want and need to turn around with a 'self'. It hardly makes sense to block our ears or stop answering the phone. Could we turn around all together when there is a call? And shout 'buh!' whilst administering a strange choreography? We do that sometimes, since it's vital for us to let our movements fade into an absurd dance, to laugh and drop our credentials and compulsively smart attitudes. But then, we also need to survive, and ultimately we also do want to hold some kind of self towards the world, to present and sometimes even re-present some structure via which we can articulate our actions and feelings. Luckily, this self needn't be in the first person singular, or in the singular altogether...

Our selves

It seems that *self* can function in various ways, as a relational device: it holds up autonomy one minute, gets caught up in individualism the other, then gets lost and anxious, losing any referent beyond the material body, or it goes from a nominal, identitarian self to a networked, autopoietical 'self-' as prefix. If you trust your self to be stable, whether it's in the singular or the plural, you're bound to get sick. Self is like a mirror, you'd think it just reflects identity back at you, and sometimes that seems comfortably true; but then more often than not it throws you

completely off track, because the mirror is dirty, or cracked, or crooked, or wears a suit, or shows an elephant, or shows nothing – and you know there’s no-one to blame. Whether a single person or a group look into the mirror, the whole thing always looks strange. You don’t know how to look at it. No point feeling guilty or victimised, of course. You’re obviously caught up in reflexivities that continually break your projected frame (‘me’/‘we’/‘they’) into pieces, fractured between different temporalities and ways of looking, and even more so since you call yourself a self-employed person or group. Self-employment is the strenuous employment of mirrors.

The tension that mounts between identity and flexibility, one or another *self*, often brings about forms of anxiety and paranoia – we don’t trust our selves to hold up to much and that’s ok, yet we recognise that we are at a loss for ways of relating, starting to feel anxious. To be sure, we appreciate our flexibility – we’re not about to give up the fantastic mirrors in our cabinet, even if some of them are in parallel use for the office. We’d rather like to understand: how can we move in relation to these mirrors and get behind them from time to time, to turn them into a new direction and avoid the nausea of an endless repetition of the same scattered references?

In our subjective and everyday spaces as predominantly self-employed and self-employed persons, our lives and personalities are subsumed under a mode of productivity that can neither be grasped solely in terms of economics nor solely in terms of ethics. Our office is our self is our cabinet and vice versa, and this makes us feel alienated, even if it should make us feel good (people with laptops usually look quite content, or at least cool). Self-employment is not just a matter of having a business card, website or special tax number, or having all kinds of social skills that allow the employed self to be effective and visible. It’s not just a matter of doing what one wants, just being creative or inventing oneself an aesthetics of life either, happily considering oneself detached from the rest of reality in a Luna Park of self-referentiality. Nor does it boil down to an aspiration to purity via an ethical life. It’s not

about utter misery, subtenancy and anemia either, or about bliss. It's a bit of everything, all the time. We employ ourselves under conditions that are troublesome, but how did we get here?

Self-making

The *self* features in contemporary economic and subjective production in various ways. I will follow one of those in my account. Both as a concrete individual and as a term, the self increasingly becomes (economically) productive through being reflexively linked to other bodies in industrialised societies. This means that the factory's assembly line or the isolating occupation of an office is replaced with cooperative and interactive work, where the self is connected and networked (in the context of a 'social factory') via flexible technologies, in open plan spaces with lots of input and output channels.

This connectivity of the self does not mean that stable, identitarian modes of *self* are not around anymore, or that they no longer provide a basis for normative images (nor is social 'connectivity' anything new). It's not a question of flexibility replacing identity replacing subjection in a straightforward way. To consider the way in which our selves are configured and fit into larger economic and social processes opens onto a broad field of ambivalence. How can we find ways of looking at the context in which *self* is brought forth, in order to tune into the contingencies, reasons and strategies that are at play in a process of self-production? Not so that we can then judge those processes authentic or fake, but so that we may become more sensitive to the functionalities of *self* at different instances, to its crises and transformations...

Contemporary cultures and economies of self-government emerge parallel to broad changes in social and economic production, affecting the way we understand politics and the role of the state in determining our lives and work¹. In this development, control and management functions increasingly shift from the larger, centralised bodies to smaller entities such as organisations and individuals. Those smaller bodies now operate within a larger

framework of self-government within which autonomy and individualism meet with much tension.

In the spirit of governing people and things by making people and things govern themselves, liberalism sets up the *self* as a vital productive device. We are not being told what to do by a prince or even by a proper boss, rather we receive suggestions and support (and we support ourselves and do lots of auto-suggestion), we are being recorded (and recording ourselves), assessed (or assessing ourselves), empowered (and empowering ourselves), and invested in (...) so that, in a bizarre way, we come to realise ourselves as our own bosses and police (trained in aesthetics and design, we notice that there's not much beauty to either of those roles). The more we are able to self-produce our aspirations, under a general gentle guidance of policy and advertisement, the less we need the the state or market to intervene directly, in the name of the powers it represents. Self-management and neo-liberalism go together, and make it very hard for us to figure out what to do with ourselves and what it might mean to be *autonomous*? We feel utterly implicated in our own management, not just structurally or materially, but above all, subjectively. We'd like to know when it is others that move us, and when it is ourselves. The problem may be that we think this is an easy differentiation to make – and maybe that we could figure out the difference between subjection and subjectivation by looking in the mirror. We may not find a categorical difference or perfect mirror image, but rather some ways of playing with the mirror, making spaces in which we can apply tactics of differentiation – flicking the mirror around for a second to escape identification.

Take cultural work for example – since this is where I (the first person and self), as well as this entry, chiefly sits. Of course there's no homogeneous category of cultural or creative work, even if policy insists on that – yet there are some similarities between self-employed artists, designers, gallery assistants, writers, interns, and so forth. People in these kinds of functions tend to be tied to their computers as devices for self-representation, networking and self-(de)regulation. They tend to want to be auto-

mous and responsible, yet find their conditions for realising this rather precarious.

The Creative Industries, as policy framework for flexibilisation in the field of 'culture'², participates in the flourishing of a service-model of employment in which cooperation is increasingly important. Modes of production in neo-liberal societies increasingly depend on communications technologies and the social networks these bring forth. Networking is key for staying in the game and getting jobs. This changing paradigm of production (sometimes called post-Fordism) affects the social in various ways. Amongst other things, it produces entrepreneurial subjects that swerve from job to job, continuously in need of opportunities in order to survive, anxious about their future and exhausted by their present.

In Self-employing, our home is our office most of the time, and our mobile phone as well as email account synchronises our work to surrounding rhythms of production. Our time is fragmented, cellularised³, we cooperate and communicate all the time, and we have to know what we want out of our meetings; when having a coffee or talking on the phone, we have to mind our individual time (to make sure not to agree to do too many things for too little money, or to get to our next appointment in time). There is no space for collective time in the places we take our offices to (living room, corner café, park): we can't really take time to discuss whether we should call what we are doing a 'project', or whether we even should or want to be doing projects.

Self-?

So how could we make space and time for a kind of collectivity that does not re-insert itself into a competitive and networked (formal or informal) market immediately? How can we employ and produce without deploying the kind of reflexivity that makes us into self-managing competitors? We have to find new ways of saying 'we' as much as new ways of saying 'self', probably. If there is no way of exiting our culture and economy of self, maybe

we have to accept to work with the office format, so as to become political entrepreneurs and radical diplomats for instance...⁴ We might find ways of operating differently in our office, say ‘self’ with some cunning and at the same time cultivate an openness to the indeterminacy of our processes of subjectivation.

‘Self’ figures as a token notion in discourses that operate the post-Fordist paradigm, and gains currency both with the amplification of individualism (a nominal self) as well as with competitive cooperation (a connective self). For example, the prefix ‘self-’ has high currency within contemporary discourses around cultural production, sounding both strangely sexy as well as politicised (self-organisation, self-education, self-authorisation...). What effects does this self-prefix produce? Does it designate a body? If yes, what kind of body – a radically open (necessarily connective) or guardedly closed body (feeding back onto itself in a tight loop), a processing (embodying) body or a processed (embodied) body; or maybe any body? Can it designate a group, an organism, a city, a movement? Who is speaking through such a self-prefix? Take *self-organisation*: there can’t be a principle of identity regarding a body that is simultaneously organising and organised. The body that is referred to admittedly changes all the time, it can go from an ‘I’ to a ‘we’ back to an ‘I’ and so forth. We don’t need to rely on our status as individual entirely, nor dissolve this in a group entirely – when self-organising, we can shift according to our desires and doubts – the stuff that frames the mirrors.

But as much as the prefix ‘self-’ allows us to move between the individual and the collective, we soon find that the latter is somewhat restricted in an office context: in terms of our ethics as entrepreneurs, we encounter a limit. Whilst cooperating and self-regulating, we are often not meant to introduce the word ‘we’ unless we are representing our project or office to an outside or strengthening the team spirit. Reading Creative Industries policy reports, one may get the impression that cooperation is in fact synonymous with a kind of generalised competitiveness (‘aspiration’ and ‘innovation’ are key values) that casually goes with a hierarchical structure ultimately regulating it. It seems that ‘we’ is only good for saying, ‘we love theater’, but not for saying, ‘we are

tired (of this theatre)'. If we start seriously saying 'we' to each other, we might organise or join a union, not to mention question the position of our bosses... this will be particularly tricky when we are our own managers and perhaps even bosses. So how do we move a 'self' towards a 'we' and vice-versa, carefully enough?

Care of the Self

To handle the *self* with care; to strategically point to a place that is singular, designate an impossible autonomous zone, to work on it and arrive at various temporary places of 'self' via conversations, friendships, collectivity, yet to keep moving and sometimes even to move in strange ways (secret dancing). To not be sure what one is pointing at yet, to allow new referents to emerge on the way to work and on the way to the bathroom: of course this will only work if our referents become shared with others. We can't crack the 'self' without the 'we', and vice versa... Our reflexivity needs to allow us to become ever more vulnerable to others, in finding complicities through which we can share a voice and vocabulary for a while.

The vulnerability of that notion of the self, of our very bodies and subjective spaces, makes it necessary to find a balance between proliferating and stabilising, between reflexivity and opening. As a resonant device or interface, 'self' is a name which clothes things that want to be able to respond, a fine discursive tissue that envelops our curious and fragile hope for autonomy.

In the midst of these difficulties of relating to the self, can we maybe work on our capacities for connectivity in order to enable those non-profit complicities we crave? Beyond the assembly line of semiological production and the modes of competition we are so used to, can putting 'self' into chains (- - -) be paradoxically liberating? How might we learn to face absurdity together, and begin to care for ourselves otherwise⁵ – through caring for each other?

Could we perhaps de-frame the self to a point where it dissipates and reveals its soft edges, as a notion as well as a body? How can

we learn to attune the temporalities of our productive self to that of our body, not locking it in, but assigning it a somatic terrain that needs to be given account of, as changing yet constant frame of reference?

