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COMMONS /
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IN ART, EDUCATION,
WORK...

THE COMMONS / UNDERCOMMONS
IN ART, EDUCATION, WORK...

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CONTENT

BOJANA CVEJIĆ, BOJANA KUNST, AND STEFAN APOSTOLOU-HÖLSCHER

COMMONS / UNDERCOMMONS IN ART, EDUCATION, WORK...

The fifteen pieces in this issue are the result of a somewhat peculiar endeavor. Between May 29 and June 1, 2014, we held a conference at Frankfurt Lab under the title of *The Public Commons and the Undercommons of Art, Education, and Labour*.[1] Its title reflected our concerns about diagnosing the current predicament of higher education in the arts and humanities, artistic production, and cultural work. To summarize briefly, two turns have lately merged that characterize the transformation of work, knowledge, and subjectivation processes across the arts field and the Academy: the educational and the curatorial turn. While the educational turn has yielded a new academic (professional) valorization of artistic praxis (in the so-called creative or practice-based PhDs), coupled with a proliferation of degrees and a prolongation of financialized, debt-stricken study (also as a temporary deferral or relief from the market and its projective temporality), the curatorial turn has corresponded to a neoliberal style of managing both art and education, reducing time and attention, critical and transformative (poetic) engagements with one's own art and study.

For three days, a number of independent researchers, scholars, academics, students, cultural workers, activists, and artists convened for intense discussion. Instead of representing their various stances in prepared and rehearsed presentations, as is customary in academic conferences, the speakers spoke and unfolded their views on struggle, resistance, and alternatives to a situation that is more unpromising than merely ambivalent. What made the endeavor of assembling this publication truly engaging is that most of the texts resulted from rewriting the speakers' initial contributions *post hoc*, in the aftermath of the conference, with the discussions possibly altering the prospects of the starting diagnosis.

These fifteen pieces are demanding along three lines of thought, often engaged in parallel. The first axis addresses the notion of *commons* in a range of approaches from philosophical to critical empirical social study. Jason Read's essay offers a happily combined reading of Gilbert Simondon's ontogenesis *qua* individuation with Marx's social nature of production and the individual, reinvesting the social commons in the categories of the preindividual and transindividuality, performing thereby a critical intervention into the current ideology of individualism. Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's opening essay is republished here because it served the conference as its point of departure. In their thorny portmanteau word ("undercommons"), the commons and the underground are joined to qualify a subversive, troublemaking type of resistance and a collective, fugitive, and subproletarianized organization of study against professionalized education and the privatization of social individuals. While most of the texts highlight a different form that the commons may take in the cultural and artistic praxes of self-organization, collaboration, and cooperation, Gal Kirn's study unravels the historically neglected problem of the commons under social ownership in Yugoslavia's self-management socialist system in the case of cinema clubs.

In a second register, a multitude of *positions* are staked out. Thus Ana Vujanović portrays the cultural worker "gone political" in an argument against Moten and Harney's call for the subversive intellectual versus the professional academic. Vujanović grounds the figure of the cultural worker as a proletarian, whose sole possession is her labor and who must dirty her hands if she wants to participate in the social-political conjuncture today. In Nina Power's terse vindication of the student today, one can read a comparison between the students' protests of 1968 and 2010, where the struggles that once structurally emancipated institutions are nowadays economically overdetermined. The figure of the student is repeatedly evoked as representative of a new political class (in the subproletarian undercommons) that actively fights precarization or,

1 The conference *The Public Commons and the Undercommons of Art, Education, and Labor* was hosted by the Institute for Applied Theater Studies (Justus Liebig University, Gießen) between May 29 and June 1, 2014. It was organized in collaboration with the Hessian Theatre Academy (HTA), the East European Performing Arts Platform (eepap), the Create to Connect network (CtC), Frankfurt LAB (the conference venue), and supported by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG). The editors of this volume wish to thank Marta Keil for helping the realization of this gathering from the earliest stages. We also wish to thank Tom Engels and Franziska Aigner from the MA program in choreography and performance, and Florian Ackermann and Matthias Rößler from Frankfurt LAB, who supported our ideas from the beginning right to the end. Last but not least, our thanks goes Martina Ruhsam, Katja Čičigoj, and Frank-Max Müller, who provided help both in the organization of the event and the moderation of certain panels.

in a more ambivalent sense, is a member of a biopolitical "army of artists" and scientists who must take charge of history, as in Jan Ritsema's mind-boggling pamphlet. Or, the student figures as a negative symptom of instrumental reason and corruption in a postsocialist context, as in Harut Alpetyan's ironic commentary. Taking its cue from Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin's film *Chronique d'un été*, Isabel de Naverán asks "How do you live? Are you happy?" and narrates her experience of becoming-collective in a self-organized curatorial practice arising from the praxis of reading together against the horizon of ambitions of an artist, PhD-granted independent researcher. Marta Keil argues for a renewal of the neglected role of the curator as a cultural producer who problematizes the existing institutional structure and workplace relations in order to radically alter them. In Norbert Pape's letter, we read an intricate mixture of feelings of an artist engaged in the struggle for a self-organized artistic scene, between complicity, self-exploitation and the joys of working and changing together.

In yet a third line of argument, the discussion of a few *problems* is central. Randy Martin, the remarkable and sadly departed sociologist whose books have influenced social and political discussions in the field of dance – and to whom we dedicate this issue – develops an intriguing prolegomenon for a social logic of derivatives in finance capitalism. The derivative logic would afford, in Martin's own words, "a speculative regard toward the social; not simply a return to what the people once possessed and now have lost in the form of the common, but of what a population and a society might be if people had the active means to make contingent claims on one another that would render their mutual indebtedness the object of a politics". Returning to the vicissitudes of the academic and artistic field today, Josefine Wikström unpacks the epistemological confusion in the business of practice-based PhDs, arguing for a more discriminating approach to evaluating knowledge that is born in artistic praxis. In Goran Sergej Pristaš's essay, the call for artists to engage with poetics rather than practice runs counter to the curatorial turn and its distinctive product of "expanded performance", which circulates the valorization of reception (experience management) instead of investing in art production. In Boyan Manchev's words, this is "performance capitalism", which dictates collaboration as a social form of relation beyond production, which, Manchev contends, must be defended anew. Gigi Argyropoulou's problem invokes politics in a most urgent sense. Argyropoulou chose to write an inconclusive account of the cultural "counter-practices" in which she has taken an active part in Athens, including the occupation of a theater and the disruption of the official discourse of cultural ministry. In framing such practices, she proposes the term of "alegal acts that can perhaps disrupt the current order and reveal the anomy of power". She also argues for including failure as a criterion of evaluation, rather than how it is commonly understood as the opposite of success. We might borrow her words to reach a conclusion about the character of not only our actions, but also our discussions on the problems we are implicated in, which we have no power to resolve entirely on our own. Those fragmented, alegal moments fail, but continue, because continuation despite failure involves a longer-term projection of the struggles in which we trust.

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FRED MOTEN AND
STEFANO HARNEY

THE UNIVERSITY AND THE UNDERCOMMONS
SEVEN THESES[1]

> Philosophy thus traditionally practices a critique of knowledge which is simultaneously a denegation of knowledge (i.e., of the class struggle). Its position can be described as an irony with regard to knowledge, which it puts into question without ever touching its foundations. The questioning of knowledge in philosophy always ends in its restoration: a movement great philosophers consistently expose in each other.
>
> Jacques Rancière, On the Shores of Politics

> I am a black man number one, because I am against what they have done and are still doing to us; and number two, I have something to say about the new society to be built because I have a tremendous part in that which they have sought to discredit.
>
> C. L. R. James, C. L. R. James: His Life and Work

The Only Possible Relationship to the University Today Is a Criminal One

"To the university I'll steal, and there I'll steal," to borrow from Pistol at the end of *Henry V*, as he would surely borrow from us. This is the only possible relationship to the American university today. This may be true of universities everywhere. It may have to be true of the university in general. But certainly, this much is true in the United States: it cannot be denied that the university is a place of refuge, and it cannot be accepted that the university is a place of enlightenment. In the face of these conditions one can only sneak into the university and steal what one can. To abuse its hospitality, to spite its mission, to join its refugee colony, its gypsy encampment, to be in but not of—this is the path of the subversive intellectual in the modern university.

1 *Social Text* 79, Vol. 22, No. 2, Summer 2004.

Worry about the university. This is the injunction today in the United States, one with a long history. Call for its restoration like Harold Bloom or Stanley Fish or Gerald Graff. Call for its reform like Derek Bok or Bill Readings or Cary Nelson. Call out to it as it calls to you. But for the subversive intellectual, all of this goes on upstairs, in polite company, among the rational men. After all, the subversive intellectual came under false pretenses, with bad documents, out of love. Her labor is as necessary as it is unwelcome. The university needs what she bears but cannot bear what she brings. And on top of all that, she disappears. She disappears into the underground, the downlow lowdown maroon community of the university, into the Undercommons of Enlightenment, where the work gets done, where the work gets subverted, where the revolution is still black, still strong.

What is that work and what is its social capacity for both reproducing the university and producing fugitivity? If one were to say teaching, one would be performing the work of the university. Teaching is merely a profession and an operation of what Jacques Derrida calls the onto-/auto-encyclopedic circle of the Universitas. But it is useful to invoke this operation to glimpse the hole in the fence where labor enters, to glimpse its hiring hall, its night quarters. The university needs teaching labor, despite itself, or as itself, self-identical with and thereby erased by it. It is not teaching then that holds this social capacity, but something that produces the not visible other side of teaching, a thinking through the skin of teaching toward a collective orientation to the knowledge object as future project, and a commitment to what we want to call the prophetic organization.

But it is teaching that brings us in. Before there are grants, research, conferences, books, and journals there is the experience of being taught and of teaching. Before the research post with no teaching, before the graduate students to mark the exams, before the string of sabbaticals, before the permanent reduction in teaching load, the appointment to run the Center, the consignment of pedagogy to a discipline called education, before the course designed to be a new book, teaching happened. The moment of teaching for food is therefore often mistakenly taken to be a stage, as if eventually, one should not teach for food. If the stage persists, there is a social pathology in the university. But if the teaching is successfully passed on, the stage is surpassed, and teaching is consigned to those who are known to remain in the stage, the sociopathological labor of the university. Kant interestingly calls such a stage "self-incurred minority." He tries to contrast it with having the "determination and courage to use one's

intelligence without being guided by another." "Have the courage to use your own intelligence."

But what would it mean if teaching or rather what we might call "the beyond of teaching" is precisely what one is asked to get beyond, to stop taking sustenance? And what of those minorities who refuse, the tribe of moles who will not come back from beyond (that which is beyond "the beyond of teaching"), as if they will not be subjects, as if they want to think as objects, as minority? Certainly, the perfect subjects of communication, those successfully beyond teaching, will see them as waste. But their collective labor will always call into question who truly is taking the orders of the Enlightenment. The waste lives for those moments beyond$_2$ teaching when you give away the unexpected beautiful phrase— unexpected, no one has asked, beautiful, it will never come back. Is being the biopower of the Enlightenment truly better than this?

Perhaps the biopower of the Enlightenment knows this, or perhaps it is just reacting to the objecthood of this labor as it must. But even as it depends on these moles, these refugees, they will call them uncollegial, impractical, naive, unprofessional. And one may be given one last chance to be pragmatic—why steal when one can have it all, they will ask. But if one hides from this interpellation, neither agrees nor disagrees but goes with hands full into the underground of the university, into the Undercommons — this will be regarded as theft, as a criminal act. And it is at the same time, the only possible act.

In that Undercommons of the university one can see that it is not a matter of teaching versus research or even the beyond of teaching versus the individualization of research. To enter this space is to inhabit the ruptural and enraptured disclosure of the commons that fugitive enlightenment enacts, the criminal, matricidal, queer, in the cistern, on the stroll of the stolen life, the life stolen by enlightenment and stolen back, where the commons give refuge, where the refuge gives commons. What the beyond$_2$ of teaching is really about is not finishing oneself, not passing, not completing; it's about allowing subjectivity to be unlawfully overcome by others, a radical passion and passivity such that one becomes unfit for subjection, because one does not possess the kind of agency that can hold the regulatory forces of subjecthood, and one cannot initiate the auto-interpellative torque that biopower subjection requires and rewards. It is not so much the teaching as it is the prophecy in the organization of the act of teaching. The prophecy that predicts its own organization and has therefore passed, as commons, and the prophecy that exceeds its own organization and therefore as yet can only be organized. Against the prophetic organization of the Undercommons is arrayed its own deadening labor for the university, and beyond that, the negligence of professionalization, and the professionalization of the critical academic. The Undercommons is therefore always an unsafe neighborhood.

Fredric Jameson reminds the university of its dependence on "Enlightenment-type critiques and demystification of belief and committed ideology, in order to clear the ground for unobstructed planning and 'development.'"[2] This is the weakness of the university, the lapse in its homeland security. It needs labor power for this "enlightenment-type critique," but, somehow, labor always escapes.

The premature subjects of the Undercommons took the call seriously, or had to be serious about the call. They were not clear about planning, too mystical, too full of belief. And yet this labor force cannot reproduce itself, it must be reproduced. The university works for the day when it will be able to rid itself, like capital in general, of the trouble of labor. It will then be able to reproduce a labor force that understands itself as not only unnecessary but dangerous to the development of capitalism. Much pedagogy and scholarship is already dedicated in this direction. Students must come to see themselves as the problem, which, counter to the complaining of restorationist critics of the university, is precisely what it means to be a customer, to take on the burden of realization and always necessarily be inadequate to it. Later, these students will be able to see themselves properly as obstacles to society, or perhaps, with lifelong learning, students will return having successfully diagnosed themselves as the problem.

Still, the dream of an undifferentiated labor that knows itself as superfluous is interrupted precisely by the labor of clearing away the burning roadblocks of ideology. While it is better that this police function be in the hands of the few, it still raises labor as difference, labor as the development of other labor, and therefore labor as a source of wealth. And although the enlightenment-type critique, as we suggest below, informs on, kisses the cheek of, any autonomous development as a result of this difference in labor, there is a break in the wall here, a shallow place in the river, a place to land under the rocks. The university still needs this clandestine labor to prepare this undifferentiated labor force, whose increasing specialization and managerialist tendencies, again contra the restorationists, represent precisely the successful integration of the division of labor with the universe of exchange that commands restorationist loyalty.

Introducing this labor upon labor, and providing the space for its development, creates risks. Like the colonial police force recruited unwittingly from guerrilla neighborhoods, university labor may harbor refugees, fugitives, renegades, and castaways. But there are good reasons for the university to be confident that such elements will be exposed or forced underground. Precautions have been taken, book lists have been drawn up, teaching observations conducted, invitations to contribute made. Yet against these precautions stands the immanence of transcendence, the necessary deregulation and the possibilities of criminality and fugitivity that labor upon labor requires. Maroon communities of composition teachers, mentorless graduate students, adjunct Marxist historians, out or queer management professors, state college ethnic studies departments, closed down film programs, visa-expired Yemeni student newspaper editors, historically black college sociologists, and feminist engineers. And what will the university say of them? It will say they are unprofessional. This is not an arbitrary charge. It is the charge against the more than professional. How do those who exceed the profession, who exceed and by exceeding escape, how do those maroons problematize themselves, problematize the university, force the university to consider them a problem, a danger? The Undercommons is not, in short, the kind of fanciful communities of whimsy invoked by Bill Readings at the end of his book. The Undercommons, its maroons, are always at war, always in hiding.

There Is No Distinction between the American University and Professionalization

But surely if one can write something on the surface of the university, if one can write for instance in the university about singularities — those events that refuse either the abstract or individual category of the bourgeois subject — one cannot say that there is no space in the university itself? Surely there is some space here for a theory, a conference, a book, a school of thought? Surely the university also makes thought possible? Is not the purpose of the university as *Universitas*, as liberal arts, to make the commons, make the public, make the nation of democratic citizenry? Is it not therefore important to protect this *Universitas*, whatever its impurities, from professionalization in the university? But we would ask what is already not possible in this talk in the hallways, among the buildings, in rooms of the university about possibility? How is the thought of the outside, as Gayatri Spivak means it, already not possible in this complaint?

The maroons know something about possibility. They are the condition of possibility of production of knowledge in the university — the singularities against the writers of singularity, the writers who write, publish, travel, and speak. It is not merely a matter of the secret labor upon which such space is lifted, though of course such space is lifted from collective labor and by it. It is rather that to be a critical academic in the university is to be against the university, and to be against the university is always to recognize it and be recognized by it, and to institute the negligence of that internal outside, that unassimilated underground, a negligence of it that is precisely, we must insist, the basis of the professions. And this act of against always already excludes the unrecognized modes of politics, the beyond of politics already in motion, the discredited criminal paraorganization, what Robin Kelley might refer to as the infrapolitical field (and its music). It is not just the labor of the maroons but their prophetic organization that is negated by the idea of intellectual space in an organization called the university. This is why the negligence of the critical academic is always at the same time an assertion of bourgeois individualism.

Such negligence is the essence of professionalization, where it turns out professionalization is not the opposite of negligence but its mode of politics in the United States. It takes the form of a choice that excludes the The University and the prophetic organization of the Undercommons—to be against, to put into question the knowledge object, let us say in this case the university, not so much without touching its foundation, as without touching one's own condition of possibility, without admitting the Undercommons and being admitted to it. From this, a general negligence of condition is the only coherent position. Not so much an antifoundationalism or foundationalism, as both are used against each other to avoid contact with the Undercommons. This always negligent act is what leads us to say there is no distinction between the university in the United States and professionalization. There is no point in trying to hold out the university against its professionalization. They are the same. Yet the maroons refuse to refuse professionalization, that is, to be against the university. The university will not recognize this indecision, and thus professionalization is shaped precisely by what it cannot acknowledge, its internal antagonism, its wayward labor, its surplus. Against this wayward labor it sends the critical, sends its claim that what is left beyond the critical is waste.

But in fact, critical education only attempts to perfect professional education. The professions constitute themselves in an opposition to the unregulated and the ignorant

without acknowledging the unregulated, ignorant, unprofessional labor that goes on not opposite them but within them. But if professional education ever slips in its labor, ever reveals its condition of possibility to the professions it supports and reconstitutes, critical education is there to pick it up, and to tell it, never mind — it was just a bad dream, the ravings, the drawings of the mad. Because critical education is precisely there to tell professional education to rethink its relationship to its opposite—by which critical education means both itself and the unregulated, against which professional education is deployed. In other words, critical education arrives to support any faltering negligence, to be vigilant in its negligence, to be critically engaged in its negligence. It is more than an ally of professional education, it is its attempted completion.

A professional education has become a critical education. But one should not applaud this fact. It should be taken for what it is, not progress in the professional schools, not cohabitation with the *Universitas*, but counterinsurgency, the refounding terrorism of law, coming for the discredited, coming for those who refuse to write off or write up the Undercommons.

The *Universitas* is always a state/State strategy. Perhaps it's surprising to say professionalization — that which reproduces the professions — is a state strategy. Certainly, critical academic professionals tend to be regarded today as harmless intellectuals, malleable, perhaps capable of some modest intervention in the so-called public sphere, like Bruce Robbins' cowboy professionals in Secular Vocations. But to see how this underestimates the presence of the state we can turn to a bad reading of Derrida's consideration of Hegel's 1822 report to the Prussian Minister of Education. Derrida notices the way that Hegel rivals the state in his ambition for education, wanting to put into place a progressive pedagogy of philosophy designed to support Hegel's worldview, to unfold as encyclopedic. This ambition both mirrors the state's ambition, because it, too, wants to control education and to impose a worldview, and threatens it, because Hegel's State exceeds and thus localizes the Prussian state, exposing its pretense to the encyclopedic. Derrida draws the following lesson from his reading: the *Universitas*, as he generalizes the university (but specifies it, too, as properly intellectual and not professional), always has the impulse of State, or enlightenment, and the impulse of state, or its specific conditions of production and reproduction. Both have the ambition to be, as Derrida says, onto- and auto-encyclopedic. It follows that to be either for the *Universitas* or against it presents problems. To be for the Universitas is to support this onto- and auto-encyclopedic project of the State as enlightenment, or enlightenment as totality, to use an old-fashioned word. To be too much against the *Universitas*, however, creates the danger of specific elements in the state taking steps to rid itself of the contradiction of the onto- and auto-encyclopedic project of the *Universitas* and replacing it with some other form of social reproduction, the anti-enlightenment — the position, for instance, of New Labour in Britain and of the states of New York and California with their "teaching institutions." But a bad reading of Derrida will also yield our question again: what is lost in this undecidability? What is the price of refusing to be either for the *Universitas* or for professionalization, to be critical of both, and who pays that price? Who makes it possible to reach the aporia of this reading? Who works in the premature excess of totality, in the not ready of negligence?

The mode of professionalization that is the American university is precisely dedicated to promoting this consensual choice: an antifoundational critique of the University or a foundational critique of the university. Taken as choices, or hedged as bets, one tempered with the other, they are nonetheless always negligent. Professionalization is built on this choice. It rolls out into ethics and efficiency, responsibility and science, and numerous other choices, all built upon the theft, the conquest, the negligence of the outcast mass intellectuality of the Undercommons.

It is therefore unwise to think of professionalization as a narrowing and better to think of it as a circling, a circling of war wagons around the last camp of indigenous women and children. Think about the way the American doctors or lawyers regard themselves as educated, enclosed in the circle of the state's encyclopedia, though they may know nothing of philosophy or history. What would be outside this act of the conquest circle, what kind of ghostly labored world escapes in the circling act, an act like a kind of broken phenomenology where the brackets never come back off and what is experienced as knowledge is the absolute horizon of knowledge whose name is banned by the banishment of the absolute. It is simply a horizon that does not bother to make itself possible. No wonder that whatever their origins or possibilities, it is theories of pragmatism in the United States and critical realism in Britain that command the loyalty of critical intellectuals. Never having to confront the foundation, never having to confront antifoundation out of faith in the unconfrontable foundation, critical intellectuals can float in the middle range. These loyalties banish dialectics with its inconvenient interest in pushing the material and abstract, the table and its brain, as far as it can, unprofessional behavior at its most obvious.

Professionalization Is the Privatization of the Social Individual through Negligence

Surely professionalization brings with it the benefits of competence. It may be the onto- and auto-encyclopedic circle of the university particular to the American state, but is it not possible to recuperate something from this knowledge for practical advances? Or, indeed, is it not possible to embark on critical projects within its terrain, projects that would turn its competencies to more radical ends? No, we would say, it is not. And saying so we prepare to part company with American critical academics, to become unreliable, to be disloyal to the public sphere, to be obstructive and shiftless, dumb with insolence in the face of the call to critical thinking.

Let us, as an example, act disloyally to the field of public administration and especially in masters of public administration programs, including related programs in public health, environmental management, nonprofit and arts management, and the large menu of human services courses, certificates, diplomas, and degrees that underpin this disciplinary cluster. It is difficult not to sense that these programs exist against themselves, that they despise themselves. (Although later one can see that as with all professionalization, it is the underlying negligence that unsettles the surface of labor power.) The average lecture, in the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at NYU for instance, may be more antistatist, more skeptical of government, more modest in its social policy goals than the average lecture in the avowedly neoclassical economics or new right political science departments at that same university. It would not be much different at Syracuse University, or a dozen other prominent public administration schools. One might say that skepticism is an important part of higher education, but this particular skepticism is not founded on close study of the object in question. In fact, there is no state theory in public administration programs in the United States. Instead, the state is regarded as the proverbial devil we know. And whether it is understood in public administration as a necessary evil, or as a good that is nonetheless of limited usefulness and availability, it is always entirely knowable as an object. Therefore it is not so much that these programs are set against themselves. It is rather that they are set against some students, and particularly those who come to public administration with a sense of what Derrida has called a duty beyond duty, or a passion.

To be skeptical of what one already knows is of course an absurd position. If one is skeptical of an object then one is already in the position of not knowing that object, and if one claims to know the object, one cannot also claim to be skeptical of that object, which amounts to being skeptical of one's own claim. But this is the position of professionalization, and it is this position that confronts that student, however rare, who comes to public administration with a passion. Any attempt at passion, at stepping out of this skeptical of the known into an inadequate confrontation with what exceeds it and oneself, must be suppressed by this professionalization. This is not merely a matter of administering the world, but of administering away the world (and with it, prophecy). Any other disposition is not only unprofessional but incompetent, unethical, and irresponsible, bordering on the criminal. Again the discipline of public administration is particularly, though not uniquely, instructive, both in its pedagogy and in its scholarship, and offers the chance to be disloyal, to smash and grab what it locks up.

Public administration holds to the idea both in the lecture hall and the professional journal that its categories are knowable. The state, the economy, and civil society may change size or shape, labor may enter or exit, and ethical consideration may vary, but these objects are both positivistic and normative, standing in discrete, spatial arrangement each to the other. Professionalization begins by accepting these categories precisely so competence can be invoked, a competence that at the same time guards its own foundation (like Michael Dukakis riding around in a tank phantasmatically patrolling his empty neighborhood). This responsibility for the preservation of objects becomes precisely that Weberian site-specific ethics that has the effect, as Theodor Adorno recognized, of naturalizing the production of capitalist sites. To question them thus becomes not only incompetent and unethical but the enactment of a security breach.

For instance, if one wanted to explore the possibility that public administration might best be defined as the labor of the relentless privatization of capitalist society, one could gain a number of unprofessional insights. It would help explain the inadequacy of the three major strains in public administration scholarship in the United States. The public ethos strain represented by projects like refounding public administration, and the journal Administration and Society; the public competence strain represented in the debate between public administration and the new public management, and the journal Public Administration Review; and the critical strain represented by PAT-Net, the Public Administration Theory Network, and its journal Administrative Theory and Praxis. If public administration is the competence to confront the socialization thrown up continuously by capitalism and to take as much of that

socialization as possible and reduce it either to something called the public or something called the private, then immediately all three scholarly positions become invalid. It is not possible to speak of a labor that is dedicated to the reproduction of social dispossession as having an ethical dimension. It is not possible to decide the efficiency or scope of such labor after the fact of its expenditure in this operation by looking at it once it has reproduced something called the public or something called the private. And it is not possible to be critical and at the same time to accept uncritically the foundation of public administrationist thought in these spheres of the public and private, and to deny the labor that goes on behind the backs of these categories, in the Undercommons, of, for instance, the republic of women who run Brooklyn.

But this is an unprofessional example. It does preserve the rules and respect the terms of the debate, enter the speech community, by knowing and dwelling in its (unapproachable) foundational objects. It is also an incompetent example. It does not allow itself to be measured, applied, and improved, except to be found wanting. And it is an unethical example. Suggesting the utter dominance of one category over another — is this not fascism or communism? Finally, it is a passionate example full of prophecy not proof, a bad example of a weak argument making no attempt to defend itself, given over to some kind of sacrifice of the professional community emanating from the Undercommons. Such is the negligent opinion of professional public administration scholars.

What, further, is the connection then between this professionalization as the onto- and auto-encyclopedia of the American state and the spread of professionalization beyond the university or perhaps the spread of the university beyond the university, and with the colonies of the Undercommons? A certain riot into which professionalization stumbles — when the care of the social is confronted with its reaction, enforced negligence — a riot erupts and the professional looks absurd, like a recruiting booth at a carnival, professional services, personal professional services, turning pro to pay for university. It is at this riotous moment that professionalization shows its desperate business, nothing less than to convert the social individual. Except perhaps, something more, the ultimate goal of counterinsurgency everywhere: to turn the insurgents into state agents.

Critical Academics Are the Professionals Par Excellence

The critical academic questions the university, questions the state, questions art, politics, culture. But in the Undercommons it is “no questions asked.” It is unconditional — the door swings open for refuge even though it may let in police agents and destruction. The questions are superfluous in the Undercommons. If you don’t know, why ask? The only question left on the surface is what can it mean to be critical when the professional defines himself or herself as one who is critical of negligence, while negligence defines professionalization? Would it not mean that to be critical of the university would make one the professional par excellence, more negligent than any other? To distance oneself professionally through critique, is this not the most active consent to privatize the social individual? The Undercommons might by contrast be understood as wary of critique, weary of it, and at the same time dedicated to the collectivity of its future, the collectivity that may come to be its future. The Undercommons in some ways tries to escape from critique and its degradation as university-consciousness and self-consciousness about university-consciousness, retreating, as Adrian Piper says, into the external world.

This maroon community, if it exists, therefore also seeks to escape the fiat of the ends of man. The sovereign’s army of academic antihumanism will pursue this negative community into the Undercommons, seeking to conscript it, needing to conscript it. But as seductive as this critique may be, as provoked as it may be, in the Undercommons they know it is not love. Between the fiat of the ends and the ethics of new beginnings, the Undercommons abides, and some find comfort in this. Comfort for the emigrants from conscription, not to be ready for humanity and who must endure the return of humanity nonetheless, as it may be endured by those who will or must endure it, as certainly those of the Undercommons endure it, always in the break, always the supplement of the General Intellect and its source. When the critical academic who lives by fiat (of others) gets no answer, no commitment, from the Undercommons, well then certainly the conclusion will come: they are not practical, not serious about change, not rigorous, not productive.

Meanwhile, that critical academic in the university, in the circle of the American state, questions the university. He claims to be critical of the negligence of the university. But is he not the most accomplished professional in his studied negligence? If the labor upon labor, the labor among labor of the unprofessionals in the university

sparks revolt, retreat, release, does the labor of the critical academic not involve a mockery of this first labor, a performance that is finally in its lack of concern for what it parodies, negligent? Does the questioning of the critical academic not become a pacification? Or, to put it plainly, does the critical academic not teach how to deny precisely what one produces with others, and is this not the lesson the professions return to the university to learn again and again? Is the critical academic then not dedicated to what Michael E. Brown phrased the impoverishment, the immiseration, of society's cooperative prospects? This is the professional course of action. This enlightenment-type charade is utterly negligent in its critique, a negligence that disavows the possibility of a thought of outside, a nonplace called the Undercommons — the nonplace that must be thought outside to be sensed inside, from whom the enlightenment-type charade has stolen everything for its game.

But if the critical academic is merely a professional, why spend so much time on him? Why not just steal his books one morning and give them to deregistered students in a closed-down and beery student bar, where the seminar on burrowing and borrowing takes place. Yet we must speak of these critical academics because negligence it turns out is a major crime of state.

Incarceration Is the Privatization of the Social Individual through War

If one were to insist the opposite of professionalization is that fugitive impulse to rely on the Undercommons for protection, to rely on the honor, and to insist on the honor of the fugitive community; if one were to insist the opposite of professionalization is that criminal impulse to steal from professions, from the university, with neither apologies nor malice, to steal the Enlightenment for others, to steal oneself with a certain blue music, a certain tragic optimism, to steal away with mass intellectuality; if one were to do this, would this not be to place criminality and negligence against each other? Would it not place professionalization, would it not place the university, against honor? And what then could be said for criminality?

Perhaps then it needs to be said that the crack dealer, terrorist, and political prisoner share a commitment to war, and society responds in kind with wars on crime, terror, drugs, communism. But "this war on the commitment to war" crusades as a war against the asocial, that is, those who live "without a concern for sociality." Yet it cannot be such a thing. After all, it is professionalization itself that is devoted to the asocial, the university itself that reproduces the knowledge of how to neglect sociality in its very concern for what it calls asociality. No, this war against the commitment to war responds to this commitment to war as the threat that it is — not mere negligence or careless destruction but a commitment against the idea of society itself, that is, against what Foucault called the Conquest, the unspoken war that founded, and with the force of law, refounds society. Not asocial but against social, this is the commitment to war, and this is what disturbs and at the same time forms the Undercommons against the university.

Is this not the way to understand incarceration in the United States today? And understanding it, can we not say that it is precisely the fear that the criminal will arise to challenge the negligent that leads to the need in the context of the American state and its particularly violent *Universitas* circle to concentrate always on Conquest denial?

The University Is the Site of the Social Reproduction of Conquest Denial

Here one comes face to face with the roots of professional and critical commitment to negligence, to the depths of the impulse to deny the thought of the internal outside among critical intellectuals, and the necessity for professionals to question without question. Whatever else they do, critical intellectuals who have found space in the university are always already performing the denial of the new society when they deny the Undercommons, when they find that space on the surface of the university, and when they join the Conquest denial by improving that space. Before they criticize the aesthetic and the Aesthetic, the state and the State, history and History, they have already practiced the operation of denying what makes these categories possible in the underlabor of their social being as critical academics.

The slogan on the Left, then, universities, not jails, marks a choice that may not be possible. In other words, perhaps more universities promote more jails. Perhaps it is necessary finally to see that the university contains incarceration as the product of its negligence. Perhaps there is another relation between the University and the Prison—beyond simple opposition or family resemblance—that the Undercommons reserves as the object and inhabitation of another abolitionism.

What might appear as the professionalization of the American university, our starting point, now might better be understood as a certain intensification of method in the *Universitas*, a tightening of the circle. Professionalization cannot take over the American university — it is the critical approach of the university, its *Universitas*. And indeed, it appears now that this state with its peculiar violent hegemony must deny what Foucault called in his 1975–76 lectures, the race war.

War on the commitment to war breaks open the memory of the Conquest. The new American studies should do this, too, if it is to be not just a people's history of the same country but movement against the possibility of a country, or any other; not just property justly distributed on the border but property unknown. And there are other spaces situated between the *Universitas* and the Undercommons, spaces that are characterized precisely by not having space. Thus the fire aimed at black studies by everyone from William Bennett to Henry Louis Gates Jr., and the proliferation of Centers without affiliation to the memory of the Conquest, to its living guardianship, to the protection of its honor, to the nights of labor, in the Undercommons.

The university, then, is not the opposite of the prison, since they are both involved in their way with the reduction and command of the social individual. And indeed, under the circumstances, more universities and fewer prisons would, it has to be concluded, mean the memory of the war was being further lost, and living unconquered, conquered labor abandoned to its lowdown fate. Instead, the Undercommons takes the prison as a secret about the Conquest, but a secret, as Sara Ahmed says, whose growing secrecy is its power, its ability to keep a distance between it and its revelation, a secret that calls into being the prophetic, a secret held in common, organized as secret, calling into being the prophetic organization.

The Undercommons of the University Is a Nonplace of Abolition

Ruth Wilson Gilmore: "Racism is the state-sanctioned and/or extra-legal production and exploitation of group differentiated vulnerabilities to premature (social, civil and/or corporeal) death" (Gilmore 2003). What is the difference between this and slavery? What is, so to speak, the object of abolition?

Not so much the abolition of prisons but the abolition of a society that could have prisons, that could have slavery, that could have the wage, and therefore not abolition as the elimination of anything but abolition as the founding of a new society. The object of abolition then would have a resemblance to communism that would be, to return to Spivak, uncanny.

The uncanny that disturbs the critical going on above it, the professional going on without it, the uncanny that one can sense in prophecy, the strangely known moment, the gathering content, of a cadence, and the uncanny that one can sense in cooperation, the secret once called solidarity. The uncanny feeling we are left with is that something else is there in the Undercommons. It is the prophetic organization that works for the red and black abolition!

This article is dedicated to our mentor,
Martin L. Kilson.

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ANA VUJANOVIĆ

(CULTURAL) WORKERS GONE POLITICAL

This article presents a brief discussion on contemporary artists as citizens. It will examine the public life, and the political activity in particular (*vita activa*), of the critical cultural worker in neoliberal capitalist society. Here, a critical cultural worker — theoretician, artist, curator, journal editor, cultural producer, etc. — means the one who wants and tries to be political,[1] hence the cultural worker gone political. The purpose of the article is to unpack, through discussing the dubious politicality of the critical cultural worker, a tension between the work and the politics in today's society, and to propose a few thoughts on what the politics today could be and what it would look like, once we recognize its classical definition as being socially and historically inadequate.

In the numerous debates I have heard on contemporary cultural-artistic scenes in Belgrade and throughout Europe over the last 15 years, as well as in *The University and the Undercommons* by Stefano Harney and Fred Moten[2], there is the following opposition: the subversive intellectual versus the critical academic. According to Harney and Moten, the subversive intellectual disappears into the "undercommons of enlightenment", and is called un-collegial, impractical, naïve, unprofessional, and passionate. What we have in the opposite camp is the academic, a notion signifying two figures: critical academic and professional academic. The critical academic as characterised by scepticism and an "enlightenment type of critique" is in seeming opposition to the professional academic, who is characterised by competence and preservation of objects, status quo, or by what the authors name a "site-specific ethics". But in fact, after Harney and Moten, "critical education only attempts to perfect professional education." (Harney and Moten, 2013, p. 32) Accordingly, in the end, critical academics are the professionals par excellence. Harney and Moten ask, "To distance oneself professionally through critique, is this not the most active consent to privatise the social individual?". (Ibid., p. 38) Since their answer to this intriguing question is positive, it follows that the critical academic and the professional academic equally belong to the notion of the academic, as opposed to subversive intellectual. The subversive intellectual is not (necessarily) an extra-institutional figure; nevertheless, while existing in the underground of the institution, she does not operate on its public stage, where the commons is discussed and shared. That is what topologically distinguishes the subversive intellectual from the critical academic, who could have been close to her on the basis of her socio-political claims, concerns, standpoints, etc. From a broader perspective, the same two notions — critical academic and subversive intellectual — could be transposed to the grassroots / bottom-up / DIY activist versus the NGO activist, to the subversive cultural producer on the self-organized independent scene versus the critical curator employed in a Kunsthalle, or even to the leftist aRtivist versus the professional critical artist. The demarcation line that Harney and Moten draw operates to an extent in all these cases: The subversive intellectual is unprofessional, passionate and disloyal, constantly challenging the limits of preexisting frameworks, while the critical academic is competent, professional, and at the end of the day loyal to the institution. It may seem somewhat schematic, but for the moment I would comply with this differentiation, since I myself have played both "social roles"[3] and faced the circumstances and challenges that this vocabulary somewhat schematically signifies.

In this brief paper I decided to focus firstly on the critical academic, trying to shake the opposition between her and the subversive intellectual, and thereby introduce the betwixt and between figure of the cultural worker (gone political). Indicating points of intersection between the two roles, I will first draw on a dialectical approach regarding the social community as a contradictory agency that is defined by being united in its sharing the common (comm-unity, Lat. *comm-unitas* (from Lat.: *communis* and *unitas*))[4] and, at the same time, being linked by a lack and debt in sharing obligation and duty (com-munity, Lat.

1 To be political here means to take part in the public sphere, thereby contributing to the organisation of the society she lives in; in a nutshell, to be active beyond her own private "business" (interests, profit, or benefit).

2 Harney, Stefano and Moten, Fred. *The Undercommons*, New York: Minor Compositions, 2013, pp. 22-44.

3 Most of my life I have been a freelance cultural worker — writer, dramaturge, lecturer, journal editor, program coordinator, etc. — on the independent cultural-artistic scene in Belgrade as well as in other European contexts. At the same time I have lectured at several universities and collaborated with various state- or city theater houses, galleries, and cultural centers. Currently, I also work as an international visiting professor at the Performance studies department of the University Hamburg.

4 This is primarily Victor Turner's understanding of the notion of *communitas*. See especially; Turner, Victor "Liminality and Communitas," in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1969, pp. 95-131.

com-munitas (from Lat.: *com-* and *munus*))[5] Secondly, I would like to offer a sketch for unpacking the tensions between work (labor) and politics, and thereby between the worker and the citizen in our neoliberal capitalist and democratic society.

I hope that the following examination of the critical academic will outline the rationale of a wider gesture, which will not be fully developed within the scope of the present article. I find it a proper point of departure, taking into account the context of the debate (University of Giessen) and the profile of the majority of the participants (scholars and artists), myself included. So let's start with ourselves, in an old-school Marxist self-critical manner.

In my view, it would be a hasty resolution to simply disqualify the critical academic from the debate on politics today by stating that she is just preserving the socio-political status quo by her critical practice, which sustains capitalist knowledge production and state ideology. I would rather see her as a contradictory figure whose paradoxical *vita activa* points to the core of the bond between work and politics in today's neoliberal society.