Some kind of self that jumps registers, bodies, tissues, and trains in order to keep track of certain thoughts and desires, whilst undoing their effects in a next step. The verbal and hyphenated *self* may be the kind that gets (itself) lost (for example, on a train): sitting still yet moving, walking relative to many other movements yet with a sense of orientation, dealing with changes of direction, with delays and encounters, with others, always touching on something, as if there was no center or time to lose, always doubling up on its referents, ever canceling itself out in the process. Not a big move, but some sense of body that is attuned to a different sensitivity... Rehearsing *self* to a point of disintegration, whereby the word becomes the element of a strange rhythm, a tune 'we' move to...

¹ Foucault, M. (1978) 'Governmentality', in Burchell, G, C. Gordon and P. Miller. (eds.) *The Foucault effect* Trans. Pasquino, P. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.87

² Guattari, F.; Rolnik, S. (2007) *Micropolitiques*. Paris: Les Empêcheurs de Penser en Rond/Seuil, p. 23.

³ Berardi, F. (Bifo) (2003) 'What is the meaning of autonomy today', in *Republicart*, webjournal. (http://www.republicart.net/disc/realpublicspaces/berardio1_en.htm)

⁴ Cf., for example Sanchez Cedillo, R. (2007) 'Movements, Institutions, New Militancy', in *Transversal*, webjournal. (<http://eicpc.net/transversal/0707/sanchez/en>) and 'Radical Diplomacy', this volume.

⁵ Not the ascetic training of self-help (Victorian Industriousness) or the self wired up with a fitness or career machine, nor the 'self' that shifts and gets shifted around by airplane, in the same way capital flows between stock exchanges and over shop counters.

you may also want to go to:

← 79 movement

← 99 radical diplomacy

→ 141 unpower

temporal distinction:

belief, fidelity, faith

Belief, fidelity and faith are principles by which we overcome, commit to, and take advantage of that which escapes us. Each comes into play only when our grasp of any given situation lacks something, and only when what is given in any situation is void of that which we expect to be the case. Ultimately, belief, fidelity and faith make possible a future that otherwise would not come to exist. But in what sense is it possible to distinguish between these three terms, and in what manner might we begin to think through the specificity of each? In this essay I will suggest that, although broadly inseparable within our everyday linguistic and conceptual framework, belief, fidelity and faith are singularly discrete inasmuch as they are temporally specific. My claim is that belief draws on the past of the present, fidelity the present's presence, and faith the present's future. In order to substantiate this proposition, I will make reference to the work of three recent French thinkers who employ these terms in their work. Thus, my thesis is two-fold. On the one hand, I will make a claim for the temporal specificity of belief, fidelity and faith, and, on the other, propose that some recent French philosophy can be distinguished by the simple fact that it privileges one of these terms. Given the brevity of this text, I will not demonstrate how exactly this thesis holds, but rather present three definitions and three philosophical abstractions that further thought and discussion might take as a form of departure. What I am not suggesting is that belief, fidelity

and faith are *solely* reducible to their temporal dissimilarity, or that the philosophers I appeal to are *entirely* specified within the contexts I provide for them. Nevertheless, I think that considering these three terms in this way provides an interesting platform for further discussion.

Belief

To believe in something always touches upon a history. 'I believe in you' is always preceded by a set of assumptions that substantiate my belief. So when I declare that 'I believe in you', I will always believe in you *because*. 'Because' here, stands for that which both legitimates and sustains my belief inasmuch as *what* I believe comes to resemble something that I have not previously needed to believe, for the very reason that I have, or at least believe I have, once experienced that thing as a fact. Hence, I might claim, 'I believe in you because I have witnessed occasions in which you have been that which you now doubt you will be'. Or, 'I believe in you because I myself have experienced that which you appear to be and I recognise something of me in you'. Very simply, my belief alludes to the reality of a past, a reality that I currently hold as true. Thus when we find, in any present situation, a lack of evidence to verify the truth of that situation, a void, belief identifies and takes hold of the glimmer of the present's past to fill that void. This glimmer is both *in* the present inasmuch as the believer is present in the comportment of his or her believing, but it is also beyond it, inasmuch as its source has passed. Thus to believe is to flood the present situation with the light of the past such that what *appears* to be true in the situation, is seen as true inasmuch as truth is reflected by the light of one's belief. To believe then, is to make anew what there is through the affirmation of particular aspects of what there has been.

Belief in Deleuze

Perhaps the most recent philosophy to intimately incorporate the logic of belief is that of Gilles Deleuze. Deleuze, whose philosophy privileges the significance of Life, is a great believer in the

power of the past in the present. In fact, his work is full of references that allude to the redemption of what is present by way of its immanent past. For Deleuze, every situation has the potential to express the entirety of its temporal history. The name that Deleuze attributes to this immanent sphere of accumulate Life is the *virtual*. The power of the virtual, although immanent to the present, remains hidden behind it, it escapes us and as a result, lies beyond our normal capacity to harness its potential. Furthermore, the actuality of our lives as we live them through the present, closes the present in on itself such that the intensity of the virtual appears entirely absent from it. Our task, Deleuze claims, is to identify the elements of the actual present that best express its virtual intensity and invent ways to affirm them in our lives. For him, the traces of the virtual are ‘a concrete cosmic force’, ‘a dynamic process that enlarges, deepens, and expands sensible consciousness’.¹ They contain a power that ‘has neither to be explained nor interpreted’.² Deleuze suggests that it is for this reason that we must cultivate a state of consciousness through which we might access the power of the virtual. Such consciousness will not depend on our knowledge of the world, but rather, our belief in ourselves, ‘the world, and in becoming’.³ For him the virtual is best expressed in those aspects of the present that escape the present’s hegemony and it is to these that we must give our attention. Our belief in, and affirmation of what he refers to as ‘the more than personal life’, will reveal that although by all accounts elusive, all along and everywhere, the intensity of virtual Life continues to ‘live deep in us with all its strength’.⁴ That is why on occasions in which the most intense points of the present reveal signs of Life, it is up to us, no matter how difficult a task it might seem, to believe in them and find ways to further affirm the power of our belief through them. Deleuze tell us that ‘whether we are Christians or atheists, in our universal schizophrenia, *we need reasons to believe in this world*’.⁵ For Deleuze, ‘the link between man and the world is broken. Henceforth, this link must become an object of belief’.⁶ For Deleuze, the vitality of the present depends on the affirmation of its elusive immanent virtual past. In a word, Deleuze’s philosophy is a system of belief.

Fidelity

Fidelity compensates for a lack of natural affinity. Thus, fidelity always takes the form of a rule and its observation. To accept, to conform, to remain faithful-to, are the preconditions of fidelity. Unlike belief, fidelity does not depend on an experience. One does not need to have known anything about that which one has decided to be faithful to in order to be faithful. Fidelity, in that case, does not originate from life, but rather from the living-out of the consequences of an abstract decision. Perhaps this explains why the decisions we make to remain faithful to someone or something often seem opposed to the world and our instinctive relation to it. Thus, 'through thick and thin', fidelity stands against the world, the experiences we have had of it, as well as those we someday might have. It could be said that fidelity looks only in on itself, towards the affirmation of itself *here and now*; its survival, in fact, almost certainly depends on it. For is it not the case that to raise questions as to the cause or effects of one's fidelity is to be, at once, unfaithful? Since if one asks oneself, 'what is the reason for my fidelity' or 'what do I hope to gain from remaining faithful', does one not have cause to admit that there are reasons *why* one's fidelity is in fact necessary, and, as a consequence, acknowledge that one's natural affinity, by itself, is wholly insufficient? Is not any attempt to provide a natural cause, or give a reason *for* fidelity, an attempt to obscure fidelity from its convictions? Ultimately, are all attempts to justify one's fidelity not in themselves acts of infidelity? If this, in fact, is the case, then there is simply no reason *why* we remain faithful to something if it is truly fidelity that we rehearse. Fidelity, in this sense, must always take the form of self-affirmation; it must dwell within the present of its unflinching presence. Fidelity, then, cannot escape the instant of its ordinary decision to be faithful. Through the living-out of its sustained convictions, fidelity preserves, within itself, the decisive moment of its birth. Fidelity is, in effect, its own decision, and since every decision is made in the instant of its present, fidelity is inescapably present to itself. Thus it makes no sense to claim that one has once been faithful, or that sooner or later, one will be faithful, only that one is faithful, that one is being faithful. If fidelity is a decision, then the condition of fidelity is the

challenge it creates for us here and now. It is in this sense then, that fidelity is solely of the present.

Fidelity in Badiou

Undoubtedly the most recent thinker to fully engage with the concept of fidelity is Alain Badiou. Badiou, who privileges the logic of mathematics, premises his work on a conviction that if we want to understand certain fundamental things about the world, then we must first acknowledge the necessity of axiomatic thinking. For him, it is only when we have reached the point at which we have no other choice than to choose the conditions by which our thinking will proceed, that it will proceed. Throughout Badiou's work, we find a number of axioms; the sole condition of all axioms is fidelity. Perhaps the most difficult of all axioms, the axiom of the void, derives from the mathematical assertion of the empty set, which, according to Badiou's ontological framework, suggests that 'there exists that to which no existence can be said to belong'.⁷ In fact, following Badiou's own argument, it is more correct to say that within any given situation, and despite appearances, there only exists that to which no existence can be said to belong. This does not mean, of course, that there is no existence whatsoever. Rather, what must be said to exist, is no-thing less and no-thing more than nothing itself. For Badiou, 'nothing' is the name of the void, the 'absolute neutrality of being', that which is the spectre of being.⁸ Badiou's ontology and his entire philosophy of Being only makes sense if we are prepared to abide by the rule of the axiom of the void. For Badiou however, one's trust in, and allegiance to, the axiom of the void does not end with ontology. The strength of our fidelity to an event, itself a revelation of the void, and which for him is practically nothing, what he describes as being on the edge of the void, is the measure of our ethical potential. For Badiou, prior to an event and its subsequent affirmation, the subject does not exist, 'he is absolutely nonexistent in the situation "before" the event', instead there is simply the 'animal (which) gets by as best it can'.⁹ This 'human animal' will continue to persevere in its being, 'which is nothing other than the pursuit of interest, or the conservation of itself', until it encounters 'something extra (...) something that (it

cannot account for'. To be faithful to an event is to 'move within the situation that this event has supplemented, by *thinking* (...) the situation "according to" the event. And this, of course – since the event was excluded by all the regular laws of the situation – compels the subject to invent a new way of being and acting in the situation'.¹⁰ For Badiou, our fidelity to an event is caused by the event. There is no faithful subject in general, no faithful disposition; there is only the evental subject. It is in this sense that we can say that fidelity is always in relation to an event and an event is always what is happening now, always what is happening to us. For Badiou, the ethics of fidelity means, 'let's be faithful to the event that we are'.¹¹ For Badiou, fidelity is what is caused by an event, itself coterminous with the evental subject, the only kind of subject there is. For Badiou, fidelity is always of the present.