First of all, let me return to the similarities and differences between the critical and the professional academic. In spite of the important structural similarities between them that were explained above, I want to stress that the critical academic is not just an "academic"; she is the academic who does not want to be reduced to a professional (a highly-valued craftsman, a skillful producer of knowledge, a bookworm in a research center), and who opts instead for making waves — for having a voice in the public sphere, for practicing *parrhesia*, for examining her citizenship, and for influencing political decisions. That is what differentiates her from fellows who (just) try to get as many research grants as possible, to invest as little energy into teaching as possible, to take as high a position in the university hierarchy as possible, to publish as many books with the most highly ranked publishers as they can, etc. In a word, the critical academic doesn't accept being an "idiot" (in strict terms) *just because* she is a professional.

Still, her politicality is always in question, exactly because of her structural place in the academy. How is a critical academic political today? How can she be political? How much is she political? How much are her (or our) critical talks, artworks, conferences, and books political? And how much are they not? These questions are recurrently raised by another sort of fellow — the one from the subversive intellectual camp. It seems that the critical academic with all her criticism and politicality is, in the last instance, opportunistic, walking hand in hand with neoliberal capitalist society and feeding its knowledge production machinery. This is partially true, and we cannot but acknowledge it. Moreover, we *have* to acknowledge it, and take that problem as a point of departure in understanding her politicality. However, this point could be a dead end, and it usually really shuts the mouth of the critical academic, if she is sincere in her criticality, politicality, and declared ideas. In the art world, an illustrative example of this contradictory position of a critical academic can be found in the numerous contemporary dance works that deal critically with either the structure of the contemporary dance institution or the relations between the First World and the rest of the world, the EU and the rest of Europe, etc., while at the same time touring throughout the EU, supported by those dance institutions.

If all this is not just about hypocrisy, then how should we understand this contradiction? And why do I still hesitate to disqualify the critical academic from consideration? Definitely not only because I am one of them. I want to keep her involved in order to register that the main problem here is that in today's capitalist democracy, the critical academic — like professional theorists, artists, curators, cultural activists, etc. whose work and practice are critical — tries to practice politics as a citizen in an ancient Greek sense while at the same time, in that sense, materially having the status of the slave. That is, they do not have private property, and have to work; in a word, they are the precariat. Let me unpack that bombastic comparison. The doubts about a cultural worker's political practice, in my view, come from an understanding of politics or citizenship practice in a broader sense, which refers to the ancient Greek democracy, or its ideal image. In Athens, as we know from political history, only citizens were politically active. In order to do so they were free in two senses: they expressed their freedom of speech, and were free of private material concerns. Interestingly enough, these two freedoms are firmly bound together: in order to speak freely and act politically for the sake of the polis, one should be free from labor, economy, and thus private interests. However, to be free from labor practically meant — to have slaves who run the household,

5 This is Roberto Esposito's understanding of the notion and its etymology, developed in: Esposito, Roberto, *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community,* Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010. See also how I developed Esposito's view in parallel and in juxtaposition with Turner's in: "Chapter 5: Social drama", in Bojana Cvejić and Ana Vujanović, *Public Sphere by Performance*, Berlin – Paris: b_books – Les laboratoires d'Aubervilliers, 2012, pp. 77-97, and especially in Ana Vujanović, "Performing Ideology: Communitas and immunitas in today's neoliberal democratic society", in: Rojo,Victoria Perez, de Naveran, Isabel (ed.), *There is no other poetry than action*, Madrid: Artea, forthcoming (2014)

business and production, which also provided citizens with free time to deal with a disinterested political life.[6]

However, a number of critical theorisations of politics have noted a profound change, even the disappearance of politics in this classical sense, due to the establishment of capitalist social and production relations, which legitimise private interests and private property as publicly relevant. Among many voices I would mention here only Hannah Arendt, not because I completely agree with her[7] but because her view is especially intriguing in regard to the dubious political life of a critical cultural worker today. According to her,[8] in modern capitalist society, starting with the French Revolution, politics as a specific and distinct social practice has increasingly taken an interest in "social issues", whereby it legitimated the entrance of private interests and the distribution of goods into the public sphere. For Arendt, that socialisation of politics and its approximating economics led to an instrumentalisation of politics in modern capitalist society and, in the end, its demise.

This could sound like a quasi-puritan view, which to an extent romanticizes Athenian democracy. However, there is something completely unromantic to be learnt here. I, for instance, as a precarious critical cultural worker, am at the same time a professional who earns her living by practicing critical theory and art, and want to be a citizen who actively takes part in the public sphere and practice politics by the same theory, art, and related cultural activities. This is where the clash between the slave and the citizen reappears. Hannah Arendt explained that condition in historical terms, however without paying enough attention to its paradoxical nature and the problems it raised:

> The chief difference between slave labor and modern, free labor is not that the laborer possesses personal freedom—freedom of movement, economic activity, and personal inviolability—but that he is admitted to the political realm and fully emancipated as a citizen. The turning point in the history of labor came with the abolition of property qualifications for the right to vote. (Arendt, 1998, p. 217)

But is it so? In other words, shouldn't the full emancipation of former slaves into citizens in the shape of workers lead to a profound change of politics itself? This has never really happened. This is precisely due to the understanding of politics as a disinterested public practice of free citizens, which has become a common sense, and we *cultural workers gone political* have to pay the toll: we are never political enough, since our critical, alternative, radical, subversive proposals, books, talks, actions, artworks, etc. are seen as always-already part of the dirty capitalist state machinery of knowledge production at the university, or even on the independent art scene that to an extent depends on public funds, international art and culture foundations, sponsorship, etc. The recurrent leftist argument against the cultural-artistic field and the NGO sector is this: You get money for the actions you carry out from international foundations, sponsors, and other big capitalist players. Insofar as you take that money, you are no longer politically clean, and in fact you work for the benefit of the machinery.[9]

So I want to point out that the university itself or the critical academic herself is not a unique problem. They should be seen within a wider figure of the cultural worker (gone political), where they are rather a symptom of a systematic problem of how to be political while working, when it is clear that our work is not free from serving the system we criticize, dispute, or protest against. That's what Harney and Moton clearly notice. However, their alternative — the "undercommons" — does not seem convincing to me, since from my view, to the opposition: either you will take part in the system and thereby get dirty hands (CA position), or you will go into its underground, where you are clean (SI position), an appendix should be added to SI position: yet invisible and cannot effectuate a wider sociopolitical change. Therefore, one should be more cautious and precise here. Contemporary theory for instance, has always had a paradoxical position in society. Even though it took to the streets in the late 60s, and has here and there pierced through mass media in the figure of the public intellectual, it has been always firmly tied to the university, as the main source of theory and the main place where it has been practiced. Thus, it constitutively belongs to an institution, a social and socially assigned institution whose function is both to preserve the social values and to project other possibilities of living and thinking the social. Nevertheless, this ambivalence shouldn't be the final

6 I would like to stress that I am aware that Greek slaves and other non-citizens were not necessarily poorer than citizens, yet they participated only in the domain of the private. As I said, the main criterion of political practice in democratic Athens was personal or private disinterest, which is the reason why only free citizens, whose decisions were not influenced by private interests, took part in politics.

7 I would agree more with Marx, and to an extent with Jacques Rancière, when they explain the importance of the question of labor and production and its investment into political life, moreover its foundational role in politics. I will return to that question in a while.

8 Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, and *On Revolution*, New York: The Viking Press, 1963.

9 The other problem is how and when to deal politically with the public issues on top of all the work we have to do on daily basis, though the work is to write and talk about culture, politics, and related public issues. This, however, opens a new broad topic and needs to be discussed in some other article.

deadlock. That kind of fatalistic (self-)criticism could even be seen as an alibi that paralyses critical practice and neglects those that already exist, though on the scales more modest than the world revolution. Of course, a remarkable part of all activity is always-already commodified. Yet, if a critical academic takes a contextual approach to her practice on the one hand and — because it is her own context — embodies her matters of concern on the other, she could still make an ordinary academic, lecturing or writing a platform where the narratives of the actual society can be discussed and confronted with those of what the society could or might be.

If all this sounds insufficient, I will turn the analytical screw once again. Politics in its pure democratic sense—factual or imaginary—is allegedly a social meta-activity. It is a privilege of a freeman who has already resolved the material trivialities of life, a privilege I am not granted. On the contrary, I and we, cultural workers gone political, are precarious, do not possess material infrastructure and have to work. So if we won't opt for enslaving others to free ourselves, we have to fight for our practice of politics as the precarious. I propose this course of action instead of purist (self-)criticism toward the dubious politicality of critical academics or cultural workers since it is a fight for legitimising workers' politics in the context where most of the citizens are workers themselves. True, our hands are always-already dirty, but if we recognize this basic paradox we could stop dreaming about a pure politics that deals with a common world, and could perhaps see that our paradox is one of the main socio-political problems of today. That is, workers who own only their labor are never free enough to act disinterestedly in the public sphere; they always act for the sake of a more just distribution of (surplus) value they produce and a more open public sphere, where voices coming from *different and various interests* could be heard. Shouldn't then our dirty hands be a political strength and argument, or should they be despised, while we disappear into the realm of the invisible, leaving the public sphere to *only one interest* that then could be seen as disinterestedness, as it was in democratic Greece?[10]

One more argument in favor of that thesis comes from my understanding that our social community is based not (only) on the goods and the commons we share, but rather on the lack, the duty, the debt (*munus*) that keeps us together with all our individual and mass precariousness and lacking goods. In such a society, nothing makes more sense than to take that situation of mass lack, debt, and thus obligation, not as an obstacle or a dubious margin or a deviation of politics, but as the premise of politics and its primary concern.

10 Which never questioned slavery, seen as a private, economic matter.

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GIGI ARGIROPOULOU

PUBLIC FAILURES: MOMENTS OF DISORDER AND THE CONSTANT ATTEMPT TO MAKE THINGS "WORK"

As a response to the call and the structure of the conference (The Public Commons and the Undercommons of Art, Education and Labor) both my presentation in May 2014 and this text attempt to bring together thoughts, encounters, troubling events and considerations in a form of "disorganised study", to borrow the words of Harney and Moten (2013). This kind of study takes place when "we enter the classroom and we don't call it to order" and "we allow the study to continue", as Harney and Moten describe it. Therefore this document remains incomplete - in process - and exists as a thinking through of current debates and presuppositions, relating to thoughts around public/common goods, the production of knowledge, and tactics of anti-capitalist struggles inside and outside of neoliberal institutions. This incomplete and ongoing study will necessarily operate from within my own limits, understanding, and involvement as a theorist of performance and as an artist that finds herself (under the current situation) involved in actions widely characterized as activism. I will refer to specific utterances and events as points of departure in order to move beyond these specificities toward a further consideration of these debates.

In conditions of neoliberal capitalism, the rhetoric surrounding the role of the state is that it is limited to preserving an institutional framework that supports private interest. At the same time, certain narratives often use and emphasize "failures" of the state in relation to public goods (art, education, healthcare) while, at the same time, these public goods appear to be in competition with one another. Florian Schneider argues that: "The problem is not just that of the inherent difficulty of assessing how critical the situation is, it is that we have reached an impasse, a failure to generate counter-concepts that could characterize a different proposal, an alternative to the existing order" (2010: [online]).

In recent years counter-concerts and counter-practices have emerged across various diverse locations in an attempt to offer alternatives to the dominant order, consisting of self-organised spaces and educational structures, alternative economies/networks and more. How do we begin to understand, critique and evaluate such attempts and their relation to the dominant structures? Can we evaluate the operations and discontinuities of such practices within the dominant models of effectiveness/functionality? When do things "work" and when do they fail to "work"? What makes the distinction between the two visible? In the remainder of this text, I engage with micro-practices and moments of disorder in an attempt to open up and exercise readings of failure.

We are taught to make things "work", both for ourselves and for others. Deleuze notes that in control societies, one never finishes anything as "school is replaced by continuing education and exams by continuous assessment" (Deleuze 1995, 179). During this ongoing process, most of us often engage in making things "work". At school. At work. At home. But what happens when things fail to work? When machines, structures, and networks fail to perform the "expected or required action"? Can these micro-failures operate as a practice of revealing that which is unseen, unsaid, and which could be otherwise? How can these micro-failures, misperformances and moments of disorder allow different conceptions and actions of *otherwise* to manifest through and beyond the specifics of the events and spaces we find ourselves in?

1.

In the summer of 2013, at one of the panels during PSi 19 at Stanford University, Jose Esteban Muñoz, Fred Moten, and Karen Shimakawa presented papers under the title *The Capaciousness of the Tight Spaces: Performances of Race, Place and Time*. The panel was situated in a very small room full of people. We were crammed in with many others, struggling to hear from an open door. Moten was present via Skype. He opened with two extremely long epigraphs from the "Grundrisse" about the commune. Partway through the second epigraph, his connection went out. The panel changed order and Muñoz delivered his paper. Once the connection was re-established, Moten attempted to start reading his paper again from the beginning. The connection failed twice more and the energy in the packed room was low. Then, Moten said "fuck it", and proceeded to talk spontaneously about the state of the university, knowledge production, and the need to inhabit the spaces we want to blow up: "To think together

in these uncomfortable spaces, to figure out ways to escape the spaces we are relegated to".

My thoughts, the words of Moten and my own written notes merge as I look back. It's about coming together, not being together. About commonality, not unity. The activities and spaces we occupy. The spaces we desire to inhabit. How do we begin to think together in order to get out of the spaces they relegate us to? How do we blow up these spaces in a different way, (so that we can see the earth at the end of the world, at the end of mankind) in order to inhabit it differently? What does it mean to be in a space?

The failure of technology, of spatial arrangement, and of communication (within the conference format) leads to a moment of disorder, when things don't work as normal and other possibilities manifest. As the conference structure failed to work, other "workings" opened up in the tight place that we were relegated to, causing us to question our position within these spaces and structures.

A few months later, in another space – a large amphitheater this time in Athens – Giorgio Agamben gave a public lecture entitled "For a theory of destituent power" (2013). He noted that it is urgent to rethink our strategies within the current "security" state, and argued that we need to abandon the revolutionary processes that traditionally acted as the constituent power of a new institutional order, in favour of a pure "destituent" power. This "destituent" power, according to Agamben, cannot be captured "in the spiral of security" and carries with it the potential to reveal "the (real) anomy of power". Agamben argued that constituent power only destroys law in order to recreate a new law, and claimed that "a praxis which would succeed in exposing clearly the anarchy and the anomy captured in the security government technologies could act as a purely 'destituent' power".

#2.

A few months later, in February 2014, in a private institution in Athens, an EU presidency conference took place under the title "Financing Creativity". The conference sought to address potential models for cultural policy in the coming decades. In the conference itself not a single artist was invited as a speaker, nor was the conference promoted publicly. The Greek Minister of Culture, Mr. Panos Panagiotopoulos, delivered the opening speech of the EU conference and stated that the sectors of the economy that are non-competitive are today non-sustainable, since Europe has to follow the economies of China and the Middle East. Mavili Collective – a group of artists and performance makers – called for artists and theorists from different fields of practice to attend the conference. The Minister stated: "Due to the cost of labor and a few other reasons Europe is left behind. European countries individually and collectively have to explore, today, alternative processes that are characterised by competitiveness."

Repeated laughter and applause from the audience forced the Minister to stop his speech. "May I continue? May I continue?" the Minister asked, and the laughter and applause eased. A few sentences later, as he claimed that "culture is our national identity and pride", the audience responded again with applause and laughter. The Minister, who had refused any requests for dialogue during recent years, resorted to calling for the audience to accept a structured form of dialogue while attacking audience members, branding them as trade union representatives and syndicalists. "Come on stage, have the bravery of public speech, not with uproar. Don't hide behind the crowd, you who annihilate and eliminate everything. You have no right to expose the country and its public image, you serve the uncontrolled noise". Someone from the audience called out, "It is a political act". "I am the one doing a political act," the Minister responded, "you do the uproar." The audience continued to cheer. "Come here, you ought to come here … let's engage in a dialogue about our country." Yet as soon as a woman stands up to come towards the stage he responds, "Sit down Miss." Then someone from the audience asks: "Can I say something?" with the Minister responding, "You have no right to say anything."

At the outset of the crisis in September 2010, the same group that organised this intervention Mavilli Collective, sent an open letter to the previous Minister of Culture, Mr. Pavlos Geroulanos, counter-signed by over 500 people in arts and education containing a demand for a sustainable cultural policy. Following this, a public conference was organised by the collective where, for the first time, cultural workers, academics and state representatives exchanged views. A year later, on the 11th of November 2011, the collective occupied the disused theatre building of Embros in Athens, which had been deserted and left empty for years by the Greek Ministry of Culture. The same collective that had been involved in civilized dialogue and practices of constituent power had now initiated a disruptive action (a violent action for some), and perhaps even an action of "destituent power".

Theorist Julia Chryssostalis discussed the notion of the "alegal" in a small-scale conference on the *Art of Lawlessness* (2014), which took place in the hallway of a semi-legal building. She argued that alegal acts expose the gap between actual and possible laws, as they put us into contact with law, and force the law into dialogue and re-evaluation. The intervention during the speech of the Minister could be considered as an alegal act, by "questioning order and how rules are formed". This alegal act questioned how things work or ought to work, as the audience actively used its legal "tools" – meaning reactions that are allowed in such contexts, such as applause and laughter. However, the use of these tools manifested in a way which tested the boundaries of what is legal and what is illegal, while making these very boundaries visible. This alegal act left both security staff and the organisers unsure how to react: You are not an audience member? You are not a violent protestor? What are you?

Alegal acts might be considered as moments of disorder that challenge the legality of what works as illegal, and the illegality of what works as legal. Moments such as these could be revealing the true "anomy of power" that Agamben referred to, by becoming moments that open up space for what could be otherwise.

3.

In another space. In a common space. In the occupied Embros theatre. It is a few days before Christmas 2012, and a critical assembly is taking place. Mavili Collective had occupied the disused Embros theatre in 2011, at the outset of the crisis, at a moment when Greece was without a government and repeated strikes and occupations in schools, universities and squares took place. After an initial 12-day program, the collective continued to operate the space as a "counter-proposal". A year later, the state demanded the evacuation of the space as it was proceeding with plans for the privatisation of public assets. Despite repeated attempts to establish dialogue with state representatives from the collective and inhabitants of the area, the Minister of Culture, Mr. Tsavaras, stated, "We are informed, we will apply legality". Despite repeated threats, the collective refused to handover the keys of the theatre and made a call for collectives, groups and political parties to support the space and oppose the police.

This collective opposition succeeded in keeping the space open and led to a change in its mode of organization, as it started to organise and run a weekly open assembly. In this space, outside of capital and neoliberal policies, cultural workers, theorists, and anarchists co-existed and struggled to find a common ground. Disputes emerged over which practices were democratic or non-democratic, as contradictory left-wing ideologies and practices were in play. Certain methods were "approved" as "democratic" and all attempts for alternative or hybrid forms struggled to find any legitimacy. The assembly held just before Christmas 2012 was particularly contested. It lasted over ten hours and any form of consensus seemed impossible. Political speeches followed one another, yet no coming together was achieved. Speakers ranged from young, seemingly apolitical participants to cultural workers and established art theorists, to unemployed workers, politicized left-wing party members and anarchist leaders. The multiple agendas and established practices of anti-capitalist struggles from different fields co-existed, while antagonism and violence became more entrenched, as a painful exercise in social pedagogy.

In a lecture available online under the title *On Continuity and Leadership* (2013), Michael Hardt discusses various political movements of recent years and addresses discontinuous practices and events across multiple locations. He states that the first move is to step back and examine what people are doing. Hardt argues that events across dispersed locations on the one hand seek to rupture the established ways of doing, while on the other hand often repeating established practices – "institutions" as he calls them. He concludes that we need to challenge established practices and "institutions", therefore establishing new institutions by reinventing established practices.

Alternative spaces constitute new ecologies, often challenging established practices and situating themselves critically in relation to the dominant order as counter-proposals. However, in these alternative spaces, the challenges do not only come from the established dominant order and institutional framework but also from repeated/established social practices that constitute the institutions inside such spaces. As Avery Gordon notes: "Power relations […] are never as clear as the names we give to them imply […] we can and must call it by recognisable names, but we need to remember that power arrives in forms that range from blatant white supremacy and state terror to 'furniture without memories'" (Gordon 2008, 3).

And Counting…

As we travel through different spaces, lecture rooms, government conferences and occupied theatres, such

"workings" of power and our failings to make things "work" perhaps bear the potential to constitute an ephemeral method: a practice of negotiation situated between constrains and desires, expectations and impotential means.

As public structures fail under the pressure of private interest and public institutions decline, other emergent alternative public forms have their own failings. Throughout the passages above, I attempted to open up the diversities and potentialities of these fallings and "un-workings". I tried to .to observe public failings as methods, and to embrace failing as a form of response and a mode of critical apprehension. My study ranges from public failures that produce new possibilities, and ephemerally open up the gap between the actual and the possible inside of spaces and structures to public failures that expose the anomy of power and the impossibility of commonality.

While going back to these rooms, spaces, thoughts and actions, I am wondering about acts that exist between constituent and "destituent" power, between "working" and "un-working" in a precarious negotiation. These are alegal acts that can perhaps disrupt the current order and reveal the anomy of power, yet also point towards different modes of being within new spaces and structures. They are also "destituent" actions and practices that constitute a form of "disorganised study", a form of study that embraces disorder and continues, immersed in a process that remains incomplete. Fragmented, "destituent", alegal moments which fail, yet continue. As collective practices of knowledge. In spaces. Together with others.

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JASON READ

THE INDIVIDUATION OF THE COMMON

The current historical moment can be described as the predominance of the individual over the collective. The individual reigns supreme in politics, as an ethic of individual rights and freedoms displaces any project of collective liberation. In economics this is even more the case, as the utility maximising individual of neoliberal economics trumps not only any other idea of economic relations, but subsumes all social relations. Traditions and institutions have been stripped bare, revealing the calculating, self-interested individual that always lurked underneath. Individual self-interest has become the template through which all actions can be interpreted. The political and economic assertion of the individual is completed by a cultural ideal of complete and utter self-expression and independence. To deny this dominance, to assert that there might be other forces at work politically, other causes to be considered economically, and other values to aspire to ethically or culturally, is to be branded as a collectivist, to be burdened with the ghost of the past century's crimes and catastrophes. The individual has become not only the basis of political, cultural, and economic understanding, but the extent of all of our aspirations; it is simultaneously all one needs to make sense of the world and the best that one could hope from it.

That we live in an "age of individualism" perhaps goes without saying. However, such a judgment raises as many questions as it answers. At what level are we to locate the individual? Is it, to borrow words from Foucault, an "illusion," an "ideological effect," or is it a real functioning element of society? In short, are people deluded into seeing themselves as individuals, or is individuation a material effect of practices? Much of the contemporary valorisation of the multitude, and with it the cooperative dimension of labor has stressed that the individuation can only be a distortion of the actually existing collective conditions of production. As Antonio Negri writes with respect to neoliberalism: "The only problem is that extreme liberalisation of the economy reveals its opposite, namely that the social and productive environment is not made up of atomised individuals...the real environment is made up of collective individuals" (Negri 1989, 209).

In a related manner other theorists in the post-autonomist tradition, such as Paolo Virno, have stressed that contemporary production, with its emphasis on intellectual labor, cooperation, and the production of social relations, has made the social individual, and not the individual, the contemporary laboring subject. Against this tendency we have post-Foucauldian critiques of neoliberalism, which argue that far from being an ideological illusion, neoliberalism is an effective production of subjectivity.

Neoliberalism functions as a set of institutional and political transformations that compels people to adopt its worldview. The parents sending their children to a charter school in place of underfunded public schools, or the college student trying to figure out the best major to go into debt to study, may not believe in the ideal of competitive individuals or market relations as the ideal model of social relations, but they are compelled to act as if they do just to survive. Neoliberal theory declares that everyone is an isolated individual, maximising self-interest, while neoliberal practice, the constitution of market based solutions for everything from education to the environment, works to actively produce this tendency, destroying the possibility and desire to act in any collective manner.

There is thus a strong opposition between those who claim that the individual is nothing but the ideological representation of a society that increasingly puts to work the collective intelligence of society, and those who claim the contemporary society has destroyed any collective sense of belonging or action in favor of an increasingly isolated or individual subject. If one of these statements is true the other must be false. A passage in *The Grundrisse* offers a way out, if not a dialectical overcoming, of such an opposition. In the passage Karl Marx takes on the tendency within classical, or bourgeois, political economy to take as its starting point the isolated and independent individual. At first his critique would seem to stress the familiar theme of historicisation, arguing that what the economist takes as a "history's point of departure" must instead be seen as a "historic result" (Marx, 1973, 83). The isolated individual of the Robinsonades is, like the novel that it takes its name from, a product of the historical dissolution of feudalism in the eighteenth century. To take the individual as a product rather than the origin of history does not mean simply dismissing it as a fiction, but comprehending it as a condition and effect of history. As Marx writes:

> Only in the eighteenth century, in 'civil society', do the various forms of social connectedness confront the individual as a mere means towards his private purposes,

> as external necessity. But the epoch which produces this standpoint, that of the isolated individual, is also precisely that of the hitherto most developed social (from this standpoint, general) relations. The human being is in the most literal sense a 'political animal' not merely a gregarious animal, but an animal which can individuate itself only in the midst of society. Production by an isolated individual outside of society...is as much of an absurdity as is the development of language without individuals living together and talking to each other (Marx 1973, 84)

This passage adds several elements to the argument regarding the historical conditions of the individual. First, it situates these conditions within a contradiction: the individual is a historical product not because society has become more fragmented and isolated, individuals more independent, but precisely because of any increase and development of social relations. The more that society is connected, related, the more that relation appears as isolation. This contradiction perhaps sounds more like a paradox: how can development lead to isolation, connection to fragmentation? Second, Marx supplements his historical argument with something that, depending on how one wanted to read it, could be considered a philosophical anthropology or ontology. Drawing from Aristotle's famous definition of man as a political animal, Marx turns not to the polis as a necessary condition of human existence, but to the fact that individuation can only take place in the midst of society. Politics, or society, is not only a necessary condition for individual existence, securing and protecting humanity from dangers it is not prepared to face as a collection of individuals, but for individuation as well. It is only through politics, through society, that anything like individuation is possible. Marx underscores this fact through his reference to language, which is the collective condition for individual expression and articulation. Individuation is not opposed to society, but only develops through it. One does not need a desert island to become an individual, but, on the contrary, an entire city.[1]

The word that suggests itself in describing this concept of an individuation that passes through social relations, rather than in opposition to them, is transindividual. The term transindividual is drawn from the work of Gilbert Simondon, and can be briefly defined as resting on two postulates. The first is that individuation is a process not a principle. Rather than seeing everything as always already individuated, individuation has to understood as a process. The building blocks of this process are not individuals, some basic building blocks or atoms of reality, but relations that exist in a metastable state. The things that individuate us, our ways of speaking, habits, comportments, are made up not so much of individual things, but of differential relations. This brings us to the second presupposition: the relation between individuation and the collective is less a zero sum game, in which individuation is always at the expense of collectivity and collective cohesion can only be a suppression of individuation, rather than a relation of mutual individuation—a transindividual relation. As much as Simondon's philosophy can be read as the ontological articulation, the ontogenesis, of Marx's formulation of an individual individuated in and through society, his ontology lacks the second component, that of the paradoxical isolation through relation that defines capitalist individuation for Marx.

Marx's assertion of the production of individuation is not just limited to one assertion in a text posthumously published. It is a problem that runs through Marx's writings, not just in the famous critiques of bourgeois self-interest that characterizes the early political writings, or the assertion of the ontology of species being that characterize the early texts on capital. Throughout Marx's mature writing it is possible to grasp not just a continuation of the critique of the individual or bourgeois society, or a development of an ontology of species being, but an articulation of their intersection. Marx critiques capital as both a constitution of an isolated individual of "freedom, equality, and Bentham" through the sphere of exchange, as well as a mode of production that increasingly relies on the combined powers of the species through the organization of cooperative production. The spheres of exchange and production are different "relations of individuation"; in the former individuals confront each other as isolated individuals on the market, confronting the labor of others only in and through the fetishised commodities, while in the latter individuals have their collective capacities put to work by capital.[2]

1 Marx's idea of the individuation through social relations has an odd precursor in Descartes. In the *Discourse on Method*, Descartes reflects on his urban social conditions as a combination of individuation and socialization. As Descartes writes, 'I have been able to live as solitary and as retired a life as I could in the remotest deserts—but without lacking any of the amenities that are to be found in the most populous cities.' (Descartes 1988, p. 18.)

2 Marx suggests a connection between the commodity, as an object, and a particular mode of subjectification in the famous section in *Capital* on commodification, when he writes: "The religious world is but the reflex of the real world. And for a society based upon the production of commodities, in which the producers in general enter into social relations with one another by treating their products as commodities and values, whereby they reduce their individual private labour to the standard of homogeneous human labour – for such a society, Christianity with its cultus of abstract man, more especially in its bourgeois developments, Protestantism, Deism, etc., is the most fitting form of religion." (Marx 1977, 172)

Neither of these can be considered according to a moral spectrum of good or bad. It is not a matter of opposing a good collectivism to a bad individualism. As much as capital puts to work collective powers, it does so not only for capital, exploiting the maximum of profits, but under the rule of capital. As Marx reminds us, the collective power of workers increasingly appears to be the work of capital itself, as the productive power of cooperation disappears in the captivating image of capital producing capital. Capitalist cooperation cannot be understood to be a prefiguration of a communist future. It is too rigidly defined by discipline and caught in a constitutive misrecognition, where its collective energy appears to be the energy of capital. Conversely, the bourgeois individual is not simply to be obliterated in some kind of collective belonging. Or rather, what has to be obliterated is precisely its bourgeois character, the isolation that confines it to "freedom, equality, and Bentham." Rather than simply affirm cooperation in its capitalist form, or destroy individuality in its bourgeois form, both must be overcome, even sublated in order to constitute the social individual, an individuation that is produced in and through its relations. The social individual could in some sense be understood as the goal. Meanwhile in the present, the question remains as how to think the articulation of the two different, and contradictory individuations, that of consumption which reproduces mankind as isolated and fragmentary, and that of production, which increasingly draws on collective relations and potentials.

With respect to the former, it is necessary to think through the production of the individual in the relations and products of contemporary capitalism. The first of these, as Marx noted, is the commodity form itself. The commodity appears to us not as the product of social labor, but as an isolated thing, which possesses value as its intrinsic property. The act of market exchange reproduces the independence and isolation of not only the commodity, but also the individuals that exchange them. Just as the commodity appears as a thing, the value of which is an intrinsic property rather than a product of the relations of production, the individual, the bourgeois individual, appears as something that exists apart from, and prior to, its existing relations (Stiegler 2006, 327). The capitalist mode of production not only fetishises commodities, but also produces the individual as a fetish. While Marx's theory of commodity form demonstrates how a particular social form produces a particular mode of individuation, it remains at the level of form, failing to take into consideration the technological, cultural, and political transformations of contemporary capitalism. Bernard Stiegler has offered an update of the problem of individuation of contemporary capitalism by turning to the way in which the commodities of the culture industry, films, music, and television, reshape and structure individuation. The fundamental difference between Marx and Stiegler on this point is that Marx primarily considers the object and subject formally based on the social relations, connecting the form of the commodity, the fetish, with the form of an abstract individuality; Stiegler, on the other hand, considers the object in question not just in terms of its formal characteristics or general relations, but its mode of engaging with memory understood as the fundamental basis of individuation. Stiegler charts a fundamental transformation of the conditions of individuation from the tool or even the book, which is defined by the material capacity for individuating oneself differently, and the cultural commodities of films and music. This distinction is predicated on a fundamental revision of Simondon's idea of the preindividual. For Stiegler the preindividual, the basis of individuation is primarily inherited in the form of objects, which are the basis of memory and individuation. The preindividual is not just made up of language, habits, and perceptions that exist as a kind of natural backdrop of the formation of subjectivity, rather these things are themselves the product of a determinate process of transindividuation, a form of culture that in turn is inseparable from its materialization (Stiegler 2009, 48).

We individuate ourselves, or are individuated through the way in which we inherit particular artifacts, particular materialisations of memory. The cultural industry fundamentally transforms the terms of this inheritance. Initially, the inheritance of a tool or even a book is inseparable from learning how to use it, just as reading is inseparable from writing. The commodities of the culture industry fundamentally transform this, they constitute the basis of our memory, displacing the memories that we accumulate while living, but they do not transmit any competence, any capacity to individuate oneself differently, there is only the passive consumption. At the extreme point of this process is nothing less than the destruction of individuation itself. As Stiegler writes:

> To say we live in an individualistic society is a patent lie, an extraordinary false delusion, and, moreover, extraordinary because no one seems conscious of it, as if the efficacy of the lie was proportional to its enormity, and as if the lie was nobody's responsibility. We live in a herd-society, as comprehended and anticipated by Nietzsche. Some think this society individualistic because, at the very highest levels of public and private responsibility, but also in the smallest details of those processes of adoption stamped by marketing and the

> organization of consumption, egotism has been elevated to the pinnacle of life. But individualism has no relation to this egotism. Individualism wants the flourishing of the individual, the being always and indissociably a we and I, an I in a we or a we composed of Is, incarnated by Is. To oppose the individual and the collective is to transform individuation into social atomisation, producing a herd (Stiegler 2009, 48).

For Stiegler there is no individuation without transindividuation, the individual is constituted in relation to collectively inherited traditions and knowledge. It is precisely this, which the contemporary culture industry destroys, reducing the individual to a series of marketable tastes and drives and the collective, the we into a "they" which is at best a statistical totality and at worse a hostile enemy. The sphere of circulation has shifted from "freedom, equality, and Bentham" to "competition, envy, and Bernays."

In sharp contrast to Stiegler, Paolo Virno has argued that the contemporary production process is one that has put to work the transindividual dimension of subjectivity. As with Stiegler, this can be seen as a radicalisation of Marx's assertion that capitalist production puts to work not just the individual capacity to labor but also the collective labor of the species. What Virno stresses, and what justifies the use of the term transindividual, is that the contemporary labor process does not just put to work the combined efforts of different individuals, their cooperative powers, but their very capacity to relate and individuate. As Virno writes, borrowing Marx's phrase, social individual, "social" should be translated as preindividual, and 'individual' should be seen as the ultimate result of the process of individuation" (Virno 2004, 80). This is Virno's understanding of the rise of cooperative and intellectual dimension of post-fordist production. Work that involves communication, language, and affects is work that simultaneously exploits and produces the very conditions for individuation, reproduction and transforming collective and individual existence.

Following Stiegler and Virno's use of Simondon's terminology, we could argue that what defines the present stage of capitalism is the commodification of the preindividual and the exploitation of the transindividual. While the division is rough, it does highlight a particular observation underlying Stiegler and Virno's analysis, that much of what we read, listen to, and watch, the basis of our sensibility, comes to us in commodity form, while our labor is increasingly social, involving not only cooperation with others, but the capacity to relate to others. This assertion repeats and deepens Marx's analysis of the sphere of exchange and the hidden abode of production as two different individuations, two different productions of subjectivity. It is possible to understand Stiegler and Virno as deepening this analysis: now the sphere of exchange, the sphere of consumption, is no longer that of egotistical individuals, but of the destruction of the very conditions for individuation; and the hidden abode of production is no longer simply the place that puts to work mankind's cooperative powers, but the very conditions of collective and individual life. The division is deepened, and passes not between two classes, those that buy and sell on the market and those who have only their labor power to sell, but at the heart of transindividual individuation, subjectivity itself.

While it may be difficult to reconcile these two different perspectives, which together could be considered an intensification of the "schizophrenic" tendency of capitalism, collective at work but disindividuated in consumption, taken together they paint a picture of contemporary capitalism, which can perhaps only be united by what they exclude. Between the commodification of the preindividual and the exploitation of the transindividual there is the destruction of the kind of individuations which have defined contemporary politics, those of the citizen or even the worker, which defined themselves in relation to a stable collective and individual identity. This is not to say that any future politics must only address individuals and collectives as consumers or entrepreneurs, adopting the machinations of marketing or the dismal prospects of libertarianism. However, it does mean that any future politics cannot simply presuppose forms of transindividuation which have been radically transformed, such as citizenship. Instead, any future politics must work in and on the terrain of individuation itself, mobilizing the collective powers of labor against the fragmenting anxieties of consumerism, transforming our collective anxiety and impotence into power.

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GORAN SERGEJ PRISTAŠ

ANTI-PRODUCTION OF ART

Institutional binding of an artist's *praxis*, coupled with accountability for her work, creates a specific ecology, where the artist becomes less and less presented by her artworks, and more by and with her labour, stretching into different social practices and temporalities. The consequence of that is the fact that the artist does not have any time left to actually engage in her art. Or, if we put it differently, the artist does not have any time left whatsoever, because there is none left at their disposal. At least, not with the time as we know it. The artist has an application, a formula, and a regime of abstraction that enfolds her labour and sets it in a relation with the capital, concretising it in a project to which projective time[1] is "the general equivalent".

Above all, the old thesis that performance is ephemeral and volatile and subversive to time no longer applies: time has disappeared into expanding performance. Practices, practical education, dwelling as labour, workshops, laboratories, exchanges of methodology and knowledge, consultations, performance lectures, research, newsletters, diaries, documentation, archives. All of these former forms of production and reflection today shape our ways of performing, dispersing and atomising artistic labour, only to make it seemingly more transparent, organized and useful.

This atomisation of the artist's work is symptomatic for various cultural institutions whose mission is no longer the production of art, but rather the reproduction of consumer relations with a work of art. Art institutions no longer figure as disciplinary instances whose task is to take care of artists and the production of artworks just like the milk industry, whose purpose is not to produce the best, but rather the most wanted yogurt. Contemporary performing arts institutions (including festivals, galleries and museums that present performances and curated conferencing) today no longer produce works of art in order to present them to the public, who then have the opportunity to valorise it; rather, valorisation itself is being reproduced and exchanged. The *curatorial turn* in performing arts, i.e. the appearance of a curator in the new role of artistic director or programmer, intends to result in a particular care for the spectator instead of poetic projection. Several decades of intensive care being paid to spectators, who have passed through various phases, from observers to participants, finally resulted in the shift towards their subjectification. While producers and programmers used to talk about "their artists", curators now talk about "their audience".

Those same institutions, and this is the point where the excessive curator's responsibility comes to light, have the possibility to bind artistic labour as abstraction with the reality and not only exchange value. Instead of abstracting artistic labour, whose use-value is then valorised through service economies (erasing the difference between art and labour), the institution has the opportunity to become her transparent material basis, which is the case with occupied institutions. This would result in unambiguous political and social implications instead of dominantly economic implications of any artistic work to which contemporary institutions tend. While the audience is constantly being educated to expect art to produce other worlds, the artist is confronted with a very particular expectation to fix, or even repair this world. Despite the fact that it is important to keep away from power-paranoia in this context, that small difference that curators have in the distribution of power confronts them with the responsibility to more actively explicate productional and presentational policies, and to elaborate their position more explicitly in terms of the relation with the framework and context of their work. As Derrida put it: "responsibility is excessive or it is not responsibility"[2]. Easy equalisation of the presentational policy inherent to performative arts and deeply problematic market logic of visual arts necessarily leads to productional impoverishment, and a weakening of institutions that are the last guarantee for the survival of artistic production confronted with the neoliberal populist attack. Only by opening doors to the existence of a perspective whose vanishing point doesn't coincide with the end of a process, but which belongs to the other side of time, is there some hope that we will no longer have to meet ourselves, but rather somebody else. That perspective is no longer related to a deferred realization of a project into a future but rather the foundation of an individual practice in the framework of common needs.