Faith

Faith is what we turn to in the wake of the past and present. We have faith when nothing in our experience of the world has prepared us for what we find we must henceforth somehow grasp. Unlike belief or fidelity, when we have faith in someone or something, our faith is unsubstantiated by the past and present. Such that, if we had experience to qualify our faith, we would not need to resort to having faith in order to believe, we would, in actual fact, believe. And if we lacked the experience to qualify our faith, but had nevertheless taken the decision to live by its command, we would be immersed in fidelity. Faith is called upon where there is no evidence to suggest that what we must trust has ever, or will ever, come into effect. Moreover, faith is what we turn to when all evidence points to the contrary of what our faith accepts as true. Very simply, we have faith, not because, but, despite what presents itself as evidently true, such that it makes sense to say that, 'despite your persistent failure, I still have faith in your ability to succeed'. Faith in this sense is a kind of wilful conviction, a blinding madness, the power of which increases with the diminishment of reason. Faith disregards the present's past as much as the present's presence. Ultimately faith presents the present with a future, inasmuch as it sacrifices what there is, in the name of what there could

be. Thus the movement towards faith always begins with an identification of a presence within the present of something not yet present. This presence haunts the present, not from its past, but from what it is yet to discover about what it might be capable. Furthermore, this 'what might be' is invariably, if not exclusively, good, or at least, better than what is presented in the present. Such that, 'I do not have faith that things will get worse, I believe they will', 'I have faith that things will improve'. In defiance of both the past and the present, faith latches onto a promise, or at least the trace of a promise, of a good hereafter. Faith suspends the experience of the present in anticipation of a time to come.

Faith in Derrida

One recent thinker whose work incorporates the logic of faith is Jacques Derrida. Derrida's preoccupation with writing and language has made him suspicious of the present. For him, the being of the present is only possible when dislocated from itself, literally 'out of joint', and, as consequence, always in relation to a non-present other. In fact, for him, the very question of a present itself lacks presence without an Other. Ultimately for Derrida, a relation to an elusive other is presupposed in every thought and every question, including the thought of being itself. Thus being, in a sense, is writing, insofar as it derives from what is wholly non-present, and can only be affirmed by way of faith. As a consequence, faith for Derrida 'has not always been and will not always be identifiable with religion, (or) theology'.¹² For him, faith is the innermost condition of language; it is rehearsed through the promise of meaning in every act of speech or writing. In the end, there is no language that does not bare the secret of the promise of meaning. Faith, in this respect, is what holds us in relation to being other. This relation brings with it responsibility, a call to responsibility, and a call to fulfil the messianic promise of being's essential and absolute alterity, its indispensable community. In *Spectres of Marx*, Derrida asserts that communism 'is always still to come and is distinguished, like democracy itself, from every living present understood as plenitude of a presence-to-itself, as totality of a presence effectively identical to itself'.¹³ For Derrida,

true communism is a presence to come; it is the advent of the event of life itself as a future reality that is not fully present and not altogether presentable. Derrida's faith in *l'à-venir* conditions his entire philosophical enterprise. For him, there can be no thought without faith in the idea that there is more to thought than thought can presently grasp. The act of reading and writing then, the doing of philosophy itself, is the affirmation of this very fact. Like philosophy, 'faith is not assured, because faith can never be, it must never be a certainty'.¹⁴ Like philosophy, 'faith (...) must remain an initiative of absolute singularity'.¹⁵ For Derrida, faith is the condition of being and of writing. It is a condition that is always for the future, and always for a future yet to come.

If Deleuze's work tends towards a concept of belief, Badiou's a concept of fidelity, and Derrida's a concept of faith, and I am correct in suggesting that belief, fidelity and faith draw exclusively on the past, present and future of the present respectively, then the obvious question arises as to the relationship between Life and the past, Number and the present, and Writing and the future. That is, when these philosophers identify a void, or lack in being itself, is there a specific reason why each turns either to belief, fidelity or faith as its compensation? Perhaps one question we should be asking is, whether in fact the past is a condition of Life, the present a condition of Number, and the future a condition of Writing? I believe that, to date, this question remains to be satisfactorily answered.

you may also want to go to:
← 11 bare life, plain life, a life
← 60 intervention
← 108 re:

¹ Deleuze, G. (1997) *Essays Critical and Clinical*. Trans. Smith and Greco. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 48.

² *Ibid.*

³ Deleuze, G. (1997) *Essays Critical and Clinical*. Trans. Smith and Greco. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 88.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Deleuze, G. (2005) *Cinema 2, The Time Image*. Trans. Tomlinson, H. and R. Galeta. London: The Athlone Press, p. 166.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Badiou, A. (2005) *Being and Event*. Trans. Feltham, O. New York: Athlone Contemporary European Thinkers Series, p. 76.

⁹ Badiou, A. (2000) *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*. Trans. Hallward, P. New York: Verso, p. 73.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹² Badiou, A. (2005) *Being and Event*. Trans. Feltham, O. New York: Athlone Contemporary European Thinkers Series, p. 236.

¹³ Derrida, J. and G. Vattimo. (1998) *Religion*. Stanford University Press, California. p. 8.

¹⁴ Derrida, J. (1994) *Specters of Marx*. Trans. Kamuf, P. London: Routledge, p. 123.

¹⁵ Derrida, J. (1995) *The Gift of Death*. Trans. Willis, D. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. p. 80.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

the absolute

The corridor is in deep silence. The lights just went out suddenly. It is sleeping time for everybody alike. Each boy is in his own room. Some are still reading with a pocket torch under the blankets. The educator is walking back and forth through the corridor. He listens out for every suspect sound. He is a fool whose attention is easily diverted. It is a time when the young boy exercises an intense activity on himself, uncontrollable and frenetic. Every evening a lot of warm liquid is launched into infinity, poured as a flood of nothingness.

Alternately it is also a time of kneelings and joined hands. In the dark. At the foot of this metallic bed, in a natural impulsion he pronounces words like

‘truth’,

‘perfection’

or

‘achievement’.

He closes his eyes and whispers soundlessly

‘ineffable’.

He lets the words resonate for a long time in the dark. Just to go on with

‘redemption’,

‘excellence’ or

‘infinity’.

Everything falls into silence again.

And then again he pierces the night with
'salvation'
or 'immutable'
'deliverance'.

He is not waiting for an answer. Pronouncing those words is giving meaning to them. Pronouncing them is believing in them. Pronouncing them is making them exist.

And then time passes by.
Nightly activities change.
No words to pierce no silence.

To the critical mind, the semantic field those children's words belong to is a subject of suspicion *per se*. We (I assume here that 'we' belong to an illusory community of critical-minded people) accept only reluctantly things that we cannot think in gradation. We need to be able to say that we are very tired or immensely happy. At the moment when one asserts that he is absolutely humble or completely accomplished, we enter another realm, where processes of individuation, conditions of development and contextualisations all are erased. Things are brought to a point. *Es ist vollbracht*. It is the vocabulary of monotheism and it is at the core of totalitarian ideologies.

The urgency for completion can take numerous forms. We probably all have our own, very intimate form for it. It is a basic longing and need that has been exploited in all its variations. It will not be cured so soon. Most of the times the years exert a slow but very effective erosion on it. Things become more intricate.

What to do then with those obsolete and worthless words? Do they belong to the reactionary and the naïve, to the populist and the simplistic? Are they to be banned as relics of another time?

Maybe that's exactly what they are. They are our very personal fine relics. They are the remnants of wasteful resonances in the night from which the echo is not silent yet.
How precious could that be?

you may also want to go to:
← 6 a 'voice' and a vocabulary
← 127 temporal distinction
→ 138 trace

trace

So, she runs away and leave a trace. And trace is her dwelling place.

I

As a substance, chalk in itself is a trace, the sediment of the past, memory of a life long gone. As an object, chalk is a writing tool that, appropriated by her hand, transforms a substance into the sign, transferring a memory of the sediment into the memory of the movement.

Let's imagine her making a mark on the wall. The surface, in its erect immobility, is pressing against an escaping movement of her body at a point of impact. And yet a wall and a body are never really touching each other. In its invisible violence, the collision is mediated by a piece of chalk that she holds in her hand. A desperate desire to nullify distance makes her slide across and away – leaving a trace as she moves.

But I should come closer and observe a trace in its materiality once her movement of inscription is concluded. By simply being, trace is becoming a sign even before acquiring any meaning guaranteed by a language. Its actual presence intervenes in a consistency of the present moment by physically inscribing past in the midst of it. Trace is complicating and defining her existence in time by folding every movement into a spatial icon of its own history.

I often choose to ignore that wherever I go and whatever I do, I am inscribing signs that are, with a cruel honesty of a trace, testifying to the factuality of my life as a material cumulation of history. By pretending that I am free from it, that I exist in the absoluteness of the present moment, I am choosing to ignore traces of a past as incongruent and inconsequential.

My everyday pretension toward timelessness is just a self imposed blindness that is protecting me from my own mortality. Because there is no more blatant reminder of that mortality than the awareness of time, as it is revealed in traces of the past. Where there is a trace, present is already gone, departed – dead. My instinctive repulsion toward trace is repulsion toward the material inertia of death. Trace is a tombstone of the present. One step further, trace is the carcass where once was the body.

But there is nothing wrong with tombstones and graveyards. By avoiding to contemplate movement of my life as a documented departure toward death, I am choosing to receive my own mortality as a curse put upon me against my will and despite the vitality of the now. Instead of seeing the landscape of my existence as a crime scene where life has already happened and the only proof that I am not dead consists in the attempt to reconstruct the original act out of the available traces left behind it, I am consciously deciding to believe in my immortal soul dwelling forever in the paradise of no-time. Instead of being a detective of ‘truth’, I am choosing, in my weakness, to be a criminal that slips away in a hope that he will escape justice forever.

And yet, at the same time, while tracing the past/present of her own universe with every movement, she depends for its creation (and her survival) on performing constant and impossible attempts to dance herself out of it. Repeatedly, she is throwing her inert, hesitant body into the unknown future of what is to come – *blind and empty as a space on which a trace is going to be inscribed; all-seeing as a*

trace itself. In this urgent motion toward freedom, she is generating a multitude of rebellious gestures which, while trying to escape themselves, are becoming visible vectors of runaway forces.

So, trace, apart from being the substance of her own mortality, her home, prison and tomb, is at the same time the only testimony, the sacrament for this final dance of self-renunciation in which she is hoping to overcome death. Through becoming a sacrament of its own denial, trace transcends signification and becomes an icon of absence. Understanding it for what it is demands an effort of imagination that counteracts the delusion of a common sense.

The artists who choose to reorganise the space of perception in such a way as to make us understand that time has already passed to come are the real iconographers of absence. They are giving us a glimpse of ourselves as we truly are – not. They can make us sit quietly in this unquiet spot where our sense of time/space is unravelling, as we are forced to realise that, while being alive, we are already dead, and thus immortal.

you may also want to go to:

← 51 frame/framing

← 108 re:

← 138 the absolute

un-power

Un-power n *weakness, want of power*

www.thefreedictionary.com

As far as we are concerned, we would rather try out another definition at the end, at the exit...

1) *Un-employment*

Who wants us? What are we here for? How can we get to do what we could do? In which community can we recognise ourselves? In what place?

Out of use and (ab)used, we are quite well accustomed to being identified, named, evaluated, weighed, compared, accepted or rejected for the next precarious job that we will have got from the last updated advertisement board of the national employment agency, or the next un-paid internship. We don't worry too much anymore about making our 'professional identity' correspond to our personal one, to match our desires with our material life: in order to live, anything works.

So we explore all possibilities: like the offer from an ice cream store, to which we'll have taken the pre-emptive care of sending: our full and updated CV; a detailed motivation letter (and here, we will have taken care to give a special account of our natural

talents in relations and communication, our general taste for ice creams, and our special taste for the ones they produce...). In addition, but not too much in the foreground, our educational background – incidentally, our masters degree in humanities, even though we are perfectly aware that it could sound too inappropriate and out of context (they would notice that we are not specialised enough.); and maybe also the umpteenth passport photo, taken in the machine at the metro in the beginning of the day, in a hurry, the machine had swallowed the last cash, the rings around the eyes were even deeper than usual, better to make it black and white, the whole picture can pretend to be more homogeneous, even the shadows...

Who knows how many motivation letters we might have written, we guess we could make a whole book for each of us.

At some point, we might have realised that maybe we took a wrong turn: we should have made the master program in business studies, or we could have tried that specialisation training organised by the regional council – 960 hours courses plus 400 hours internship – to get the chance afterwards of becoming the representative for a cosmetic firm. We might also have indulged in considering a total reconversion of our career, fantasised about wearing a nurse's gown, and nostalgically remembered our schoolmate that was not specially brilliant in mathematics but had the bright intuition to enroll at a management department, and how she has had a job for ten years now, in her father's accountancy firm, got married (and divorced as well), owns her flat (we rent ours privately, no real estate agent would let us in), and goes on holidays twice a year (our 'permanent vacation' prevents us from feeling that we deserve 'real' ones...).

So, this is what we get out of this long learning process that unemployment is: we are not enough or we are too specialised – it could sound like a contradiction, but there is a deep truth within paradoxes –, and our most miraculous abilities, our contortionist, Chinese circus-like faculties (which others call flexibility) are still not adequate to finding any points of contact or tangency with the

real and actual needs of society. In other words: we are useless.

The feeling of uselessness starts with a rather subtle insinuation, and then becomes more pervasive and diffuse. It's not only the job issue that matters. Ok, we are still in a welfare state, each month we get some government subsidy, it's little but better than nothing, and in exchange we accept to be 'helped' in re-orienting our life – endless forms to fill, constant meetings on CV writing methodology, checks and bureaucratic procedures keep us busy enough... –, but something like the feeling to belong to some promising social dynamics, a so-called flow of reality, or even a community, begins to fail. We start to engage in lucid backward analysis, considering a series of wrong choices made in wrong times, something like a constitutive lack of strategies – ... we did not think that *the art of war* could have helped us –, maybe even some failure in projecting and anticipating our life ahead enough to bear the unknown transformations of contemporary society. It is like an assessment. What did we believe?

2) *To long to belong*

And yet we should rather feel reassured and confident: in the neo-liberal universe of labour, any nostalgia for a fixed job, any 'homesickness' for stability, gets dissolved in the positive trust in self-foundation. Emancipated from waged labour and from subjection to contracts or employers, from mass-production dominating the old industrial societies as well as from repetitive, time-framing tasks, we become our own self-entrepreneurs and self-exploiters, we make great profit out of our intellectual capacities in order not to produce material objects, but ideas, solutions, creative devices, services. Furthermore, within the paradigm of post-Fordist labour, it is our own creative and intellectual potential that becomes the very end of production, not only the means of it. If the production of subjectivity is the living resource that capital exploits as extended, flexible and mobile work force, it is quite hard to differentiate what is our active part in *subjectivation* process, and what is the outcome of our passively undergoing the *objectivation* of our social identities.

The apparent democratisation of mass intellectuality, the awareness of belonging to the common root of the General Intellect and of its linguistic and cognitive resources, even the so called accessibility of contents of knowledge and the great hope coming from the digital dissidence of the free software virtual communities, are still not able to soothe a sentiment – as insidious as it is exactly the opposite of such an exciting dynamics – of isolation and confinement, because there is not (yet?) a real emancipation of immaterial labour from the social relationships instituted by capital.

In other words: it is not by sitting in front of our laptop, navigating the infinite ocean of democratised knowledge, that we get the feeling of being part of something bigger, transcending our contingent, individual lives: something like a community. We just as easily drown than swim. We still feel that it is the space for acting that is missing, a physical space for relating and for co-creating other dimensions of living; that is particularly pertinent in urban, metropolitan life.

By superimposing *labour* as such with *production* (or *social production*), and hybridising *production* and *praxis*, ‘perverse late capitalism’ – to borrow a definition from the philosopher Boyan Manchev¹ – comes to saturate all the possible entrances to a collective public sphere. The fundamental need to participate in a common instance, where our individual praxis could take form and make sense, is too often limited and restricted by the imperative of productivity by which our acts are legitimised and allowed, and by the use of communication we make. Under these parameters, the risk is that even some contemporary literature insisting on the constellation of autonomy – self-education, self-inauguration, self-organisation, self-management, etc. – is turned into its opposite values, coming to feed the worse capitalistic subjectivation of an hypertrophied self, whose singularity can be made marketable as such, and whose connectedness can be reversed into a variety of corporate lobbying strategies.

As Virno states, the ‘publicness of the General Intellect’ requires a ‘political public space’ in order to unfold; otherwise it is bound

to end up generating an ‘unchecked proliferation of hierarchies’², groups and elites that replicate new partitions of spaces by clearly defining their ‘inside’ and ‘outside’. If our agency relies and becomes dependent on accumulated power, on the amount of resources for acting upon others and their acts – and on the degree of virtuosity in appropriating, manipulating, exploiting and marketing cognitive means and talents –, then autonomy, rather than being the fundamental ground for collective praxis and processes, falls back within old categories of individualism and becomes the self-defending enclosure that operates by keeping a certain order of privileges: a regime of protection and pursuit of local interests.

So what is it that causes exclusion? Is it un-productivity, inaction or up-rootedness, or are these three terms viciously interconnected? If we need to find out how to construct processes that allow for the common to come, and institute alternative spaces where our doing and relating can take place beyond the narrow boundaries of restricted interests (be they of individuals or groups), we might start to consider forms of resistance and exodus as ways of living out the alternative between acquiescence and ‘transgression’, or between depression and stressful strategies of empowerment.

Instead of ‘want of power’, *un-power* sounds to us like a strategy for emptying out power, caring to interrupt the replication of the same vicious circle of integration within a system that builds its very existence on a rhetoric of visibility, availability, plasticity and performativity of life. As Paolo Virno says:

‘What is at stake, obviously, is not a spatial ‘frontier’, but the surplus of knowledge, communication, virtuosic acting in concert, all presupposed by the publicness of the general intellect. Defection allows for a dramatic, autonomous, and affirmative expression of this surplus; and in this way it impedes the ‘transfer’ of this surplus into the power of state administration, impedes its configuration as productive resource of the capitalist enterprise.’³

We think that one of the first, very simple, almost intimate, practices for training in exodus is to address the very use of knowledge.

What if we refuse to use knowledge as power, as performance?
What if we experience knowledge in its more exposed and fragile
'un-power', suspending the moment when it gets recycled into
communication, keeping an 'outcast' space for thinking? (What if
'thinking' itself is always out-cast?)

What kind of ecology, what ethics and politics would come out of
such practice?

3) *Still exodus*

'We pupils are to be trained and shaped, as I observe, not
stuffed with sciences. We are educated by being compelled to
learn exactly the character of our own soul and body. We are
given clearly to understand that mere discipline and sacrifice
are educative, and that more blessings and more genuine
knowledge are to be found in a very simple, as it were stupid,
exercise than in the learning of a variety of ideas and meanings.
We grasp one thing after another, and when we have grasped a
thing, it is as if it possessed us. Not we possess it, but the op-
posite: whatever we have apparently acquired rules over us
then.'⁴

Repetition, obedience, patience, expropriation: these terms draw
the initiatory journey that the young Jakob von Gunten (the pro-
tagonist of Robert Walser's novel) undertakes, passionately want-
ing to become a servant, a perfect zero, as he says.

Sustained by this ambition, Jakob enrolls at the Benjamenta Insti-
tute, a mysterious school where there are no teachers, 'that is to
say, the educators and teachers are asleep, or they are dead, or
seemingly dead, or they are fossilised'⁵. There is only one text-
book, *What is the aim of Benjamenta's Boys' School?*, and only one
lesson, 'How should a boy behave?'. All the teaching is done by
Miss Lisa Benjamenta, the sister of the principal, and it consists
of few notions, repeated over and over, learned by heart, meant to
be imprinted even in the most resistant and reticent mind.

The learning process hints at a kind of casting or manufacturing process, the aim being to adhere as much as possible to the mould, to eliminate 'personal' inflexions or characteristic 'rests'. The Benjamenta Institute seems to be the perfect allegory that bends the figures of subjection/subjectivation in a disquieting yet still promising twist and illustrates a very particular practice of 'self'. If we take this novel (actually, we could consider Walser's work as a whole for our purpose) as a way of approaching a 'grammar' of un-power, it is because, in its ambivalent stance, *Jakob von Gunten* seems to point towards a subtle technology of undoing the inextricable knot that binds together subject and power.

Following Foucault's analysis of the constitution of the modern subject, and of the modes of subjectivation that define its emergence, we always confront a double feature: in order to become a subject, the individual has to objectify itself, or better still, it has to undergo a process of objectivation which enables its intelligibility and becoming perceptible and identifiable by the political apparatuses that pattern a given society. It's through this very first operation of subjectivation/objectivation that human beings can enter the 'public space' as subjects and be assigned this or that normative category, receiving a given frame for their actions, or being allowed to exert their rights.

Becoming political always implies the integration and assimilation into, and dependency on, government and control structures.

Foucault warns us:

'power is not "the" substantial ground of political systems, but rather a certain type of relations between individuals. Such relations are specific, that is, they have nothing to do with exchange, production, communication, even though they combine with them. The characteristic feature of power is that some men can more or less entirely determine other men's conduct – but never exhaustively or coercively'.⁶

The first movement of subjectivation/subjection, which already institutes the fundamental ambiguity of the ontological subject, is doubled up by the further ambivalence of the de-subjectivation

process: if in modern and contemporary biopolitics, the exercise of power is what distributes, regulates and partitions individual and collective agency, moreover, this operation may shadow the capture of social identities within a diagram of inclusion-exclusion, which is setting and encoding the very conditions for biological and political life, determining and/or limiting movements and actions, and the very possibility of speech.