The atomisation of labour into practice objects is not so much derived from the need to demystify art creation as it is a symptom of rationalisation, accountability and

1 Kunst, Bojana. *Artist at Work, Proximity of Art and Capitalism*, Winchester, UK, Zero Books 2015

2 Derrida, Jacques. *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992, p. 41

monetisation of artistic labour. The fact that discourse on creation methods (*poiesis*) has been overrun by discourse on artistic work (*praxis*) highlights that economic rationalization took the place that used to belong to poetic clarity.

Having in mind that art no longer functions outside of the institutional and market system, as Stilinović also underlined in his *The Praise of Laziness*[3], neither Duchamp's logic of "non-work" nor Malevich's utopian laziness, today produce the effect of setting artistic work free from purposefulness found outside of the labour. Quite the contrary, as Boris Groys claims, artistic labour has been alienated and utilised as an instrument through institutional production processes - the very processes that allowed Duchamp to break free from material work in the production of art. Post-Duchampian artistic labour has been proletarianised via alienated construction and transportation work, to which I would also add the institutional organisation.[4]

However, at this point we come to an important turnaround: this type of transforming artistic labour into a product can no longer be called "work" or "process". It is rather a social production (or reproduction) of conditions and modes of production, a kind of realism of production relations. Althusser would say that "social production is only apparently the production of things; in reality it is the production of a social relation, i.e., the reproduction of the relations of production."[5] The tendency to reproduce artistic labour as an alternative to the production of artworks, with the (cl)aim to destabilise a fetish of objects, has actually turned into a fetishisation of process where the so-called free, non-alienated artistic work became a usable good, thereby erasing a difference between artistic production (*poiesis*) and reproductions of modes of production. Because they represent processes, art institutions no longer simply separate spheres of circulation, they also produce conditions of production and distribution and references and finally (or, initially), desire and consummation.

This is the point where the final level of the so-called aesthetic revolution manifests itself. According to Ranciere6, the aesthetic revolution has replaced the regime of representation. By abandoning its representative role, institutions have undertaken the role of regulators of the new regime: an aesthetic regime, in which "art is art to the extent that it is something else than art".[7] Institution thus becomes aestheticised institution, operating in the sphere of service economy, and its contemporaneity lies in simultaneous production and consummation.

Institution is then turned into a place where "credit invades art", as Jacques Camatte foresaw in 1977 for Beaubourg.[8] Institution is a place of promise and not production and everything is possible, just like in the world of capital. "When execution is replaced by credit, by a blank check, Art finds itself reduced to derisory size and, at the extreme, disappears. It disappears by becoming almost the opposite idea." [9] An art institution can be an anticipation of politics, society, life, and finally, it can be an anticipation of art. In such institutions the artist is indebted, and he/she knows his/her debt. However, his/her debt no longer belongs to the sphere of creativity, but needs to be verified in something that is its "opposite idea". Artist's labour has to be presented and:

> Art has to be produced from art and artists in a manner amenable to capital. For what matters is to touch the mass of human beings (otherwise there would be no realization of art) who still haven't internalized capital's lifestyle, who are still more or less bound to certain rhythms, practices, superstitions, etc., and who (even if they have taken up the vertigo of capital's rhythm of life) don't necessarily utilize its image, and therefore live a contradiction or jarring, and are constantly exposed to 'future shock'.[10]

Institution must become a factory, but not a factory of works of art or interruptions; it has to be a factory of continuity, labour, and production, or rather anti-production. Production incorporating dislocation, distribution and consummation is nothing new in the world of capitalism; this symptom was defined as early as in Marx's *Grundrisse*[11], whereas Deleuze and Guattari named it anti-production in *Anti-Oedipus*.[12] Interpreted by Stephen

3 Stilinović, Mladen. "Praise To Laziness", in B. Cvejić and G. S. Pristaš (ed.), *Parallel Slalom*, TkH Belgrade and CDU Zagreb 2013. p.335

4 "In fact, contemporary art institutions no longer need an artist as a traditional producer. Rather, today the artist is more often hired for a certain period of time as a worker to realize this or that institutional project." Groys, Boris. *Going Public*. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010.

5 Althusser, Louis and Balibar, Étienne. *Reading Capital*. London: NLB, 1977. pp.318

6 Rancière, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans Gabriel Rockhill, London: Continuum, 2004 or *Dissensus: Politics and Aesthetics*, trans. Steven Corcoran, London: Continuum, 2010, or *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, trans. Steven Corcoran, Cambridge: Polity, 2009.

7 Rancière, Jacques. *The Aesthetic Revolution* NLR 14 pp.137, 2012

8 Camatte, Jacques. "Beaubourg et le cancer du futur," 1977; "Beaubourg: Future Cancer?," *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, Fall/Winter 1997–1998, pp. 52–55

9 Cailloix in Camatte 1977

10 Ibid.

11 Marx, Karl, and McLellan, David. *Grundrisse*. London: Macmillan, 1980.

12 Deleuze, Gilles. Guattari, Félix. Hurley, Robert. Seem, Mark, Lane.

Zepke:

> Anti-production works through all the mechanisms that prevent or recoup creative excess, whether by refusing funding or support, or by rewards that integrate it into the flows of capital. In this sense anti-production is not the opposite of production, but rather supports and develops it. As a result, the greater visibility, prosperity and integration enjoyed by the arts today does not mean they have more creative freedom. Just the opposite. (...) contemporary artistic practice marks a particular low-point in creativity and insurrectionary spirit, not least because 'resistance' is now aggressively marketed as one of art's selling points.[13]

The anti-production model has penetrated deeply into the spheres of art education. Primarily with the Bologna Process, art education embraced the logic of *performance management*, finding an adequate form of anti-production in artistic research. Artistic research is not in fact production, but it implies a presentability that can be academically verified. The aesthetic revolution of academic institutions introduced the concept of education as an experience, and it would be worthwhile to analyse the *curatorial unconscious* of present-day progressive art educations, that presuppose different types of workshops, researches, and a proliferation of methods and methodological articulations. Classical educational models, where students learn about different modes of representation, has been replaced by a parade of experiential art forms and methods. The same parade that had been presented to the audience inside the presentational institution. And while the classical type of education has often resulted in student resistance and the inventions of their own ways of expression, current education is based on the exchange of information, experience, and a consensus, where the critique is in function of maintaining equilibrium. Here I do not intend to suggest a need for going back to the old educational technology, but I believe that the educational system founded in students' desires reproduces the anti-productional model of producing pleasure that is being repeatedly postponed.

Artistic and creative excess, the production of relations that have not been determined *per se*, still invokes differences and breaks the consensus. Especially if it comes from collective processes, that presuppose focusing on the very principles of production and representation apparatus, thus becoming "existential excess, a 'being there' that immediately spins off on multiply affective trajectories that are entirely singular because they depend on the viewing act itself."[14]

Every encounter, as every combination of relations in the process of production of artwork and its presentation, "might not have happened although it has happened."[15] Every encounter is subjected to chance and its outcome is aleatoric, therefore its conditions can be "defined exclusively by *working backward*"[16]. Our field of activity, as artists, is to detect "affinities"[17], that have allowed/might allow this setting to hold on, and which have made it necessary. And that is what theatre investigates during the process: what are the preconditions for and which affinities do the actors of the process have for a particular collaboration, to hold on to different levels of existence – among those taking part in it, in the world of objects, in relation to fiction, in front of the audience, in a repertoire, in history …

Zepke writes:

> (...) it is not actual poetry that is required but a return to 'poetics', an open form of composition by which we can escape ourselves according to a 'logic of sensation', one in which affects multiply and lead towards a singular infinity of virtual possibility. As Nietzsche famously advised, we must become poets of our lives and in this way turn life into art. This, as Bifo rightly argues, is the way in which poetics might reconnect (it means to re-sensitise, to re-politicise) the social body and the general intellect.[18]

Thus, it is worthwhile to open a discussion on various poetics that have been, due to great care paid to the spectator (reception) and a fetishisation of practice, repressed in the backyard of art discourse. My primary artistic interest is poetical in terms of reflection, but also in terms of proposing procedures for the production of art and knowledge, with the aim to problematise and contradict inside the field of social reproduction, where non-disciplinary dramaturgic procedures serve as methodological gateways for reflections of this kind.

Helen R. , and Foucault, Michel. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

13 Zepke: *Schizo-revolutionary Art; Deleuze, Guattari and Communisation Theory*; due to be published in 2014, personal copy

14 Ibid.

15 Althusser, Louis. Matheron, François. and Corpet, Olivier. 2006, p. 193.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Zepke: *Schizo-revolutionary Art; Deleuze, Guattari and Communisation Theory*

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MARTA KEIL CULTURAL PRODUCER AS A TROUBLEMAKER WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF A CONTEMPORARY PERFORMING ARTS INSTITUTION

The professionalisation of the artistic field has resulted in a development of the discourse on curatorial practice, as well as in a growing number of opportunities to obtain a diploma of curatorship. One may observe a certain rise in the number of university programs offering curatorial studies (both in Europe and US), a rise in the number of professional magazines focused entirely on curatorship (*Manifesta Journal*), or those publishing one issue dedicated to curatorship (*Texte zur Kunst, Frakcija*). This growing number of publications is creating a curatorial discourse, networks focused on information and grants exchange, residencies and project proposals (Independent Curators International https://www.callforcurators.com, www.curating.org. Thus, curatorship, while undergoing a process of professionalisation, tends to become a fully legitimised part of the art production system and another level of the "factory of knowledge", the knowledge-based economic and social system we live in. Moreover, a number of researchers and practitioners asserted the emergence of the "curatorial turn". Beatrice von Bismarck, among others, in her *Cultures of the Curatorial*, analyses yet another turn (after the performative turn, the educational turn, the mnemonic turn, etc.) in the humanities and in the arts that is believed to bring into sharp focus the paradigmatic changes that the dual process of creation and reception of culture has been significantly affected by in recent years.

Personally, I am racked with a plethora of doubts regarding the grounds for proclaiming the reign of the above-mentioned (allegedly *new*) paradigm; I sincerely believe that, instead, we are privy to a process of revealing the rules, laws, and orders of art production and distribution. The position of curator is rather a result of widespread social, political, and economic changes that we have been witnessing (and participating in) since the mid-1980s in so-called Western Europe, and since the 1990s in the post-communist countries. To my mind, the banner of the supposed "curatorial turn" is hoisted and wielded by the curators themselves as an ensign of their credibility and a tool of professional legitimisation; the term provides a means of self-definition and boosts the development of the "curatorial business". Let us carefully and cautiously consider the fact that the authors of particular volumes of essays, conference proceedings, monographs, and dissertations, are industry professionals, working in the field of curating (i.e. their interests are vested and interlocked). This in turn poses the potential double risk of further complicity and appropriation of the nascent discourse as an instrument of power, employed for self-gain, fashioned to legitimate one's growing authority. Correspondingly, the outcome of introducing "Curatorial Studies" as part of an academic curriculum is comparable to a double-edged sword, the all-time king of ambivalence: likely to be, at best, unwieldy and, at worst, an accident waiting to happen. On the one hand, university institutionalisation is a benchmark of quality, providing academic grounding and sound official legitimisation. On the other hand, this legal seal of approval – on its own yet another marker of professionalisation – diminishes the critical dimension of curatorship. Since its inception, a foregrounded critical perspective has informed curatorship as a novel means of thinking about exhibitions, museums, and showcasing, as pioneered by Harald Szeemann. By contrast, in the context of academia, curators have been transformed into a cookie-cutter batch of producers and suppliers of knowledge (or rather know-how), seamlessly transplanted onto the framework of the hegemonic economic system.

Seen in this context, what concerns me the most is the following question: How, in the case of the strong entanglement of the curator as a cultural producer in the socio-economic system, is it possible for the critical and subversive stance to be maintained by and within institutions? The question regarding the definition (identity and positionality) of the present-day curator (but also of an artist, thinker, or researcher) as a cultural producer immediately spawns a host of other queries, following in the same vein as the original question: what are the models of a curator's work and how has their role changed in cognitive capitalism, that is based on the production of knowledge? Who constitutes a cultural producer? What are the conditions pertaining to her professional activities? What methods of decision-making are implemented and how do they affect the art circuit and the circulation of the arts? Which rules and hegemonies govern the contemporary system of art production? Who is the decision-maker

as far as the choice of a given artist and the publication of their works are concerned? Who includes and invites some artists to participate in the international festival circuit while others are excluded for months, seasons, and years to come? These are not solely academic questions, cocooned in theory and suspended in the vacuum of irrelevance to palpable socio-economic concerns. On the contrary, they touch upon a network of interrelations, interdependence, and connections between creators, producers, and audience, significantly influencing the shared space of contemporary theatre and dance.

> Curators are eloquent writers, intrepid researchers, communicative art educators, adaptable interpreters, sophisticated critics, proud editors, meticulously precise archivists, imaginative producers, socially critical politicians, painstakingly tough budget planners, mobile networking people, sensitive diplomats, clever lawyers, flexible project managers and stimulating agitators. (Jeschke 2012: 149).

This description of the work of a curator, posited by Beatrice Jaschke, is a fitting list (quite an ironic one…) of skills indispensable to the profession (and sometimes difficult to combine); it is not, however, exhaustive. For I define the curator as first and foremost a cultural producer, equipped with specific competences and functioning in a specific social and economic system which strongly determines her actions, oftentimes reducing the curator to a product of the said system. It is no coincidence that the profession of the so-called independent curator (one who is freelance and has no permanent ties to an institution) started to develop at the turn of the 1960s and the 1970s (in performing arts about a decade later), as the model of production evolved into post-Fordism and as late capitalism began to take shape. Non-material work/production is grounded in generating communication, creating network-based structures of information exchange, and producing knowledge. A curator functions in a system which is a network, not a hierarchy; this does not mean her power is weaker, but rather that the alignment of the directions and vectors of that power are different. Curatorial practice is, to a substantial extent, a product of late capitalism, embodying its key rules and mechanisms and at the same time becoming a tool for legitimising and perpetuating these rules and mechanisms. The position of a curator is therefore ambivalent, necessitating constant vigilance and critical attention. Visual artists have long criticized the position of curators, and the criticism is not unwarranted: the unclear mechanism of the redistribution of power, the lack of transparency related to the reasons why some artists are included in the exhibition circuit and others excluded from it, and conflicts concerning authorship (such as who is the author of an exhibition: the curator? the artist? the viewer?) lead to tensions and clashes, raising valid objections on the part of artists. For instance, at the moment in Poland, one may observe a sort of clash between the public theater model and the curatorial system.

On one hand, the institution of the public repertory theatre has been affected by an impasse that cannot be ignored anymore. It is beset with problems stemming from, among others, insufficient funding (shoestring budgets often only allow for building maintenance costs and to provide the ensemble with salaries), fall in attendance, rigidly hierarchic – frequently coercive – top-down management (i.e., the work of the entire institution is contingent upon the unquestioned vision of the leader which renders critical or alternative approaches untenable), steep production and staging costs as well as logistic and structural top-heaviness, which contributes to the ossification of the institution and in turn does not allow it to quickly react to the changes that the cultural landscape is constantly undergoing. This also does not enable the institution to keep up with the shifts as far as the process of theatre reception and the development of other domains of the arts are concerned. Moreover, the situation is reflective not only of Poland, but also of East-Central European countries and of Germany, i.e., the entire region that, in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, was dominated by the model of institutionalised repertory theatre.

Simultaneously, public theatre yields to the strong-arm tactics of economists and politicians that are keen on the neoliberal definition of the self-regulating market and who in turn demand that cultural institutions should remain self-financed. In consequence, they attempt to downsize or radically diminish state subsidies and grants offered to public institutions of culture. The pressure of effectiveness imposes the confines of constant productivity on artists and creatives, frequently turning theatres and related institutions of culture into factories that are not only hastily churning out products at full throttle, but are also bogged down with intricate logistics. Such theatre is a machine rather than a site of artistic work; an artist ceases to be a creative and is transformed into a number-crunching cog in the said machine. Under such circumstances, there exists no space for exploration, research, substantial discussion, sounding ground, taking risks or “mistakes”, “missteps” or “failed” attempts – there is no room for everything that is part and parcel of an artistic process. As a result, an important, perhaps crucial paradox emerges: faced with market pressure, cultural

institutions postulate a return to exclusive state funding, which introduces the risk of the return of nationalism and a cultural and economical colonisation. On the other hand, when in danger of nationalistic influences, cultural institutions defend themselves by invoking universal values (freedom of speech, artistic cosmopolitanism), which have been completely commodified. Within the current economic and social system, an institution is sometimes trapped in a seemingly dead-end situation.

On the other hand, of course, the precariousness and dependence on the privatised system of funding in the curatorial model is even higher. By definition, the independent curators work in the project-based system, which implements intermittence, flexibility, mobility, lack of stability and insecurity as the main working conditions. Moreover, the artistic choices, goals, even the artistic practices depend on a much larger scale on the grants system, which is always constructed according to the particular interests of political representatives or private sponsors.

Clearly, neither of these models is a solution. What I find fascinating though is the moment of clash between them, which unveils the structures, the weak points, and helps to identify the main problems. In the context of the Polish performing arts field, for instance, one could have observed recently an interesting process of redefining the notion of public theater (especially well seen in an ongoing debate about the goals, responsibilities and obligations of the public art institutions, brought on by different attempts at censorship – also economically – that took place over the last three years), taking place alongside new independent initiatives that created an alternative towards the repertory theatre model, i.e., Komuna Warszawa, Pop-up project[1], the festivals that take on the role of a production house etc.

I am convinced that conscious and reflexive analysis of the network of interrelatedness that creates, sustains, enwraps, and surrounds the art production system serves as the basis of critical thinking about contemporary theatre and dance. Equally, the analysis makes for a fitting starting point for all critical practitioners of art. The question we should all be asking ourselves at present is as follows: how, in the world governed by a quasi-alliance between the rampant capitalist economic model and art production, can we maintain a stance that is antithetical to the prevalent system? In what way can we not just think outside of the box, but abandon the framework we have been supplied with without committing social suicide and bringing our further work to a standstill? How to, following Gerald Raunig's expression, build an autonomous path within an institution?

Characteristic of the critical approach that the authors of *The Undercommons* advocate, out of two viable means of maintaining a critical stance on all institutional forms, Moten and Harney choose a third option: constant, radical changes within the institution, entailing permanent, if varied, problematisation and the interrogation of existing (power) structures with a view to their reforming. In my opinion, a cultural producer, consciously problematising the working conditions and the rules of contemporary art production system, may play the role of a trickster, a troublemaker within the repertory theater institution.

Thus far, my experience within the repertory theatre as an institution clearly demonstrated that no truly critical stance is possible without an attempt to change the structure of the institution, by which I mean the transformation of the hierarchical power system into a horizontal structure; the subjectification of all members of the artistic team; the equalisation of wages; objecting to the increasingly precarious working conditions and to the exploitation of all theatre workers. Particularly striking and poignant in this context is the realization that even interesting and programmatically progressive theatres uphold hierarchical and oppressive management structures. Furthermore, these often go hand in hand with strategies borrowed from corporations. Frequently, ambitions to create an intense program, and live up to the expectations of efficiency, along with the need to carve out a theatre's own, original program, transform a theatre institution into a factory working blindly at full speed, which only functions thanks to the exploitation of its badly remunerated employees. The result is that even the most lofty, progressive programmatic assumptions shatter against the rock of the inherently false intra-institutional practices. This is why I believe a real critical stance within an institution is possible only by relentless problematising of the existing structure and workplace relations, and through seeking to radically alter them; by questioning the way the institution functions; by rebutting existing solutions and proposing new ones; by continuous (self)critical reflection over the methods of action. I believe a truly critical stance can be adopted by an objection to the demands of constant productivity and efficiency, by refusing to take part in the race to produce ever more numerous and ever more attractive premieres, and finally, by introducing to the working

1 Temporary theatre institution, situated in a tent at the Kraków University of Economics in Kraków, Poland, and financed by a private artistic agency owned by an economist and politician. The project took place in October and November 2015. Curated by Agata Siwiak and Grzegorz Niziołek, it was an attempt to create an alternative for institutionalised, public repertory theaters in Kraków. http://www.popupkrakow.pl

system of the institution the categories of slowing down and tardiness as categories of political resistance. It is crucial to provide artists with such working conditions, which will allow creative quests and experiments, and which will make allowances for error and risk; these are, after all, central to the artistic process. This is only possible by decelerating the pace of work at the institution and by the subjectification of all its workers; the problem will not be solved by programmatic assumptions, however beautiful they may be. Only radical structural changes can lead to the creation of truly new, alternative, courageous, and consistent artistic proposals.