Analysing it in its psychic stance, Judith Butler shows that power is what initiates the subject in its first occurrence as the grammatical site and ontological place-holder that individuals will come to occupy so as to enter the order of discourse⁷; subjection then is the first operation that constitutes the ontology of the subject as both subordinated and enabled to act and speak. According to Butler, in any case, 'power is never merely a condition external or prior to the subject, nor can it be exclusively identified with the subject'.⁸ The subject derives its agency from the power it opposes.

If the limit of the subject, insofar as it traces the contour of the political, is the limit of power, then with the question of the non-subject, that of a non-power or of an un-power necessarily arises. The 'voluntary servitude' that Jakob's odd tale illustrates therefore manifests an extraordinary subversion within the distribution of roles and places of agency. If Foucault reminds us that power cannot be applied but on 'free subjects' (free to subject themselves? subjected to freedom?⁹), the initial gesture of Jakob's refusal of power puts in crisis and brings to disruption the entire institution of the Benjamenta school. Like a sprite or an imp, mixing candor with a patently insincere self-abatement, Jakob ends up playing a troubling ascendancy over the Benjamenta brother and sister, which precludes the definitive closing of the institute and prepares him, together with the 'old' Benjamenta principal, for a new journey in the desert and wilderness, 'out into the world'.

It's not anymore the parable of the master and the slave, rather these two figures stand as ever changing thresholds that allow for agency, or that keep making agency possible, until the whole illu-

sion of the school will fall apart and disappear and movement will be the only possible 'action', without any other end or finality than itself. And still, the Benjamenta institute is also the exemplary antinomy of a pedagogical institution: the teachers lie around as if dead, disciplinary power appears as an unfathomable authority that haunts the school. The missing relational figure seems then to be interiorised in the inauguration of self-reflexivity, within the self-discipline that Jakob puts into practice. If he will not be the perfect 'cast' like some of his schoolmates, Jakob, in his brilliant playing between seriousness and humor, gives account of the particular education the school provides, in terms of a deep learning of 'the character of our own soul and body'.

Following Foucault's analysis of technologies of the self, we could think that what is at stake in the mysterious training of the pupils¹⁰ is a progressive practice of self-detachment. Not to possess knowledge, but rather be possessed by it: being possessed, being expropriated. There is a fundamental distinction to make between 'formal knowledge' (*connaissance*, in French) and 'tacit, or informal knowledge' (which corresponds to *savoir*). The latter is essentially living and experienced, as Foucault points out: 'I mean by *savoir* a process that implies a transformation of the subject through the very thing that it gets to know, or through the work it does in order to know it'.¹¹ A central aspect of the practice of self-detachment is motion. But motion is vital not only because self-detachment requires a subject to undergo a process of change. Rather, with self-detachment, motion comes into view as an end in itself, valuable for its own sake.

In referring to Nietzsche, Bataille and Blanchot as the most important authors for his work, Foucault hints to their formulation of 'experience' as a 'project of de-subjectivation', since for them: '(...) the experience has the function of wrenching the subject from itself, of seeing to it that the subject is not longer it, or that it is brought to its annihilation or its dissolution. This is a project of de-subjectivation. The idea of a limit experience that wrenches the subject from itself is what is important too in my reading of Nietzsche, of Bataille, of Blanchot, and what ex-

plains the fact that however boring, however erudite my books may be, I've always conceived of them as direct experiences aimed at pulling myself free of myself, at preventing me from being the same'.¹²

This 'setting-free' of/from oneself is then something like an experience of the freedom before the subject, before its autonomy, as Boyan Manchev states: 'The radicalisation of experience does not refer to a self-founded subject: rather it means des-appropriation or expropriation, that is to say the excess of the very condition of the subject'.¹³

In a dense and vertiginous analysis¹⁴ Agamben follows this reasoning by defining the subject today as the space 'in-between' subjectivation and de-subjectivation processes, the rest or the exceeding momentum. It seems very useful to consider this space as the one in which un-power can be experienced as resistance or suspension of power, or, according to Agamben's terms, as a 'minor bio-politics'. Its topology is inherent to the subject's excessive logic of non-contradiction, so that, if it's a 'limit' experience, the border is a very internal one, the excess being an in- and out-growth ontologically contained in the subject's foundation.

This kind of resistance is one of dividing the division, multiplying folds: a still exodus that opposes and dodges power partitions by introducing and infiltrating an inexhaustible rest, a gap or a space that no name, nor norm or category can appropriate and fix within a juridical or linguistic representation. Walser's 'scandal' is the scandal of a writing that admittedly does not capture anything, but rather celebrates all that escapes us. Giorgio Agamben – in whose work Walser features as one of the favourite authors – defines movement as the 'act of potency as potency': it seems, then, that rather than being the prelude to a (political) action or praxis, the Walserian 'trainings' are meant to prepare the subject to be in movement, to exit the world or to go across it as almost invisible, liminal presence.

Walser's figures – as much as they instance a border, an 'in-be-

tween' being like the assistant, the helper, the servant – recall those 'whatever singularities' that Agamben presents in *The coming community*.¹⁵ Within this, Agamben's conception of 'whatever singularity' indicates a form of being that rejects any manifestation of identity or belonging and wholly appropriates being to itself, that is, in its own 'being-in-language.' Whatever singularity allows for the formation of community without the affirmation of identity or 'representable condition of belonging,' through nothing other than the 'co-belonging' of singularities itself.

Un-power then would be like a border, an immanent limit that constantly modulates the very economy of the subject: the economy of its formation, its ways of appropriating knowledge and experience. It is as though the ethics of 'little, but thoroughly' would determine the allowed or needed amount of knowledge that the subject can bear and embody in order to transform itself. Not a use of knowledge as power through accumulating means to manipulate the world – but rather a counter-use of knowledge to reach the space in which each subject is revealed as the limit-experience before and/or beyond individuation, as freedom without a subject. But transformation is never done once and forever, it's never achieved as total consumption of the subjectivation process, as the perfect coincidence between the potential pre-individual and the individuated self. There are always 'leftovers', and this can be the resistance that we can oppose: a bodily inertia, or a movement, or a becoming-migrant.

you may also want to go to:
← 11 bare life, plain life, a life
← 39 empowerment
← 117 self

¹ Manchev, B. (2007) 'Pornoscropy – Performance', in: *Corpusweb*. (www.corpusweb.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=421&Itemid=35)

² 'The publicness of the intellect, when it does not take place in a public sphere, translates into an *unchecked proliferation of hierarchies* as groundless as they are thriving. The dependency is *personal* in two senses of the word: in the world of labour one depends on this person or on that person, not on rules endowed with anonymous coercive power; moreover, it is the whole person who is subdued, the person's basic communicative and cognitive habit'. Virno, P. (2002) *Grammar of the Multitude*. Trans. Bertoletti, I., J. Cascaito and A. Casson. Cambridge, MA: Semiotexte, p. 41. (Italics in the original.)

³ *Ibid.*, p. 70

⁴ Walser, R. (1999) *Jakob von Gunten*. Trans. Middleton, C. New York: New York Review Books, p.64-65.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5

⁶ Foucault, M. (1979), 'Omnes et singulatum: Towards a Criticism of Political Reason', in McMurrin, S. (1981) *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, t.II, Salt Lake City : University of Utah Press, pp. 254. The text is available online: <http://foucault.info/documents/foucault.omnesEtSingulatum.en.html>

⁷ According to Butler, 'the subject ought to be designated as a linguistic category, a place-holder, a structure in formation. Individuals come to occupy the site of the subject (the subject simultaneously emerges as a 'site')', and they enjoy intelligibility only to the extent that they are, as it were, first established in language.

The subject is the linguistic occasion for the individual to achieve and reproduce intelligibility, the linguistic condition of its existence and agency'.

Butler, J. (1997) *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, p. 10-11.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16

⁹ As the Italian philosopher Benedetta Zaccarello annotates.

¹⁰ '...Since I have been at the Benjamenta Institute I have already contrived to become a mystery to myself'. Walser, R. *Op. cit.*, p. 4

¹¹ Foucault, M. and D.

Trombadori (1980) 'Entretien avec Michel Foucault', in Foucault, M. (2001), *Dits et écrits*. Paris: Gallimard, vol. II, p. 876

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 862

¹³ Manchev, B. (2007) *Les danses des vies désorganisées*, communication for the seminar « Les danses des autres. De l'inquiétante étrangeté à l'étrangement familial – Lectures d'Antonin Artaud », Paris: Collège International de Philosophie/Centre National de la Danse, 27 Mars 2007. We thank the author for letting us quote this unpublished paper.

¹⁴ Agamben, G., M. Potte-Bonneville, S. Grelet (2000) 'Une biopolitique mineure', in *Vacarme*, 10, winter 2000. (<http://www.vacarme.eu.org/article255.html>)

¹⁵ Agamben, G. (1993) *The Coming Community*. Trans. Hardt, M. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

urban security

Our small town is situated in central Europe. It has a historic centre, a little hill with a castle and a river that splits it in two. Our small town is pretty – and rich, with various businesses and chain-stores occupying the city center as well as shopping centres in the suburbs. Our small town can afford quite some things. It calls itself ‘university town’ and ‘cultural capital’. And also ‘town of pensioners’. It’s clean and quiet here. Out of the 240.000 people who live here, some 37.000 come from some 140 different nations. Not all that special really, considering that this is the case with the best of European cities.

In Graz, nobody needs to sleep in the streets. There are organisations that look after the homeless and take care of people who drop out of social networks. Asylums provide shelter for people who come to find happiness in this town. Alright, one might think, that’s something to build on. Graz is a global village now, despite having realised its implication in key processes of demographic change only little by little. It also calls itself a city of human rights. However, it grants little rights to those who – for whatever reasons – settle here. Most immigrants live in poor areas, dwell in poor housing, do the badly-paid and strenuous jobs and have little access to education. But these conditions also apply to the best of European cities.

In terms of its climate, Graz has been spared of much trouble. Global environmental changes make the winters milder, and the summers no longer quite so unbearably hot – that’s all rather pleasant to deal with. If it weren’t for that subtle yet steady breeze troubling the collective soul... Some people do still find the climate in this city hard to deal with. A lot of people are scared, they feel threatened in public spaces, by people who are – in the most varied ways – different or other than them. They cry out loud: ‘too many beggars, too many homeless people, too many punks, too many foreigners’... the media joins their chant. With all this uproar, politicians start to feel under pressure to act. This equally applies to the best of European towns.