Translated from Polish by
Małgorzata Paprota and Bartosz Wójcik

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JAN RITSEMA
THE ARMY OF ARTISTS

The choice is either to be instrumentalised for neoliberalism's profit-making purposes or to be an agent attempting to change this protective, overly ruled, exclusive bourgeois society into something radically different.

The Summary

Look at this picture: On one side, the army of artists and curators in paradise (financed by the state in order to teach the workforce, organize work by yourself, being low-paid but having a good life). On the other side are the successful artists, extremely well paid by the state, providing the dress-up (the cover-up) for the increasingly arrogative and vampiric operations of the state, who can present themselves through art as the philanthropists of a paradise for the poor.

Such a picture is as bleak and promises as little as the way work is organized and defined. "Being paid for work" is my definition of work, and this has no sustainable future. The idea that a human being's worth is measured almost exclusively by his or her productive output of goods, services, and material wealth will for our grandchildren seem primitive, even barbaric.

We need an economy centered on sustainable abundance rather than scarcity. Fifty years from now, our grandchildren may look at this mass-market employment with the same disbelief with which we look upon slavery and serfdom.

EIGHT OBSERVATIONS

Observation 1

The artistic sector has proliferated ferociously throughout the last decades in the western world. While New York counted 800 artists in the 1950s, their number is now around 80,000. Many countries nowadays count more artists than soldiers.

The Army of Artists is accompanied by an army of artist-related administrators, organizers, programmers, curators and critics.

Western societies pay for this and make money from it. Art and art-related productions and activities have become a substantial part of their economies.

Observation 2

After having served very well as agents for gentrification in all big cities, artists now serve as agents for colonizing the rest of the world into economical and ideological globalization.

A new task is in preparation. I will explain. But first, another observation.

Observation 3

The time of the 'big artists' is over. One is famous nowadays for a maximum of 3-5 years and then replaced by other talents.

Observation 4

Being an artist nowadays is less an application of techniques than a lifestyle.

The artist is *master over his/her own time and space*. When is one usually master over one's own time and space? On holiday and in the weekends. The artists define where and when they will produce art. Or, better to say, the artist manages his/her activities permanently 24/7. The artist has a low income, prefers to be mobile and values a good quality of life above high or stable income. Before the world war every bourgeois family had a priest or a nun in the family, now they have an artist. My daughter is a choreographer (made one solo) or my son is a filmmaker (made a 20-minute video.)

What I describe here is what the neoliberal semio-capitalistic economies foresee for *their* future workforce: everybody permanently on holiday but managing the work 24/7 all by themselves, but not without the state holding power over the profit lines. Artists serve as the missionaries, as teasers and examples to inseminate this "free" life.

From being the *slave* of somebody else (labour), many more people will become the slave of themselves. There is no difference between worker and artist. Artists are submissive to divisions of labour and the conditions of the market, only the aspects of subordination are not of a disciplinary nature as it is only the disposal of control that changes. The artist does not listen to an individual boss, but is rather acting/reacting to a full range of power relations.

Observation 5

No work for graduates.

Another tendency which is now appearing is that we get a huge amount of graduated students from all of these schools/universities for artists and cultural workers (curators, programmers) who all look for opportunities to present their skills, but do not find any as these are full/saturated. Nonetheless they have smelled the life of the artist and want to live like this, free and independent. They are all well educated, talented (the average talent in these schools is much higher than twenty years ago, when there were only one or two, maximum three talented students in a class/group. Now 80% is artistically, intellectually and socially skilled, yet there is no place for them). It is painful to see that a quality generation becomes lost. Neoliberalism educated them, but took and takes money away from the governments in their never-ending privatization demands. What is left is this army of unemployed artists, or little employed artists, who live as masters of their own time and space. No employer who tells them what to do, or very rarely, in order to earn some basic money. But what is there to show from this 'free' way of living? This makes their societal function less dependent on their artistic production, and more dependent on their way of living.

Employing oneself as an artist is becoming a good way of living. Poverty, yes, but not the old poverty; it is poverty without misery. In a way, it is paradise. I don't go for the lamentation over their 'precarious' position. Young artists nowadays are situated on the sub-tops of society. Loads of money for free still streams in their direction, with their only curse being that they have to divide the cake with so many.

What neoliberalism can show to the people is that with a very low income they can be very happy in paradise, and still make the economy go round, just by the mere fact of their activities. Combined with the organizers of these platforms, who coordinate their activities in infrastructures like schools and museums and other venues, and in the so-called creative-industries, the organizers. I mean the investors of the platforms are still tapping the money and the profit out of all these activities, visited by the badly paid in their paradise. By the way, these venues are becoming more and more virtual. (As the physical ones are too expensive and too slow to maintain or to change. I talk for instance about schools which are changing into MOOC's, Massive Open Online Courses, like Coursera and Iversity).

As another aside, all I said about the army of artists can easily be replaced by the army of scientists, of which many of the younger generations have no employment either. When they do find employment, they still have to work within a commercialized science, looking for the fastest results.

This will all happen when we let history go its own way and watch it from the sidelines (whether critically or not) but are not doing anything to resist it. Only when we want to redirect this movement consciously can we change it into something else.

But first, three other observations:

- That we are liking machines, not desiring machines, let alone reasoning machines.
- That explicit common goals and ideologies do not bind us any more
- That there is no common given. We are alone. We cannot know each other as we cannot know the outside, as it is outside, but neither can we know our inside, as it almost does not hold anything. We are fundamentally alone. But this does not need to prevent us from being *together* alone.

Observation 6

People are not desiring machines. They are not motorised by their everlasting, insatiable chain of desires. No, on the contrary, they are liking machines. Our instrument, the machine that we are, operates in the world through the simple equation: I like or I do not like. What one likes or dislikes can change and changes all the time.

Capitalism understands this and offers a constant chain of what we could like or not like. We call these fashions.

To like or to not like is not based on rational reasoning, it is more of a belief system: I don't know why I don't like Brussels sprouts or BMW's, but I 'know' I don't like them. We operate through belief. Our operations lack grounding, and navigate through taste and an everlasting chain of talking in value judgements. Things are beautiful or bad or sharp or stupid. This lack of a rational grounding makes us all suffer from a God-complex. What is a God-complex? That is the conviction that what you think and how you think things should work is *right*. It is the conviction, call it *belief* if you want, that you are always right. You know it better. You know it the best. This God-complex is as ungrounded as one's likings. Because: how can everybody be right all the time, some must be wrong now and then,

no? But people, lost as they are under capitalist conditions, do not improve it. On the contrary, they happily operate in a cloud of beliefs and ungrounded convictions.

Observation 7

Artists are distributors of values, among others, like teachers, journalists and scientists. They are what Noam Chomsky calls “manufacturers of consent”. They have the tools to formulate, to propose, to present, to disguise, to modulate, to transpose, to mutate, to mutilate (together with others) what people might start to like. The creative industries are perfect servants for the capitalist operation of constantly changing the likings of people. More often than not, changing them into their opposites.

Imagine that artists become aware of their historical position and put up resistance to being instrumentalised for the purposes of others, namely the capital or state. Would it be necessary that they formulate common goals and develop the same perspectives for a future society? I don’t think so. The times of the common and the communal are over. This was always already an artificial construct that could only be implemented by force, despite its ideal perspectives. Can people then still make history and be conscious of doing so? Can they do this consciously, on purpose? Yes, they can. They can break the circumstances, change them into something else, but nowadays they have to break them alone, without being connected to a common goal or ideology.

Observation 8

People are not equipped to know the outside, although there is only outside. They can see it but not be it. They swim in it, but as a separated entity. One could say there is no outside, as we cannot know it, yet there is only outside. As one cannot not be outside the outside.

The same counts for the inside. There is only inside, all we know happens inside, but we cannot know this inside. It slips away all the time.

The inside and outside are not two different sides of the same coin. They are completely different and are differently operating intelligences/instruments/machines. They are not equipped to understand each other. They are only equipped to appreciate or not appreciate each other.

Since we are unreachable for each other and for the world and for oneself, we cannot really unify. We are all different, unreachable entities. One could say there is no common or communal and therefore there should be no ‘one’. But at the same time we are in the common. We swim in it, but we are connected individually, each one with a unique IP address sending and receiving messages in and from many directions.

Therefore:
The times where revolutions will be made by streamlining what all people should think and do, are over. The future revolutionary force will be much stronger and much more sustainable as it will be based on personal and individual perspectives that produce the will to change for a best thinkable world, that will change how we want to live together into something radically else. The modern revolutionist operates alone, based on the knowledge of not being alone, but being together alone. The future common will do without gluing ideologies. No management, no leaders, no one ideology. It will be an army of individuals, of which the army of artists can play an initiating role in opening up unexpected perspectives. The new common is immanent and invisible. It is not a tool, just a given. The new common will, however, be together, and they will be interested in the gestalt that might emerge from a collective gathering.

Instead of working on the monument that is called Me, that operates in the clouds of beliefs and ungrounded convictions. Instead of expressing themselves, showing to themselves that they can do it. Writing a novel, making a movie, a painting or a dance solo, in order to prove to themselves that they can do it. They better forget to reproduce themselves under the capitalistic conditions. As Foucault said: “Self-interest is non transferable and inexchangeable” It only separates!

Therefore:
They better sit together to find that which only they can think/do in that specific constellation, by embracing laziness (meaning how to avoid operating under and in capitalist conditions) and doing nothing else than sit and talk and think together in pure curiosity about what might be produced. To be common without a goal, not even the goal to be common.

I tried several times to ask people to leave their individual interests and just to sit together and talk for three months, six months, one year, three years. To talk to find that which is more than each of them alone can produce. I can tell you that what will come out of it is always much more, and much more interesting than what arises from pursuing ones own little interests, directed by and under capitalist/neoliberal conditions, with all its negative consequences.

Until now, almost noone dares to leave the quasi-safe haven of the bubble of individuality, self-interest, and individual liberty.

But I think we have no choice.
Let's have fun and go for the new revolution.
Let's help to push history in another direction.

Let's make a movement for 21st century schools, elderly houses, prisons, hospitals, psychiatric asylums. The 19th century that invented and installed the existing disciplinary models has already violently passed away some two centuries ago.

Let's contest these institutions of slavery and barbarism firmly and offer the new models. The non-disciplinary ones. The reasonable ones. Let's embrace the many but rare examples that exist already in all the domains mentioned, but are dispersed all over the globe. All alone.
Let's come together now (and do nothing)!

Or:
We the people have to start to organize ourselves, our work, our education, our medical care, and our infrastructures (transport, public space). We have to start to manage ourselves and go for highly flexible models of this self-organized work, and we need to restart currency (money) and the way we use it. We have no choice but to act, *but before acting we have to think of a better post-capitalistic future. Implement think-tanks and research institutes. Find instruments/tools/models/concepts that show us, the people, that we can manage ourselves easily, better and more efficiently.* That we can think of society as radically different. This can only be done in cooperation and together. But as I said, a lot has to be thought through thoroughly and has to be invented and imagined. For this we need to think less of strategies and do more thinking and imagining of models/concepts.

There is work to be done! Systematically and regularly and consequently!

Who wants to be no longer busy with themselves but with the world?

In the army of artists is situated a huge potential for these think-tanks or these purposeless gatherings. Please understand that these are needed, urgently. Understand that the stakes are high and solutions and results are not easily available.

Therefore:
! We have to want it all and not only the crumbs !

We will open up the cage we have put ourselves in so 'comfortable-uncomfortably'.

Do you want to be part of breaking the bars of the prison and be one of the first to fly back into abundance, away from the capital world of scarcity?
! Join the band !

RANDY MARTIN

ART'S POLITICS: AN INTERVENTIONIST CURRICULUM

The arts and higher education share a dilemma and an entanglement. They are entangled as answers past and present to the promises of mobility and self-realization under capitalism in the making and unmaking of its post war social compact and through the professional turn that the arts have undertaken in the past four decades that have led through university credentialing. The dilemma they share is that what once was a figure of growth, progress and development mapped onto individual meritocratic achievement has shifted to an engine of debt. The professional managerial class which had once tied self-governing autonomous knowledge through a career launched by university completion is part of a more general ruination of modernizing enclosures that have come undone and have been replaced with a vaguer yet more ambitious promise of societal re-invigoration through the rise of the creative class. Here, creativity becomes stripped of critical inflection and esthetic specificity to be placed in the service of a new social compact grounded in austerity, precarity and security.

Creatives are to rescue a failed course of development through generous donations of free labor and abdication of benefits from accumulation drives that are otherwise indifferent to the disruptive and expansive effects of creativity. Art is celebrated as an inner-directed practice of risk taking while unprecedented wealth is reserved for those few who can benefit from financial risk well taken and receive the support of the entire tax base as collateral, a degree of state intervention into the requisites of accumulation that only capital can command. Lost in the panic over the forms and beneficiaries of risk is the reversal of fortune in which derivatives, the instruments for pricing risk, constitute a new form of wealth that promise abundance in the face of scarcity, something that more prosaic expressions of capitalism now seem to abdicate, but that certain notions of creativity hold open.

If the education of artists is to matter in this conjuncture - one where their efforts are devalued while their promise is exalted as poster-children for a film not of their making - what might such a curriculum entail? The claim for such a course of study would need to be interventionist that is to imagine how to move between operations of production, capacities for critical evaluation, and means of disseminating work, so as to elaborate the value of what one wants to see in the world so as to be able to generate more of it. This endeavor is something like crafting a global positioning system for a landscape that does not exist; moving into the not-yet so as to realize what might be; generating strategies for the coalescence of self-organizing and self-affiliation. The standard partitions between theory and practice are not serviceable to this endeavor, as critical elaboration and implementation cannot await serial completion when they are more generatively mutually disruptive of one another such that intervention continues and engenders its conditions of possibility.

"Interventionist" may also refer to how such study imagines its own institutional situation. A compact course of study is one route toward debt containment, while a permeability between students inside and outside the program encourages a general circulation across the university. The cohort of students in this case do not share a particular practice but a predicament, which entails how to move laterally through the various worlds in which they may see themselves as the outlier and to constitute a collaborative around what they can devise as an evaluative means to make these side steps across artistic production, curatorial and critical endeavors sustainable. Rather than a thesis project which may replicate professionalizing models internally when such models can no longer deliver on their career promises, the final projects might also be considered properly interventionist; a small work oriented toward its self-situation and mode of address in the world, and a compression of future prospects into a self-address of next steps and unscripted prospects. The lateral mobility of intervention would thus be implemented as a condition of completion of study that stages the need for its continuation under other means.

This question of study recasts the chasm between the vocational and the for-itself which would now threaten to render education and art irrelevant, each caught in the trap of either being a skill-set for the masses or an object of sheer contemplation for the elite. The subsequent rise of a knowledge society renders such distinctions quaint if not extinct and invites relating education and art as matters of family resemblance rather than for what they might disclose about current dynamics of labor and capital. Recall that knowledge is foundational and not simply sectoral in the marginalist neoclassical account of

knowledge that runs from Hayek to derivatives formulaire Fischer Black through the idea of the public good in which knowledge is aggregated to set price but also challenges pricing because it can be enjoyed in common without diminishing it (nonrival and nonexcludable).

Today knowledge is a seemingly endless frontier for commodification, and volatility—the basis of financial derivatives, but also of any number of modeling failures which figure in environmental and political crises. There are doubtless many forms of creative knowledge, art-making in particular which once were part of a commons and have now been enclosed. But there are also circuits of revenue generating information flows which were never part of a commons but that do efface the divide between producers and consumers and treat the free labor of providing information that can subsequently be mined for profit as a kind of capital. These knowledge circuits that range from social media to surveillance to rank-based marketing did not once pass through professional credentialing, but do reference a vast social participation in what are treated as new forms of wealth. The other formation to emerge from the ruins of the professional managerial class that transmit creativity as a form of labor that can operate as capital (the obverse of big data), is what is frequently described as maker culture. Derivatives traders consider themselves market makers, but so too do locavores who nestle supply chains of discerning producers and consumers. While makers may have privileged pedigrees it is harder to discern what role credentialing plays in their activity. Rather, they are engaged in a kind of arbitrage, where small differences make all the difference and excess capacity is located in the intensities of use.

The larger political and analytic challenge for these seemingly commercialized and marginal practices is how to discern the larger social premises that they rest upon which might allow knowledge to have an expansive circulation and artistic labor to make the kind of contingent claim on wealth that the expansive instances of wealth make upon it. Marx's account of fictitious capital, the contracts that different firms and capitals enter into with one another to place credit and debt into circulation is the basis of disintermediation, one of the cardinal effects of the derivative. By facilitating the mitigation of various risk exposures that would threaten a failure of profit, derivatives also render accumulation from seemingly disparate sources of accumulation interchangeable, concentrating these into blended flows of capital. The accumulation that derived by agriculture, industry and banking in the form of rent, production and interest, shadows the three basic forms that derivative trades take: futures, options, and swaps.

Typically, derivatives are either focused on in strictly technical terms as mathematical models for hedging risk, or, in moralistic terms, as purely speculative processes unmoored from the real economy. Both of these approaches overlook the profound dimensions of socialization—for capital, labor and populations—that is the hallmark of Marx's work. Each of the three derivative forms makes different kinds of claims on accumulated wealth, assembles a distinctive relation of part to whole, and assembles a particular expression of a social agency. The financial bailout that followed the explosive rise of derivative trading used public funds as collateral for private debts, but wound up cementing a politics of deficit by which present expenditures on social needs have to be sacrificed to future deficit reduction. Just as commodity production can be read immanently as disclosing the social foundations upon which it rests, derivatives suggest a politics of mutual indebtedness that is contrary to the conventional segregation of wealth and austerity by which we now live. Following the analytic procedure in *Capital* to begin with the simplest unit of wealth and see how it becomes socialized, we can track a parallel course for the various forms of the derivative.

One place to locate a derivatives future market is in the current proclivity towards tax exemption as a means of recognizing what should count as and rewarding public goods—a foundation of the arts economy in the United States. Tax exemption is in effect a government forbearance of future revenue, a fiscal means by which the state shorts its own capacities to fund socially necessary activities. The transfer of these future public funds into current private hands assumes that private individuals will treat that sovereign obligation to dispense of the public good and their orientation toward the present. Philanthropy becomes, from this perspective an investment in a future public good, but one that takes a purely individuated market form even as those individuals are supposed to be making investment decisions from the perspective of a future government action. At issue is less whether such persons are capable of making these judgments but just the opposite how those decisions might appear as measures taken toward a collective need.

Currently, tax exemption operates in the name of the public good to preserve private wealth. In the United States, roughly $1 trillion are ceded as tax exemptions (the largest share of this through mortgage deductions that benefit the most affluent), and only about a third of this amount is returned through charitable contributions. If these same trillion dollars were thought as wealth that could be aggregated and delivered collectively in the present, then

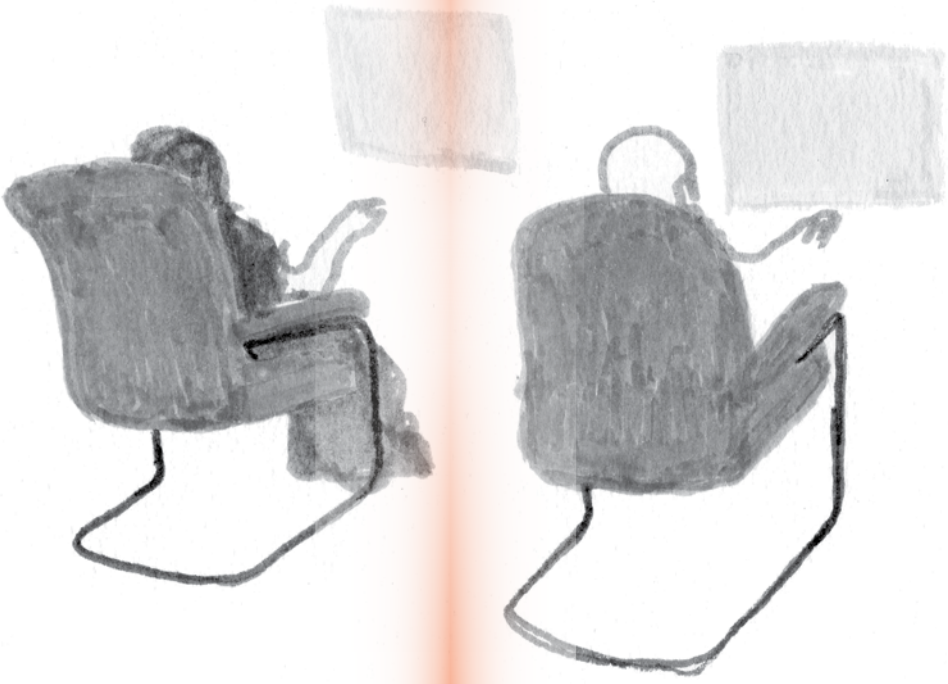
the process of decision-making, investing, and taking on a voice associated with the deliberation over the public good would itself be socialized. Metaphorizing the future, treating it as if it is like the present, summons an intervention into what might come to be. The idea that the present could be like the future could become the basis to convene a critical reflection on what could be made together with social wealth gathered for that purpose. In such a scenario, government could no longer be an enemy of the people, a drag on our common capacities for collaboration and deliberation. Rather, a form of governance would need to be summoned that made a claim on the aggregation of surplus that taxation once represented but has now been disavowed.

Trading options is meant to be integrative. A balanced portfolio hedges expected gains against losses, protects against risk exposures in any direction, but also makes it possible to create revenue streams from expected returns. Conventionally, there is no place for labor in such calculations. But if we are referring to some kind of rise in values in an underlying commodity or market, labor will have a place. There has, for example been much talk about creative classes sparking urban redevelopment. Artists, creatives, makers, congregate in a neglected area, render that place more desirable, rents go up, and they are pushed out, having forfeited their sweat equity. That art is purportedly done for love has meant that it is often not treated as labor, making it all the more difficult to take the measure of such contributions to enhancing the real estate value. If equity were to be measured by appreciation to the market as a whole, bonds might be issued that returned some of those gains to the very creative endeavors that made them possible.

In addition to providing a means of revenue sharing, options sustain a means of remembering, of reconnecting those to whom present wealth is indebted to the sources of that wealth. Here too, options would be pricing what had been unpriced, socializing the risks of expanding the value of inhabitability, elaborating the kinds of knowledge that could be valued, posing the question of who has access to the city and what urban space might be for. The example of artists here is not meant to be metaphorical, a relatively weak or strong resemblance, such as the claim we are all artists now. Rather, artists should be thought as a synecdoche, as providing a means to re-calibrate what kinds of form we might value so that we could say of the city, or of society, it's all art, or it's all justice, or it's all optional. This perpetual option, directing revenue streams through the anticipated enhancements of what we make together transposes the account of commodity production in which labor disappears, to a continual repricing where credit for what could be created is extended over and over again.

As of this writing, the cap and trade market for carbon emissions lies dying, gasping for breath. By issuing credits to pollute a certain amount that could then be exchanged by those who polluted more, the expectation was that a net reduction in the amount of carbon emissions would be created, a positive incentive for industries to clean up their acts. Swaps are conventionally designed to reduce exposures to unavoidable risks. They are motivated by an effort to negate what the market might otherwise bear if a part had not been taken out against the weight of the whole. In this sense, swaps are ironic, as indeed we might say is the mature state of any regime of accumulation where risk factors have made their presence known.

Irony is itself interventionist, and swaps themselves suggest the modes of risk management that enhance the volatility that would seek to profit from. The trick might be to be able to sort out what kinds of uncertainty we would want to minimize and what we would want more of. Swaps have been oriented toward risk reduction while they have been pinned with the elaboration of risk. Perhaps we might start by asking what risk or uncertainty we want to enhance; what volatility would allow us to thrive; what excesses would expand our horizons of imagining ourselves together. This also seems to be the trick of the derivative; to assemble something excessive, self-expansive from very divergent sources and sites that are placed in circulation together. Art may have more impact as a scheme of valuation when originality and authenticity are made to accommodate the social logic of the derivative. In this the derivative may not simply socialize disparate forms of accumulation, as Marx saw for finance, but may enable us to value social wealth together as at once a surplus product; a creative potential; and populations in circulation. The derivative affords a speculative regard toward the social; not simply a return to what the people once possessed and now have lost in the form of the common, but of what a population and a society might be if people had the active means to make contingent claims on one another that would render their mutual indebtedness the object of a politics that enhanced the ways in which they could value how they make their worlds. That would be asking a great deal from the derivative but no less than it currently asks of us.



ISABEL DE NAVERÁN
FURTIVE TUITION

Some years ago, on my way from Bilbao to Berlin, where I was due to give a workshop to young postgraduate students, I decided to take a look back at the projects, small jobs, and commissions I'd been involved in over the previous few years. I realised that I'd taken almost all of them on in the hope that somehow, sooner or later, my life, the life I wanted to live, would come. A life in which I'd have time to do what I really wanted, to read calmly, to think properly, to enjoy what I was doing as I did it. But at the same time, I realised that the moment I'd been waiting so long for (while in the meantime I'd agreed to do things in certain ways in the belief that they were a passing stage because I was learning and training) was never going to come, and that this was in actual fact my real life.

Years have gone by since then, and what I was thinking could easily be seen as the idealistic reflections of an immature woman, of yet another freelancer who finds herself trapped inside conditions of production she'd imagined she'd chosen.

I now work at an office for art and knowledge called Bulegoa Zenbaki Barik which Beatriz Cavia, sociologist, Mirén Jaio, art critic, Leire Vergara, curator, and I set up in Bilbao in November 2010. In the year before we publicly opened the office, we met up regularly to discuss our particular concerns at the time. We weren't friends and didn't know each other very well, but there were two things we had in common: all of us were doing our PhDs at university, and all four felt that our research was disconnected from the institutional context of the city. At first we met in cafés, and were considering renting an office where we could go to work instead of doing so at home so that we could separate our work from our private lives.

Soon we found ourselves outlining a common line of content, with a wide-ranging list of international guest speakers, which we wanted to open up to other investigators and artists in the city. We searched for offices, but finally came across something very different: a space which had first been a grocery store and then a hairdresser's; a space at street level, with four large glass windows, in the city district where all of us now live. The initial project changed radically because of the visibility of the space. What we first intended to be a neutral office ended up becoming a crossroads where researchers in different areas, and from different fields, are able to test out ways to do things. We also consider it a framework within which we can continually reconsider the underpinnings of our respective practices, by questioning or reaffirming them. Among the issues we think could be reconsidered are these: learning (where knowledge is produced); time (the use and consumption of it); and work (or, the relationship between work, production and free time). Before I go on to explain how we dealt with these issues, I'd like to bring in two images that keep coming back to me recently.

The first one is from a video I saw on the web page of a clothes store run by friends of mine in Bilbao. The video is an advert for a new brand of handmade espadrilles manufactured in India and Mallorca. It starts with the sound of birdsong, and then you hear an acoustic guitar being played with the reverb on: In the image, a white Renault 4 is driving along a roughly tarred road in the Mallorcan countryside.

The next shot is of one of the makers of the shoes, who manages the firm. A cheerful woman, not too young, not too old, who could be me, sitting on the landing in a house in a village, smiling contentedly. As we watch the image, which plays slowly and seems to infinitely prolong her bliss, we hear a voiceover saying, "I was lucky enough to be able to stop in time."

The sentence might not have made such an impact on me if my friends who own the shop, and everyone else who shops there too, like me, seemed to agree with the fact that the best thing that can happen to you if you're a young entrepreneur, a researcher, an artist, or a freelancer producing intellectual work, is without any doubt "being lucky enough to stop in time."

How do I relate to time? What does it mean to stop in time? Stop what? Stop doing what, and what for?

The second image is from a film: *Chronicle of a Summer* by Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin.

Filmed in Paris and Saint-Tropez in the summer of 1961, it was considered to be the first cinema-verité film, perhaps because of the hand-held camera and what appears to be its documentary ambition. It has also been considered as self-reflexive ethnography, perhaps because it uses the methodology of the survey to sound out a particular social group at a specific moment in the group's history. Morin, anthropologist, and Rouch, filmmaker, embarked

on a complex film-interview project entirely devoted to two questions: How do you live? Are you happy?

There are two aspects I find remarkable about this film.

Firstly, all of the interviewees are very young. They could be students, like those who took to the streets in Paris seven years later in what was to be considered "the last revolution." But here, they're students, and what they mainly do is learn. They read, they study different professions, and they learn from themselves and life. The generation in the interviews seems to be stuck in time, as if they had all the time they needed to experience their own present, to think about it consciously and to speak about it. Except for a scene that shows the main character, Marceline, as she mentally writes a letter to her dead father, they seem to have no past and no future either. The scene of Marceline's conversation with her father is filmed using a different technique to the rest of the film. Other scenes were shot with a hand-held camera with a special lens which brings the viewer close up to the interviewees and creates a feeling of crude, direct reality; but this scene of the woman talking to her dead father uses a tracking shot or crane which moves her into the distance as she walks off. Furthermore, her thoughts are spoken as a voiceover, which is also a technique only used in this scene. The exceptional nature of this scene is an indicator of the deceptive ruses used in the rest of the film.

The second aspect, which has been largely spoken and written about, is the ethnographic nature of the film, which ends with a conversation between Morin and Rouch in the Museum of Man (Musée de l'Homme) in Paris. During their walk through the Museum of Man, the directors talk about the previous scene, which shows the interviewees in a room at what would seem to be a preview of the film. They argue heatedly in something like an after-film discussion about the truthfulness of their own accounts. The actors, who act as if they weren't, talk about how they relate to the film, about when they were interviewed, about their nakedness before the camera, or their disbelief of what others say.

We can think that the key to this film is the way Rouch and Morin break down the differences between what appears to be constructed and what we think of as natural; the differences between montage and the organic. We discover several instances of this; for instance, when one of the actresses talks about a trip to Africa as if it were a real experience, and yet the same actress appears in another of Rouch's films on the trip itself, so that we never know what's real or what's fictitious.

What the film leaves me with, then, is the fact that behind the documentary form of the interview and the two questions "How do you live?" and "Are you happy?" is a complex montage that calls into question not only the idea of truthfulness, related here to the lifestyle of ordinary young people who could be students (who were later discovered to have belonged to the same political group, *Socialism or Barbarism*), but also the preconceived idea of what it is to have a fulfilling, satisfying life.

Whether working next to where I live, in an independent office, with people who I *can* now say are my friends, in a project which began by wanting to separate work from free time, but has ended up turning work into fun, is what it means to have a fulfilling, satisfying life, is something I can't say. What matters to me, at least today, is how it came about, and where it's led us.

In the beginning, we were motivated by a need to learn from one another. Today, I think what drives us most is a will to do things differently, to test out other ways of understanding our relationship to work and what it means to produce. In 2010 we talked of self-education, of free universities, and of producing knowledge. One day, at one of our weekly meetings, we realised that what we were doing was more like collective learning and self-learning. We were reminded of Antonio Machado when he speaks through his heteronym Juan de Mairena, saying, "Never boast about being self-taught, remember, because there is little you can learn without help. But never forget, either, that that little bit is important, and also that nobody else can teach you it."[1]

In Machado's book, Juan de Mairena is a sort of "ignorant schoolmaster", a schoolteacher who instructs a group of students in his free time, giving lessons in rhetoric outside school hours. We took this idea of furtive tuition driven by a passion for learning as a reference for one of the lines we wanted to develop in our office: E.G.B. (Basic General Education)[2]. So, somewhat ironically, we set the programme in motion when we realised that most of the time there are too many things that we take for granted. Since then, what we've done most of the time with E.G.B. is to invite artists to prepare "lessons" around their work. We've found that many of them are caught up in

1 *Juan de Mairena. Sentencias, donaires, apuntes y recuerdos de un profesor apócrifo* (Juan de Mairena. Epigrams, Maxims, Memoranda and Memoirs of an Apocryphal Professor) was written by Machado in 1936.

2 The acronym E.G.B. refers not only to the idea of a basic, general idea of education - "what every student should know." It's also the name of the compulsory education system our generation grew up with, which was replaced by the L.O.G.S.E. (Organic Act on the General Organisation of the Education System) in 1990.

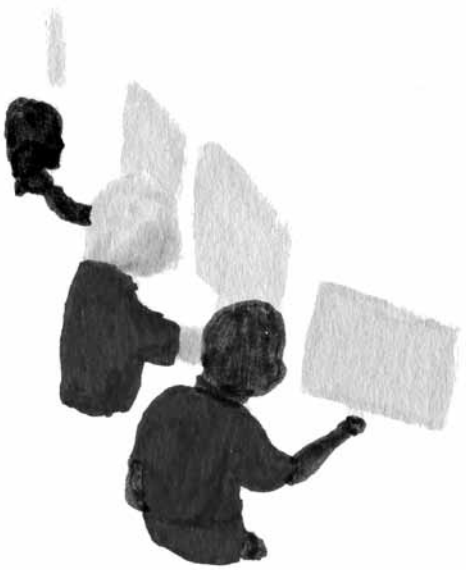
complicated thesis projects. I've often wondered what this sort of academic resource can do for an artist. I studied art myself and did my PhD, and there's a matter of principles. Firstly, that has to do with legitimisation, and the question of where knowledge is produced. Academic practice seems to consider philosophical and historical sources to be unquestionable, particularly compared to other sources such as art practice and what comes out of it, whether this be experiences or testimonies – which are often taken as minor, subjective, partial thinking. The relationship between academic theory and art practice is always a contaminated one; for too long, it's been based on theoretical illustrations of what are considered to be non-verbal, non-discursive, non-idiomatic or even irrational ways of working. Perhaps this is true, I don't know; but the question for me is, how much theory is there in this kind of experimental practice? What kind of new thought is produced inside the work of art? Furthermore, how much of a practical dimension does current theoretical elaboration, that is, academic theory, contain?

Any art process is obviously a process of knowledge production involving many factors, both material and intellectual. This is why, perhaps, conventional academic thinking requires new concepts for approaching art. Also, theoretical sources should be considered as practices in themselves, forms of thinking we should be able to locate in time and space. Knowing where and how such ideas are elaborated, in response to what, seems to me to be as important as respecting the theoretical elements in art and the idiosyncrasies within it. I started challenging myself to place theory in context, maybe because when I studied, theoretical sources were often used as isolated poetical resources. The entire process of integrating sources from other fields of knowledge entailed recognition of philosophical and academic practice, which required "learning to work with texts and sources" and "learning to read". But learning to read also means building up your own interpretative criteria. One of the ways we've being doing this over the past few years is through reading groups at Bulegoa z/b. *El Contrato* (The Contract) is one such project. With it, we try to revise the visible and invisible agreements that govern our professions - social theory, curatorship, criticism and choreography. Our question is whether it's possible to renegotiate agreements that were established in modernity, without falling into the indifference that so often comes with consensus.

Our reading group El Contrato has been going for eight months, over which a stable group of people of a wide spectrum of ages and educational backgrounds have been discussing a rigorous selection of texts, ranging from deconstructive philosophy to critical theory, prose, poetry, essays and film. Apart from discussing the texts, we also read them together and did exercises with them. Perhaps the most significant thing about the sessions was something we didn't consider too important at first. They lasted for three hours, and we made audio recordings of each session. Also, each one was documented by two of the members of the group, who chronicled them in whatever way they chose and presented what they'd done to the group at the beginning of the following session. These testimonies turned into something creative, partial and subjective, something different to the sound recordings, complementing them. I mention this as the most significant thing because although it began simply as a means to remind ourselves of what had happened in previous sessions, it turned into a form of collective writing as well as an account of the content of the meetings and each of our experiences. Readers became writers who write about their work and lives, in a mutual dialogue through the content of the texts.

So, learning to read entails learning to write. And here, writing means making a discourse public, publishing.

We started out by bringing together a reading group to learn from the great thinkers, and ended up becoming a writing group who account for how we interpret them. That is how we work.



BOYAN MANCHEV

NOTHING IN COMMON. COLLABORATIONS, RELATIONS, PROCESSES, AND THE ACTUALITY OF ARTISTIC LABOUR[1]

There is no doubt that today we are witnessing a discursive fetishisation of the concept of *collaboration.* Throughout the last decade, in Europe at least, we have witnessed a massive attempt for a discursive articulation of the notion of collaboration in the frame of art events, festivals, as well as symposia, publications, and various formats offering platforms for experimental artistic and critical work, as well as for debate between artists and theorists. Obviously this discourse is entangled with a set of collaborative practices, undoubtedly involving new horizons of expectation and new forms of regulation for artistic labor (in projects, workshops, labs, works in progress), while being related to the reemergence of philosophical and (quasi-) political concepts like community and collectivity.[2]

Coming from the Latin verb *collaborare,* "work with," (from *cum-,* "with" and *laborare*, "to work"), the term "collaboration" relates to two crucial questions for actuality: the question of labor, on the one hand, and the question of artistic subjectivity, on the other,. It is clear that the term "collaboration" implies common labor. From that point of view we need to consider and reflect upon the structural transformations of labor (or more generally of work) in the neoliberal era before even approaching the issue of collective creation, or, more importantly, of collective subjectivity. When issues of artistic collaboration are discussed, they are often extracted from their economical reality.

Obviously, the discourse of what I call the "collaborative turn" is connected to the attempt to experiment with new forms of subjective organization – with new forms of subjectivity – which is clearly in dialectical connection with a new concept of community, and the common. This experimentation with new forms of subjectivity and community was at the very heart of the utopian drive of early performance art, body art, theatre, and dance in the 1960s and the 1970s. The discourse of collaboration, or cooperation in particular, could be seen precisely as one of the major attempts in this direction of experimentation with modes of production, but also with new forms of organization and the creation of techniques and subjectivities. However, in the same decades, we have also seen contemporary art running the risk of becoming one of the emblematic figures of what I call "performance capitalism".[3] The distinctive feature of performance capitalism is the attempt to monopolize the production of subjectivity, of modes, and of forms of life. It reduces forms of life to commodities. Thus, what was at stake in contemporary art, and especially in the fields of performance and dance – due to the fundamental premise of a body's potentiality for today's new biopolitical forms – is that we witnessed a curious parallel with the processes of contemporary capitalism and its dominant regimes of production and consumption. Therefore, since the standardized notions of organization of work and production collapsed, the critical necessity of this moment is to think not only of a radical transformation of modes of production and exchange, but also of power and of power regulation, leading to the transformation of modes of subjectivation.

Hence, we should be aware of the commodification (the reduction to commodity) of the utopian visions of collectivity, related to the experiments in question. Namely, it is about the reduction of the ideas of new communities to creative lifestyles, inseparable from the tendency of the progressive generalizations of precarious labor in the new model of creative, or more accurately, *performance* capitalism. As a result, we have at stake the sharp contrast

1 The first draft of this essay was presented at the conference *The Public Commons and the Undercommons of Art, Education, and Labor*, organized by Bojana Cvejić, Stefan Apostolou-Hölscher, and Bojana Kunst at Frankfurt Lab in June 2014. A longer version of the essay was developed under the title "The Collaborative Turn in Contemporary Dance: Performance Capitalism and the Emancipation of Artistic Production", in Noémie Solomon (ed.), *DANSE: A Catalogue*, Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2015. I express my gratitude to Noémie Solomon for her precious comments and suggestions, which also affect some aspects of the present version.

2 Authors like Bojana Cvejić, Bojana Kunst, Ric Allsopp, and Claire Bishop formulated critical accounts on the rise of the practices of collaboration, especially in connection to other modalities of the common, like the concept of "collective," dominant in the 1960s and 1970s. See Cvejić, Bojana. "Collectivity? You mean collaboration?", http://republicart.net/disc/aap/cvejic01_en.htm; Kunst, Bojana."Prognosis on Collaboration," http://www.howtodothingsbytheory.info/2010/05/13/bojana-kunst-prognosis-on-collaboration/; Bishop, Claire. "The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents," in *Artforum* (2006). On her turn Martina Ruhsam published a monograph on dance as collaborative praxis in 2011: Ruhsam, Martina. *Kollaborative Praxis: Choreographie*, Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2011.