To many people, our small town represents a lot of hope. A hope to settle down and find opportunities, to find more luck than in the countryside, amidst ones family, in an Anatolian village, in a poverty-struck African home, or in the midst of a civil war in Chechnya that forces one to take flight – hoping to find some peace, some shelter and work. To many of the others, these people and their hopes appear foreign, strangely other. Otherness has always been quite handy a notion for raking prejudice. And since politics is principally dealt with by PR-strategists these days – who in turn want to know and rake the collective soul (as well as the voters’) –, those who are meant to be responsible end up mimicking the fire brigades. Alarm! They don’t act, they react – to begging Roma in the pompous pedestrian zone, to scrounging and beer-drinking punks on the marvelous main square, to youth hanging out by the main public transport interchange, to asylum seekers condemned to inactivity... But don’t we know this from the best of European cities?

‘The capital (Graz) mustn’t turn into Chicago’ – such has been the contention carried by the wind that blows from the right these recent years, inciting some feelings of uneasiness and fear. In Graz, safety comes first. There’s reason to be proud: consider the unique Beggar Act (*Bettlervverordnung*), which is supposed to protect citizens from being aggressively appealed to for money. Or the never-ending debate about installing a surveillance system on the central square; who’s watching whom? Can we have rotating

cameras that merely follow those that are bound to cause trouble (we know them from afar)? One may also be proud with respect to our countywide law for public safety (advocated and introduced by our small town), which prohibits any illegitimate use of public establishments such as park benches and memorials and also makes any disturbance caused to pedestrians subject to prosecution. We may also claim that the ban of alcohol-consumption on our main square is a unique thing. You're bound to pay dearly if you diverge from those regulations. Rest assured, in order not to get in the way of ample popular festivities, the local authorities are happy to be generous and let people drink, on those special occasions. Just like in the best of European cities.

Well, we know how to celebrate...check it out yourself! Come visit our little town.

Revised version of a text that was written for S.U.P., seltene-urbane.praktiken, Beiträge und Aktionen im öffentlichen Raum, Graz 2005 – rare.urban.practices, contributions and actions in/ to public space, Graz 2005.

Translated from German by Manuela Zechner.

you may also want to go to:
← 11 bare life, plain life, a life
← 79 movement
← 141 unpower

vocabularies of doing

‘Practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practice to another. No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall, and practice is necessary for piercing this wall.’

(Foucault and Deleuze, 1972: page?)

‘For politics precedes being. Practice does not come after the emplacement of the terms and their relations, but actively participates in the drawing of the lines; it confronts the same dangers and the same variations as the emplacement does.’

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 203).

The Vocabulaboratories Diagram

In February 2008 the Amsterdam School for the Arts sponsored the *vocabulaboratories* workshop organised by Paz Rojo and Manuela Zechner as the final event of the group residency. The problematising of vocabularies of practice as processes of subjectivation, as reciprocal relations of knowledge and power, as transversal flows between the political, ethical and aesthetic, was an underlying theme among the facilitators and participants.¹ I was struck by the qualities of attention given to the dynamic relations² between emerging terminologies and performative actions, be-

tween forms of content and forms of expression, between the visible and the articulable as Foucault might put it, between Light and Language as Deleuze might poetically imply. The workshop deployed these bifurcating vectors powered by the relation between choreographer and theorist as initial conditions, producing conceptual mappings as relays for performative instantiations.

One task, stipulated by Rojo and Zechner, was the daily practice of recording *entries* or *access points* onto a wiki designed as a permanent resource for the development and exchange of vocabularies emerging from the practice of the participating choreographers. Zechner has expressed a desire to facilitate this praxis, imagined as a site for transversal layering: 'to see the project and labs as a site where a language and mode of relating to concepts can be carried forth, across various divisions; social, class, disciplinary, geographical, etc as a means to actually learn from the way in which all of these contexts and discourses will undoubtedly clash or at least produce friction, and see it as a site where an honest negotiation of concerns and co-speaking can emerge.'³ She further points out: 'language, discourse and writing play a central role in the post-Fordist regime of production (...). The use of discourse and writing are not irrelevant side-aspects of operating within the cultural field today, they are rather the condition for survival within it.' (2007)

Yet any 'language' of 'co-speaking', of giving voice, to emerge from the propositions of the *vocabulaboratories* must also encounter sensation: non-representational, a-syntactic, non-linear movements of thought. This kind of felt thought, charged by the chaotic force(s) of the unthought, can be called a diagrammatic process. It occurs in the lived interstice that separates and integrates forms of realisation: what we see, what we say. Maps of vocabularies emerge within a 'cultural' social field. An informal diagram or cartography of the *vocabulaboratories* project, by way of example, maps the unformed and unstable forces that affect mutations to the 'conceptual givens' of the project's design; the markings, erasings, and scramblings that intensify in a single point and leap to or fold into other points. How does such a diagram function?

‘It is the presentation of the relations between forces unique to a particular formation; it is the distribution of the power to affect and the power to be affected; it is the mixing of non-formalised pure functions and unformed pure matter (...), a transmission or distribution of particular features.’

(Deleuze, 2000, 72-73)

This specific diagram envisions the provocation of both resistance (‘friction’) and resonance between the individuating vocabularies of the participant practitioners and the effects of these mobile vocabularies in a social field (political, ethical, professional, etc.). Describing the pure, informal matter-function relations between diagrammatic forces, Deleuze has commented: ‘A relation between forces is a function of the type “to incite, to provoke, to combine...”.’ (*Ibid*, 27). So in a *praxis* of the diagrammatic type, the functions ‘to incite, to provoke, to combine’ converge with the ‘to do’ that defines practice itself.

The Amsterdam *vocabulaboratories* event provoked awareness, from the perspective of this participant, of the reciprocal relation between an *entry as practice and practice as entry*. Call an *entry as practice* the seductive force of movement through local-yet-mobile attractor points (events) of a diagram, continually emerging, fading and mutating, accessible to all in a social field. Call *practice as entry* the formalising force of doing. Inter-acting, these forces, affected by and affecting other forces of the diagram, generate relations.⁴ In this case, relations diagram the interrelation of relations between *vocabularies and doing*. This reciprocal play of forces is doubled by the coding and decoding of the term ‘entry’ itself, both as a noun-substance (an entryway, port, point and vibratory conduit) and the verb/gerund-function (to enter, entering). An entry as in the event-dimension of an archway. An *entering* as a vectorial force at play within the diagram. This modulating entry-entering marks both the movement of passage *and* the passageway as the topological space-time of relational relays. Points of entry becoming processes of passage.

Inciting, provoking, cutting-up, combining

Brion Gysin: 'How do you get in... get into these paintings?'

William Burroughs: 'Usually I get in by a *port of entry*, as I call it. It is often a face through whose eyes the picture opens into a landscape and I go literally right through that eye into that landscape. Sometimes it is rather like an archway (...), a number of little details or a special spot of colours makes the *port of entry* and then the entire picture will suddenly become a three-dimensional frieze in plaster or jade or some other precious material.' Wilson

'An entry is an access point that someone uses in order to map the current ideas, and possible modes of operation in a certain context. Definition may be part of the investigation that one goes through but not the goal. An entry is a conceptual tool that one uses in order to engage in a practice'. Zechner

The word diagram – *diagramma* in the original Greek – refers to the wax tablet philosophers once used to compose ideas before committing them to papyrus with a stylus (Knoespel, 2001, p. 147). The blackboard and chalk of the mathematician, the notebook of the artist, the sketch of the architect, the inked napkin from the brainstorm lunch, all exhibit diagrammatic tendencies, the matter-movement of not-yet-formalized thought and sensation. Praxis, is the in-itself of doing. There are coexistent registers of relation present between diagramming as an informal abstract machine⁵ and as a formal realization of that abstraction – those sketches, drawings and mappings making their way to form, to a concrete assemblage. The movement of thought between these registers provides a way of thinking through the relational qualities of content and expression encounters and the production of subjectivity (or individuation) after Simondon. The dynamically variable tendencies that a *diagram* diagrams provide a literally 'remarkable'⁶ concept for mapping intensities that echo and relay between and through vocabularies of practice. The dance of relational movement that *between(s)* integration and differentiation, *between(s)* folding and unfolding. The relays mapping the unsta-

Pressure

Boyer - looping blur but
contraction - expansion
in - stability

pressure

Boyer - looping blur but



When is a **potentuous** without stratified form

a social field

Diagramming =

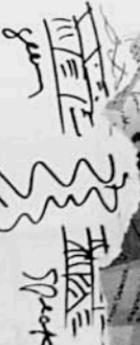
between the agitated forces

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Thinking - disliking
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Boyer - looping blur but

Advertisement for 'SMILE' and 'THE COO' featuring a cartoon character and text.

Advertisement for 'MAGNETIC RECORDING' and 'MAGNETIC RECORDING COMPANY'.

Advertisement for 'MAGNETIC RECORDING' and 'MAGNETIC RECORDING COMPANY'.

ble forces and points of entry in a social field, situates *vocabularies of doing*. The affective intensities of the diagrammatic, modulate the filtering and forming of the content of our expression and the expression of our content. Importantly, the formalizing process – the capturing of the entry as ‘knowledge’, as substance, as form – feeds back to redraw the diagram (abstract machine). The looping between virtual and actual functions like a Moebius strip.

So, there is an ontological *and* epistemological breadth to the concept of diagrammatic praxis that resonates with the notion of *vocabulaboratories*. Narrowly contextualised within art research practice that problematises the relation between theory and practice, it can be considered the *doing* of research as it emerges through the strategic interplay of content and expression. Lived experience affecting its own emergence. Or, as Massumi (2002, p.189) suggests, when thinking through the diagram to the *biogram*: ‘Practice becomes perception.’

Process Snapshot, 27 April
2008: *diagram fragment for thinking through entry as practice*. Cut up text = ‘The blackboard and chalk of the mathematician, the notebook of the artist (the *drawing* of, and drawing off) and the artaffect (realised thing) are topologically immanent. This imagines *the* sketch of the architect, the inked napkin from the brainstorm lunch, as all exhibiting the diagrammatic *practice* of writing.’

No Entry - opens a multitude of unexpected, indirect, non-linear

No Entry = transformation of a passage through resistance

Entry = a way into a place: spatial, fixed; archway, frame, hole, tube

Entry = process of recording: historical, archival; capture of form

Entry = force or act of entering, of passage: temporal, processual

No Entry - opens a multitude of unexpected, non-linear movement

Entry (archway) = bifurcation

Entry (frame) = painting, film, comic, photo, doorway



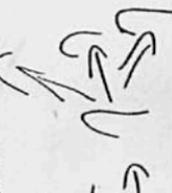
Entry as copy-paste

the 2011's frame -

Practice as entry : **Entry as practice**

effect copies

direct



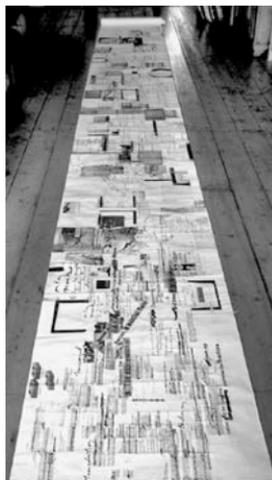
his the event of
moving through
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infert one part
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the

in copies
[diagram]

Process Snapshot, 5 May 2008: *Entry as practice notes. Practice* as problematisation; *Entry* as diagrammatic; *Entry* = copy-paste; *Entry* = process of recording: historical, archival; capture of form; *Entry* = force or act of entering, of passage: temporal, processual; *Entry* = a way into a place: spatial, fixed; archway, frame, hole, tube; *Entry* = passage through a non-place; *Entry* = hinge between realities; *Entry* = distribution; *No Entry* = transformation of a passage through resistance; *Practice* as entry/passage through an archway (open); *Practice as entry* into the frame (closed) through a focal point; *No Entry* - opens a multitude of unexpected, non-linear movement; *No Entry* = intensifies the event of passage, the moving through; *Entry* (archway) = bifurcation; *Entry* (archway) = point of inflection; line of the outside; *Entry* (frame) = painting, film, comic, photo, doorway; (no entry = writer's block); *Practice* as no entry through the comfort zone portal.

→ Process Snapshot, 12 May 2008: *Cut-ups* (*bold italics are ports of entry*). 'This writing, interleaves with the mapping processes with which it *proposes* a contractual (push, pull) approach - the *tendencies*, the matter-movement of not-yet-formalised thought and sensation. *Folds* and unfolds - the forming, deforming and re-forming of both processes. The *separation-* between abstract machine, biogram (embodied, inflected diagram) and formal diagram (drawing of/off) are *coexistent* registers of relation between diagramming as abstract machine and its *pulsing* connections (non-relations) that power the resonating thought intensities; the *drawing off*. It imagines clarifying Deleuze's diagram as a *contraction* to variable states of presentation (sketches, drawings and doodles) *between* fragments, between content and expression, the seeable and the sayable. *The practice of writing, of this writing.*'



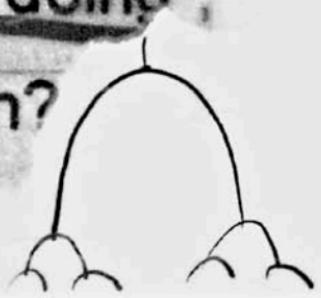
These images are snapshots from an eight meter scroll, an experimental technique for diagrammatic praxis that influenced the writing of this entry and parallel, detailed texts on the politics of the diagram and the biogram in artistic research.

ain, is the topological terrain this project ports are marked out, localized, situated, by the continuous movement of

ence
ams

An inflection point, marked out by the diagram, is not a symmetric between concavity and convexity, a pure temporality, a "true aton geography." Cache, 1995, 40)
steps... (1995)

ss a vocabulary of "doing",
they and expression?



Given the paradigm of the topological-becoming, how

A spatio-temporal-material contracting-expanding of copy-paste and hypertext? The seamless and the s the abstract machine (informal diagram). This is the linguistic multiplicity whose virtual immanence is the processual thinking-feeling-articulating of the phonemes that gives rise to all language? diagram becoming-cartographic; synaesthetic conceptual mapping. A play of forces, a series of relays, affecting a tendency toward an inflection of

The potential for resonance and redundancy in diagrammatic interrelations predispose it to both philosophical speculation and a methodological precision.² As a toolbox of applicable concepts and techniques, it affords a tangible approach through the movement of ideas and the emergence of form. A diagrammatic praxis whose particular features concern the dynamic relations between theory and practice in art research, traces the affects of force field upon force field as they contract and expand in one event-dimension, fold and unfold in another. Through multiple processes of translation and transduction, from articulation to re-articulation, the power relations engendered from the play of these forces in the Diagram produce objects of *partial capture*, differentials of individuating phase-shifts. Alternatively, they may emerge as visibilities or statements, things and/or thoughts.



o diagrammatic is paradoxically double in that it is both the **Four Speculative Registers of Diagrammatic Praxis** the (contraction) and the recursive counter-actualization of the virtual and actual.

ance between theory and practice resonate - becoming-form; states and differentiates the immanent cause⁵ and quasi-cause search/creation.



¹ Part of a three-week artist residency with Association LISA members Nicole Beutler, Ivana Muller and Paz Rojo and guest theorists Igor Dobricic, Bojana Kunst and Manuela Zechner respectively. Participants in these residencies/workshops included students and faculty of the School for New Dance Development (SNDO/SNDD), the Dance Unlimited MA programme and guests. The SNDO/SNDD and Dance Unlimited programmees are maintained by the Amsterdam School for Arts (AHK). The residency series is supported by the Art Practice and Development Research Group.

² 'A relation does not spring up between two terms that are already separate individuals, rather it is the aspect of an internal resonance of a system of individuation. It forms part of a wider system.' (Simondon, 1992, 306)

³ <http://www.voculaboratories.net/definitions/31>

⁴ For Deleuze, power is a relation between forces and a force, as Foucault indicates, is a set of actions upon actions. Forces only act upon other forces, not upon objects.

⁵ 'An abstract machine in itself is not physical or corporeal, any more than it is semiotic; it is *diagrammatic* (it knows nothing of the distinctions between the artificial and the natural either). It operates by *matter*, not by substance; by *function*, not by form. Substances and forms are of expression 'or' of content. But functions are not yet 'semiotically' formed and 'matters' are not yet physically formed. The abstract machine is pure Matter-Function – a diagram independent of the forms and substances, expressions and

contents it will distribute.' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 141)

⁶ Kenneth Knoespel notes that *diagramma* in the original Greek does 'not simply mean something that is marked out by lines, a figure, a form or a plan, but also carries a second connotation of marking or crossing out,' suggesting not only ephemerality but also an incompleteness that carries an expectation of potential. 'In a sense, *diagramma* embodies a practice of figuring, defiguring, refiguring, and prefiguring. What is interesting is that the diagram participates in a genealogy of figures that moves from the wax tablet to the computer screen. From a phenomenological vantage point, the Greek setting of diagram suggests that any figure that is drawn is accompanied by an expectancy that it will be redrawn (...) Here a diagram may be thought of as a relay. While a diagram may have been used visually to reinforce an idea one moment, the next it may provide a means of seeing something never seen before.' (Knoespel, 2001.

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 ← 45 entry
 → 178 vocabularies

we

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- 15 bullshit²
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- 117 self²⁵
- 178 vocabularies^{8/20/25}

¹ Carla Bottiglieri comes from dance and often goes back to it, as much as environmental circumstances and the continuity of her own desire make it possible. Meanwhile, she moves between different fields of investigation: aesthetics, clinics and politics are her main preoccupations. She's going to begin a PhD research project around somatics and subjectivation processes at the University of Paris 8/Dance Department, in collaboration with the Catholic University of São Paulo/Department of Clinical Psychology.

² Ann Cotten, born in Iowa, grew up in Vienna and now lives between Vienna and Berlin. She published a book of sonnets on foreign words, *Fremdwörterbuchsonette* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2007) and is currently working on prose about ghosts, robots and Florida-Rooms, a kind of literary one-woman-Wikipedia called *Glossar.Atrappen* and the perversion of a non-fiction book on lists in concrete poetry, which will appear in fall under the title *Nach der Welt. Die Listen der Konkreten Poesie und ihre Folgen* (*After the world. The lists of concrete poetry and their effects*). Irregularly, in Berlin, she does the 'Rotten Kinck Schow' with Monika Rinck, Sabine Scho and shift-ing guests.

⁴ The Committee for Radical Diplomacy is a gaggle of chronic collaborators with a passion for the protocols of formal diplomacy (cocktail parties, gift-giving, spy-games, careless whispers, gestures of hospitality) and the mechanics of constituent organising. The Committee devises popular and experimental formats that

hold people together in collec-tive actions and explorations of desire. If you'd like to get in touch: radicaldiplomacy@kein.org.

⁴ Igor Dobricic, Belgrade, studied dramaturgy at the Academy of Dramatic Arts in Belgrade, (former) Yugoslavia. In 1995, he worked as a dramaturge for the Belgrade International Theatre festival (BITEF). His interests lie in the exploration of parameters of performative action in-between different fixed contexts (theatre and visual arts, professional and non-professional status, individual and group work, aesthetics and ethics, etc...). Since 1999, he is a coordinator of the Arts programme at the European Cultural Foundation. Starting from 2005, he is developing a new project platform for the ECF (www.almostreal.org) and collaborating as a dramaturge with a number of choreographers/makers (Nicole Beutler, Keren Levi, Nora Heillman, Diego Gil, Katrina Brown etc.).

⁵ Sher Doruff, formerly Head of the Sensing Presence and Research Programme at Waag Society, is currently a Research Fellow with the Art, Research and Theory Lectoraat (ARTT), and a lecturer/mentor in the Choreography programme MA at the Amsterdam School of the Arts. She received her PhD from the University of the Arts London/Central Saint Martin's College of Art and Design in 2006. Her research investigates the role of collaborative interplay and creative processes in performance practice. She has published numerous papers, edited a book on live art, and

regularly lectures, presents in academic and artistic contexts and nurtures a modest artistic practice.

⁶ Tom Groves is a writer and lecturer, and is currently studying for a PhD in the Visual Cultures Department at Goldsmiths College, University of London.

⁷ Diego Gil, born in Argentina, lives in Amsterdam and divides his time between Berlin and Buenos Aires. He combined studies in philosophy, dance and theater. Graduated in 2003 from the School for New Dance Development (SNDO) in Amsterdam, he creates choreographic work such as: *Trabajo en Práctica Social, Emotional Architecture of Movement and Creating Sense*. Currently he is collaborating with dramaturge Igor Dobricic for their new project *About Falling* (www.aboutfalling.wordpress.com). Diego's interest in dance is to intensify the potential for movement of the body, as a way to create alternative ways to feel, think and relate to the world.

⁸ Anja Kanngieser is a researcher involved in anarcho-syndicalist organisation based in Melbourne, Australia. She is also a collaborator on the *Future Archive* and *vocabulaboratories* projects, and works with installation and radio.

⁹ Bojana Kunst works as a philosopher, dramaturge and performance theoretician. Working in-between practices influences how her work is institutionally framed, being for many years a combination of free-lancing work and university.

¹⁰ Lawrence Liang is a researcher and legal theorist. He is a co-founder of the Alternative Law Forum. His areas of interest include law and culture, piracy and IP. He is the author of *The public is watching: sex, laxus and videotape and A guide to open content licenses*.

¹¹ LISA is a production facility of the independent dance and performance makers Nicole Beutler, Hester van Hasselt, Ivana Müller, Paz Rojo and David Weber-Krebs. LISA is also a platform for reflection and artistic exchange. To this end LISA initiates and participates in, amongst others, workshops, lectures, debates and events in cooperation with colleague-artists, academics, programmers and many others. www.associationlisa.com

¹² LUDOTEK is a lab of living forms, which incorporates discourses and practises from a variety of disciplines looking forward to dissent. We believe that art is a shared (dis)organisation among objects, images and people, and therefore LUDOTEK's work must always be understood as a sociophysics platform for the development of critical discourses, and always from a ludic, recreational and socio-organisational standpoint. We make video essays, ludogrammes, testimonial documents, little exercises in criticism which consider a number of different relational problems, in order to generate a new wealth, emancipated from the tyranny of consumption, one that can apprehend the present and resist acceleration, that can be capable of generating immanent and dialogical situations: a new wealth capable of allowing a referential

autonomy, of allowing the real construction of *real life* through a relational re-positioning of individuals and their world. www.ludotek.net

¹³ Stephanie Lusby is passionate about engaging young people in building community sustainability in rural Australia, carrying with her an experience in international development campaigning and research. She has worked extensively with young activist groups in Australia as both facilitator and collaborator, as well as with international groups varying from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria to communities in remote and rural areas of the Pacific Islands. She is on the Committee of Management for the advocacy group AID/Watch and is a Policy Advisor for Jubilee Australia. Stephanie has an Honours degree in International Studies. Her thesis examined community development policy in the Australian overseas aid program and is being used as part of a forthcoming book published by the Globalism Institute.

¹⁴ Rodrigo Nunes has been involved in different community and labour organising, as well as art, projects over the years. Mostly a philosopher by training, he has just finished a PhD at Goldsmiths College, University of London, with a grant from the Brazilian government, dealing with the problem of immanence from Spinoza through Kant and post-Kantianism, up to (and particularly in) Foucault and Deleuze. He has written on passions like politics, art, and philosophy in publications such as *ephemera*, *Mute*, *Transform* and *Transversal*; co-edited

(with Ben Trott and Emma Dowling) a special issue of *ephemera* on immaterial and affective labour; and is a member of the editorial collective of *Turbulence* (www.turbulence.org.uk). Other great passions are music and film – and he is also a DJ, scriptwriter, inept pianist and failed film-maker. Contact: rgnunes@kein.org

¹⁵ Simon O'Sullivan is Senior Lecturer in Art History/Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths College, University of London. He is the author of *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation* (London: Palgrave, 2005), and editor (with Stephen Zepke) of *Deleuze, Guattari and the Production of the New* (London: Continuum, 2008) and *Deleuze and Contemporary Art* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming 2009). He also has a collaborative art practice, with David Burrows, called *Plastique Fantastique* www.plastiquefantastique.org.

¹⁶ Peter Pál Pelbart born in Hungary, did his studies in Philosophy in Paris and teaches at the university of São Paulo. He has translated some works by Gilles Deleuze into Portuguese, and is notably the author of a book on the idea of time in Deleuze (*O tempo não-reconcilado* (*Time unreconciled*), São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2004). He has worked on the relations between philosophy and madness, as well as on contemporary/biopolitical subjectivity. Besides that, he coordinates a theatre group constituted by psychiatric patients (Cia. Teatral Ueinzz), and sometimes is referred to as 'the renowned alienist going by the name of Peter Pál Pelbart'.

¹⁷ Critical Practice is a cluster of artists, researchers, academics and others hosted by Chelsea College of Art & Design, London. Through Open Organisations (www.openorganizations.org) guidelines and wiki technology, the cluster pursues a peer-led approach to cultural production. Examples include *Open Congress* (Tate Britain, London, 2005) and *Disclosures* (Gasworks, London, 2007). For more information, visit the Critical Practice wiki at <http://criticalpracticechelsea.org>. The cluster's entry for *vocabulaboratories* is co-authored by Marsha Bradfield, Cinzia Cremona and Michaela Ross.

¹⁸ Judith Revel is a philosopher and translator of Foucault into Italian. She is currently researching the political aspects of '68 and the concept of the common. Specializing in contemporary thought, she teaches at the Sorbonne in Paris and is a member of the journals *Posse* in Italy and *Multitudes* in France.

¹⁹ Jan Ritsema has directed for a wide variety of Dutch and Belgian theatre. With the *International Theatre Bookshop*, that he founded in 1978, he published over 300 books about theatre, dance and film. Since 1995, he has been working also as a dancer with the solo *Pour la fin du temps* for the Kunsten-festivaldesArts; in several *Crash Landing's* by Meg Stuart; dance-actions with Boris Charmatz; with Jonathan Burrows, *Weak Dance Strong Questions* and with Sandy Williams, *Blindspot*. In collaboration with the performer and musicologist Bojana Cvejic he slithers along the borders of representation and 'non-performance' in per-

formances like *TODAYulysses*, *Pipelines*, *a construction*, and *Knowh2ow*. He was from 1990 till 1995 professor at the Rijksacademie in Amsterdam and teacher at P.A.R.T.S. In 2006, Ritsema starts in an old convent near the French city of Reims a PerformingArtsForum (PAF), an open place for residencies and formation to experiment with other ways to produce and develop performing arts pieces, and to rethink formation in the performing arts.

²⁰ Paz Rojo in English translates as *red peace*. It is the colour she likes the most, and a substantive which she doesn't use very often. She doesn't understand her work as the achievement of freedom from violence, or the freedom from dissension between individuals or groups. Quite the contrary: she likes to move. She is a mover. She is interested in movement as a physical, political and philosophical notion. She *moves with, and in, between*, people, institutions, choreography, philosophy, performance, projects and spaces of different sorts, which she engages with, sometimes violently, sometimes strategically, sometimes sensually, sometimes experientially. Passion to find common spaces and ideas divides her the most, but is the current motor of her work. www.associationlisa.com www.vocabulaboratories.net

²¹ Ricardo Santana is a choreographer and performer, with degrees in drama from R.E.S.A.D (Madrid Drama School, 1998, and the School for New Dance Development, Amsterdam, 2000-2002. As performer he has worked in Paris with Claire Heagen, Théâtre Du Mouvement; in

Holland, with Keren Levi, Nicole Beutler and Uri Ivgy; and in Madrid with the dance company Provisionaldanza/Carmen-Werner until 2006. He is currently finishing his MA in Philosophy, Art and Aesthetics in the University Carlos III, Madrid. His recent works as choreographer are *Se ver la al reves*, 2005; *Easy listening*, 2006; *Las palabras, las cosas y el desarrollo de los acontecimientos*, 2007, in which he collaborated with Paz Rojo, and *Si, pero no lo soy*, with the theatre director Alfredo Sanzol (a production from the Centro Dramático Nacional, Spain).

²² Suze May Sho is a group of three: Connie Nijman (graphic designer), Jessica Helbach (artist/fashion designer) and Rosell Heijmen (artist). The name Suze May Sho is based on a fictional character. A woman who is headstrong, single-minded and proud. She may or may not show. The collaboration between her members can best be compared to a band: in a visual jam session, drum, guitar and keyboard are replaced by graphic design, fashion and art. All three founders research the boundaries of their respective disciplines. Making exhibitions is Suzes specialty. She combines her skills to create a complete surrounding whilst working in close collaboration with the exhibiting artists. The exhibition as a whole is treated in the same way, as would be a painting or a sculpture, resulting in a vital show. contact: info@suzemaysho.com

²³ Judith Schwentner did an MA in Slavic Studies at Graz University (Austria), lectures at the University of Lemberg (Ukraine), and since 1999 is

editor/director of the street journal and social initiative *Megaphon*, as well as an attached intercultural Café (Auschlössl), since 2007. Judith curated and organised the 'Bollywood film nights' in 2001 (Forum Stadtpark, Graz) and the exhibition *SPB contemporary art from St.Petersburg* (Graz, 2003).

²⁴ David Weber-Krebs combines philosophical and political interrogations around metaphysics, romanticism, or the sublime, with reflections on the mechanisms and potential of a situation given in a theatre. His work cultivates ambiguity, between transcendence and immanence, between fascination and critical distance.

²⁵ Manuela Zechner is a name. It doesn't hide too many secrets, but it constantly multiplies and replaces its referents. There's a body attached to that name, or vice versa; these two move around together (mainly between London and 'continental' Europe) and get themselves into different encounters, troubles, groups (for instance The Committee for Radical Diplomacy) and projects (for instance the *Future Archive* (www.futurearchive.org) and vocabularatories). The Zechner body and name reconfigure their relationship every once in a while, trying to find new complications and ways of working. They did some art and theory studies together and enjoy collaborating, as well as traveling by train (especially when they're on the verge of breakup).

yours

Vocabulaboratories is an ongoing project consisting of a series of laboratory spaces for working on self-made conceptual vocabularies, collectively as well as individually. Facilitated by Manuela Zechner, Paz Rojo and Anja Kanngieser. All texts are available online: www.vocabulaboratories.net.

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 2008

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...vocalaboratories

This project works with the idea of ‘vocabularies’ as access points: through vocabularies we position ourselves, say things, and make sense in and of the world. We connect these vocabularies to voices, and hence to bodies that move and act in the world. The ways in which we engage abstractions and concepts through our vocabularies offer us modes of strategically operating within the world. We become vocal via our vocabularies, not to arm ourselves against reality, or to deny it, but to work and exist within it. At the same time, through our voices and positions, our vocabularies gain significance and performative power: the power to act and to produce. Vocabularies exist in inter-subjective spaces – between us collectively and singularly, and our environments – which are constantly in negotiation with instances and ideas that we encounter. These negotiations help us displace ourselves and things – allowing us to relate, act, make gestures and movements.

Our vocabulary frames our ethics, collectively as well as individually, and as such constitutes a point of access to our lives and practices – its multiple components allow us to enter and relate to problems and instances in specific ways. Hence we think of the *entries* collated in this book as moments of articulation that are still in process, to be worked upon as we come to share our questions, ideas and strategies. Working across virtual, physical, theoretical and practical frameworks and terrains, the project of vocalaboratories is engendered through a series of

laboratory spaces. In these spaces vocabularies are explored as relevant, local and self-organizing practices. We seek to facilitate processes that allow us to map out, exchange and discuss the strategies and hopes we invest in concepts, as a means through which to construct our worlds. As such, vocalaboratories are spaces where everyday, aesthetic, and social practices and articulations are brought into relation with self-made conceptual frameworks. Discussions, diagrams, research and action are important modalities in this process. Through such devices, we aim to open up sites from which to address the problems and desires that we deal with through our vocabularies: how these allow us to position ourselves and how we might increase our capacities of acting and being affected. This always involves questioning our very concrete, local and material positions and the subjective conditions those resonate with.

This collection of texts signals a point of departure for the vocalaboratories project. While some texts relate to a local laboratory space, others are fragments coming out of processes of transnational collaboration: some written between us, some alone, but all connected to one another in different ways. These processes are always preliminary, never finished – there is never a final text. Like each of our vocabularies, all our entries are in perpetual development; changing, transforming, colliding and accumulating.

you may want to go to:

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