3 Manchev, Boyan. "Transformance: The Body of Event," in M. Hochmuth, K. Kruschkova, and G. Schöllhammer (eds.), *It takes place when it doesn't*, Frankfurt am Main: Revolver Verlag, 2006; Manchev, Boyan. *The Body-Metamorphosis*, Sofia: Altera, 2007.

between an idea and a reality. On the one hand, there is the late utopian idea of collaboration (the creation of new "eventful" communities, according to Giulia Palladini's concept),[4] believing to step beyond the traditional patterns of modern subjectivity and collective. And on the other hand, we have the embodied economic reality that is imposing these new forms.

The work of art in the age of its performative (re)production

This raises our awareness of the conditions of the discourse, as well as of the practice, of collaboration. Hence, instead of repeating critical commonplaces, we should raise our awareness of the conditions of this practice, specifically an awareness of the structural determinations that are conditioning it.

The discourse of collaboration is strategically elaborated and staged against the realities of the modern forms of optimization of artistic production. The discourse on collaboration fosters the idea of an encounter of subjectivities, not on the basis of individual subjects, agendas, sets of tasks, etc., but on what is happening *between* them. For that reason, it implies the idea of contesting the end product. Overcoming the logic of the end product would mean overcoming the homogeneity, and fake autonomy, of the individual-centered production. Collaborative practices are supposed to resist the demand of constant production, which presupposes that should you exit the circuit of production you would find yourself in the non-being. Therefore, discourse on collaboration is responding to the desire to step beyond the patterns of subjective creation, and consequentially the modes of production, established by late modernity. From this perspective it focuses in on the process rather than on the end product.

Clearly, this orientation is based upon today's obvious critical accounts on the economic and political conditions. More precisely, on the naïve belief that processes, unlike products, have an ontologically different position to that of the circuits of exchange. While the "oeuvre" is clearly there, at hand, while it is present and available and therefore it can and will enter the market circuit in the form of a product, the process would be ungraspable by the circuits of exchange and therefore couldn't be commodified. Such a belief is very much related to some high points of early performance art theory, especially to Peggy Phelan's proposals on performance art.[5] As we know, according to Phelan, the performance art "piece," or rather action or practice, has the structural chance to essentially resist its marketable appropriation. This is due to its ephemeral character, which makes it irreducible to a stable oeuvre and therefore a product.

Not surprisingly, today we witness the failure of this theory; however it was fair (in a utopian way) to its objects in the 1960s, 1970s or even in the early 1980s. With a somewhat bitter critical consciousness, we could observe now how posthumously the ephemeral, processual performances (those which are not reduced to product or marketable forms and traces) are coming back as ghosts from the past. However, these ghosts, the phantoms wandering in the performance venues and contemporary art spaces, are recuperating or even growing anew their flesh in the immaterial and inorganic form of capital. We are witnessing an ultimate spectacle, the Last Judgment of value, where no value is lost. We understand that what was ephemeral, what was somewhat heroically wasted a long time ago, was indeed invested in the future, consciously or not. At this point of looking-like-impossible reversibility, capital reaches the same level of intensity as performance: *performance capitalism*. In performance capitalism we are close to infinity: it is a mode of production which pretends that there is no loss, no waste – no waste of value whatsoever. Yes, here the value augments through risk. Hence, the performance capitalist is becoming a Hegelian Master of value: the one who risks finitude in order to acquire value in the infinite.

You know too well what I refer to here; it would be grotesque to even evoke an example that haunts the global cultured society. No, it is not only Marina Abramović at MoMA; much before this, and throughout Europe, a series of important exhibitions, projects, and performances based on the patterns of re-enactment took place. However, in a broader context this tendency acquired publicity, especially in the U.S., through Abramović's re-enactment work. Abramović's re-enactments stretch back to 2002, but the publicity was mostly gained through her MoMA retrospective in 2010, as well as the controversial attempt to re-enact scenes from Pasolini's *Salò* (120 Days of Sodom, 1975) for a fundraising event at LA MoCA in 2011 (criticized in an open letter by Yvonne Rainer). In the case of the new generation of European and American artists, the form of re-enactment expressed the interest in the choreographic and performance structures and techniques from the past in questions of history, memory and

4 Palladini, Giulia. "Towards an Idle Theatre: The Politics and Poetics of Foreplay," *The Drama Review* 56:4 (2012): pp. 97-105.

5 Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, New York: Routledge, 1993.

archive, and therefore in forms of subjectivity. However, in the more spectacular institutional appropriations the re-enactment became a tool for an "Eternal return of the Same", for performative reproductions of 'classics' of performance and dance. Thus the trend of the re-enactment, which started as artistic gesture, critical to the tradition of historical re-construction and used as a powerful instrument to deal with complex issues of history, memory, archives, and production of value, progressively became a self-referential activity, reduced to "purely" aesthetic questions. However, in those cases including the spectacular retrospective at MoMA, all the remnants re-enacted are far from being repetitions of past actions. Rather, they are an *actual* action: a(n) (re-en-)act in the actuality of the present. This is the actuality of a new mode of production, which radically and retroactively destabilises the thesis of in-appropriability, of the irreductability to marketable cultural goods not only of performance art but also of the very form of art as performance: of *the work of art in the age of its performative (re)production*. This complexity lies on a simple account. There are new forms of organization of labor and of value production, which allow this appropriation.

The totalization of artistic production

The desire for stepping out of the necessity of constant production risks totalizing production itself. This is so precisely because of the conditions in which the practices in question are happening – the conditions of performance capitalism – where every form of production, which in this transformed biopolitical condition means every form of life, is subject to commodification, and where every aspect of work and/or life could be commodified. We could witness today, in multiple facets of contemporary art, such substitutive or compensatory transformations.

In that way the process of production acquires production value. This is a fundamental problem, which all "process-oriented" discourse, including the collaborative, needs to face. In this new condition of not only production but also of evaluating production and work and therefore sanctioning the production of social value, all formerly private activities – the preparation for work, the work for guaranteeing conditions for work (household, maintenance, health and aesthetic condition of body) – are valued as productive work.[6] However, paradoxically, they are not in fact valued. As a matter of fact they face the impossibility of evaluation, or in other words, of application of the forms of a control society such as described by Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault[7] for one simple reason: today nothing is valued as work any longer. Beyond any dialectics of labor, today's self-managerial condition imposes on us the condition of production – management and sanction – of "work-for-society" itself, of the very convention of labor as participation in social organization. As a result, the thin line separating public and private spaces is progressively blurred, and this makes the instrumentalization of the private space as part of the social capital possible. That is how, today, labor power is becoming commodity itself.

Thus, the "events" of the 70s are replaced by projects, and products by processes. What is called "process" appears in the end as a privileged form of commodification of life in the form of (fluid) production instead of end product. Hence, the affirmation that the process is not a product is false. It is an ideological mystification, coherent with the new social-economic realities of production. It perfectly responds to the "social turn," to the new "community-building" processes via creative industries, life-style, and social networks – the production of sociality as the last refuge of "creative" capital. Productibility, the potential of production, receives today the name of sociability. Exploitation of potential as such only means the establishment of the regime of pure sociality. Social existence is "pure" work.

Hence, there is no possibility of communicating a "work" without reducing and mediating the process (process is no longer work but "meta-work": a constant mediation through self-presentation of work itself). In this act of mediation, any process appears already as a product. As far as the process is mediated, it is a product. The *ontomedialisation* of the social world tends to establish a sphere of total mediation, in which the substance of the product is reduced to "fake" substance, while process itself as a human activity becomes paradoxically impossible. In the age of "creative" labor, everything is a product.

The emancipated production: Conclusion

Time has come for contemporary art and performance discourse to operate complex critical accounts on the economical process and on the notion of production in general. The first consequence of such a will for critical complexity would be to step beyond the reductive opposition between process and result, or product. Today, the

6 See Kunst, Bojana. "The Project Horizon: On the Temporality of Making," Projected Temporality, ed. Kunst, *Maska* 149-150, vol. XXVII (Autumn 2012).

7 See Deleuze, Gilles. "Postscript on the Societies of Control," October 59 (1992).

negative discourse on production is becoming counter-productive. The tools of the metalinguistic, self-legitimizing description of contemporary dance, borrowed from the powerful French philosophical discourse of the 1970s and the 1980s (first of all, by the line of Bataille-Blanchot's concept of *désœuvrement*, or inoperativity), which had radical critical potential twenty years ago, today risk to operate against their initial intentions.[8] The radical critique of function and activity, proposed by Georges Bataille, Alexandre Kojève, and Maurice Blanchot, followed by Jean-Luc Nancy and Giorgio Agamben, had as a horizon the elaboration of an alternative concept of activity, work, and economy, and was never falling into the trap of "simple" negativity, as the academic *doxa* later reduced it to. Similarly, in the field of contemporary dance, the emancipatory discourse on the withdrawal from the modern notions of function, activity, work, and product (characteristic of the theorists of early "conceptual" dance), appears in the end as an extension of Phelan's idea on the ephemerality of the performance event as resistance to the marketable appropriation of the products.

Nevertheless, in the last decade this clear opposition was progressively blurred, mostly by the needs of institutional simplification. The institutionalisation of "relational discourse", which, in consequence, developed the collaborative turn, accounted for the transformed idea of artistic activity or labor, thus also transforming the economic substance of the artistic "product." The product became a flexible category – "work in progress," "project" – and precisely as the critique of product, the very production process became a normative horizon. As a result, today the critique of production becomes counter-productive itself. The paradigm of negative concepts – absence, impossibility, impotence, inoperativity – which are important in order to think of dance in ontological terms, become more and more problematic in regard to the material consistence of this art practice. These concepts progressively became the vehicle of negative fetishization of a set of newly baptized normative features of contemporary dance, thus displacing and reducing the material consistence, not only of the practice, but of labor itself. But this tendency is ambiguously synchronic to performance capitalism, which today is doing precisely that: it simulates "non-products" – relations, cultural forms, experiences – as ultimate goods, as new types of immaterial products.

Therefore, to take position against production is neither mature nor a reflected political claim. We cannot imagine any social existence or artistic activity without production.

8 See Pouillaude, Frédéric. *Le désœuvrement chorégraphique*, Paris: Vrin, 2009.

Therefore, we should be at the level of the necessity of production. Yet, we shouldn't misunderstand this proposal by homogenizing it with the constant and pressing demand for production, where the disguising of products as "non-products" is becoming normative. On the contrary, our task today is to think of art, performance and dance precisely as action – on the side of actuality, on the side of action, on the side of *energeia*. Thus, we need a radicalization or an extension of our understanding of the work as an *energetic effect* instead of a product.

Contemporary art should face the necessity for a new concept of production, related to a new concept of action, of activity, and contribute to its elaboration. It has the opportunity to confront the risks at stake by growing meta-critical awareness and strategies, and experimenting with new forms of labor and production, of production of value and exchange that are alternatives to the standardized marketable forms. There is no emancipation possible without the invention of new modes of production, and therefore, of new forms of life in common.

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JOSEFINE WIKSTRÖM

PRACTICE IN/AS CONTEMPORARY ART VS PRACTICE IN PRACTICE-BASED PHDS

Since the introduction of practice-based PhDs in art in the mid 1980s in the UK[1]– also commonly known, as "research-led practice", "practice-led research", "theory-led practice", "practice-as-research", "research-artist", and so on[2] – there has been much debate both for and against it.[3] The primary defence of a doctorate in the arts seems primarily to stem from a deep desire to equalise art with other forms of knowledge. Art, it is argued, must stop being a "subordinate form of knowledge"[4] and instead reach the *same* status as other forms of knowledge within academia, the university and society more broadly. The critique of the practice-based PhD in art has, on the one hand, focused on the fact that there are no standardised criteria for it and that it therefore fails in its aspiration of becoming like any other science or form of knowledge. Another argument against research in the arts has focused on the increasing commodification and neoliberalisation of higher education in general and its implications on art in a broader sense.[5]

What hasn't been discussed, which I believe touches on the above-mentioned questions as well as puts them in a more general philosophical and critical perspective, is the question of which concept of 'practice' is at stake within *practice*-based PhDs in art. This text then is a brief and initial attempt to try to begin to untangle this problem. More specifically, it tries to understand the relation between the concepts of *practice* within the context of practice-based PhDs in art and *practice* as understood within the framework of a critical category of contemporary art. Some of the questions this text would like to ask are: Which concept of practice is asserted when one talks about practice-based PhDs and what is its relation to science and knowledge? Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, how does it relate to a concept of practice within a critical understanding of contemporary art? This article does not attempt to argue for or against practice-based PhDs in art. Instead it wishes to see if it is possible to shed some light on what seems like presumptive understandings about what *practice* in research in the arts stands for, and the consequences such assumptions may have for its relation to a critical concept of art.

Practice in Practice-based PhDs in Art

One way of exploring which concept of 'practice' is at work within the practice-based PhD in art is by looking at some of its basic premises.[6] What is the object of study in a practice-based PhD in art? Which methods are being employed, what is being submitted, how is it assessed and, more generally, what is its self-understanding with regards to knowledge?

Since anything can become material for a contemporary art practice, a PhD-student in art is neither restricted to a particular object nor a discipline of study. Concepts, paintings, ecology, tables, atoms, or whatever else, can be researched. Secondly, the PhD-student in art is not restricted to any particular method; instead she is being told "all manners of research methods and models are available."[7] The research can be empirical, critical, intuitive, textual, or can take any other model of research. Thirdly, and as a consequence of the previous two premises, the object of submission in a practice-based PhD in art is non-standardised and can, in principle, take any form. Depending on which country, university and department the PhD is undertaken in, the criteria for submissions vary slightly. However most of them ask for a substantial

1 For a detailed history of the development of research in the arts in the UK see: Mottram, Judith. "Researching Research in Art and Design", in: James Elkins (ed.), *Artists with PhDs: On the new Doctoral Degree in Studio Art*, Washington DC: New Academia Publishing, 2009, pp. 35-71.

2 Burgin, Victor. "Thoughts on 'Research' Degrees", in: James Elkins (ed.), *Artists with PhDs: On the new Doctoral Degree in Studio Art*, Washington DC: New Academia Publishing, 2009, pp. 71.

3 See for example Elkins, James (ed.). *Artist's with PhDs: On the new Doctoral Degree in Studio Art*, Washington DC: New Academia Publishing, 2009; Suchin, Peter. "Rebel Without a Course", *Art Monthly* 345, April 2011, pp.11–14 and the letters that followed throughout 2011 and Andrew Mc Gettigan, "Art Practice and the Doctoral Degree" available at: http://www.afterall.org/online/art-practice-and-the-doctoral-degree#cite5788, (14 December 2014).

4 Price, Elisabeth. "To PhD or not to PhD", *Art Monthly* 350, 2011, pp. 18-19.

5 For a detailed analysis and outline of the changes in higher education in the UK since 2010 see: McGettigan, Andrew. *The Great University Gamble: Money, Markets and the Future of Higher Education*, London: Pluto Press (2013).

6 I am here primarily drawing on the model in the UK. However the very general statements I am making here are applicable to most research degrees in art.

7 McGettigan, Andrew. "Art Practice and the Doctoral Degree", 2011, http://www.afterall.org/online/art-practice-and-the-doctoral-degree#cite5788, (14 December 2014).

amount of artworks as well as a written contextualising thesis that situates the work and the research. Finally then, (slightly contradicting the other basic premises of the degree) a PhD in art is assessed on the same criteria as any research degree and should therefore constitute a substantial and original contribution to the field of knowledge, in this case, 'art'. London-based writer and researcher Andrew McGettigan concludes the requirements for something to be understood as research.

> Research that advances knowledge goes beyond a personal exploration and requires a clear sense of how what is being pursued will be of significance to a broader community of academics and practitioners. To wit, when all is said and done, what would others learn from reading the thesis that they could not get elsewhere? Why there is a need for this research?[8]

A clear example that institutions which offer practice-based PhDs in art are aiming for this understanding of research can be found explicitly on The Royal College of Art's website. Here, potential future PhD-students are encouraged to ask themselves the following questions before embarking on a research degree: "How do you propose […] to develop the field (what is your methodology?) How do you see your work in the wider context of the discipline? How does it relate to existing work in the area?"[9]

The concept of "practice" at stake here – although never articulated or discussed but rather taken as an assumption – seems to me to be based on a scientific, empirical and positivistic research model. Furthermore, it seems to me as if, included in this concept of practice, is a notion of the object understood as empirical and scientific. Art is taken as a scientific object positioned on the same ontological level as any other type of object as, for example, "the Ebola virus", "the concept of morality" or "the gender roles in Pasolini's films". What appears to be researched then in a practice-based PhD in art is either *art* as a scientific object (the experimental development of installation practice or of choreography for example) or the things or objects that might appear in art (flowers, tables, colours and movements for example.) In both cases art is posited as a scientific empirical object, which can be investigated through standardised models of research. The main consequence of this concept of practice is that it subsumes the object of art ontologically with any other type of scientific object. In doing so, it neglects art as a privileged space of cultural production and therefore breaks with the concept of art as it has emerged within modernity and continued to develop into its contemporary form.[10]

Needless to say, the concept of practice that is taken for granted in practice-based PhDs has come a long way from its critical Kantian root and its development in Marxist and critical philosophy, where it was tied to ideas of freedom, criticality and production.[11] Instead I think it is possible, philosophically and institutionally, to trace the concept of practice present in practice-based PhDs back to the encounter between science, philosophy and art in the late 19th and early 20th century, as well as in French structuralist thought on the one hand and in American pragmatism on the other. It can also be observed in poststructuralist thinking and, more recently, in thinkers related to speculative realism and object-oriented ontology in which science, philosophy and art merge in uncritical ways within which the 'flat ontology'[12] of things are celebrated.

The problem is not so much that this is the concept of practice at work within practice-based PhDs. Rather, the problem is that the field itself seems completely unaware of it, or at least does not openly say that this is what it is based on. When the British Turner prize winning artist Elizabeth Price asks for art to stop being defined as a lower form of knowledge she does not ask herself why she wants art to be knowledge in the first place. The question whether art should, or indeed can, be considered a field of knowledge and which implications surface when we understand art as knowledge are completely absent from the discussion.

In my view, the real question that needs to be posed revolves around the relation between art and science within a contemporary art paradigm. It is beyond the scope of this article to explore this fundamental and enormous question. Instead, I will briefly look into which concept of practice is at stake within a critical understanding of contemporary art.

8 Ibid.
9 http://www.rca.ac.uk/research-innovation/research/student-research/doing-a-research-degree/, (14 December 2014).
10 For the development of a modern concept of art see for example: Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Rules of Art*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996 or Burger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
11 For a critical and full account of the notion of practice in the history of philosophy see for example: Lobkowicz, Nikolaous. *Theory and Practice: History of a Concept from Aristotle to Marx,* Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967, and Bernstein, J. Richard. *Praxis and Action: Contemporary Philosophies of Human Activity,* Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971.
12 "Flat ontology" is a term coined by Mexican-American philosopher Manuel de Landa. For a recent overview of de Landa's and other related thinkers see: Brown, Nathan. "Speculation at the crossroads", *Radical Philosophy*, 188, Nov/Dec 2014. http://www.radicalphilosophy.com/reviews/individual-reviews/speculation-at-the-crossroads, (14 December 2014).

"Practice" in/as Contemporary Art

So how does the concept of practice at work in the methods and criteria of practice-based PhDs differ from the concept of practice at stake in contemporary art practice?

I would argue that the "practice" in the commonly used expression "contemporary art practice" must first of all be understood as a marker of the shift between modern and contemporary art, and therefore, with the break from medium-specificity and the introduction of post-disciplinary practices in the early 1960s. This change in art has been defined as the "neo-avant-garde,"[13] "the social turn"[14] and as a movement from "form to process"[15], but in my view it should rather be understood as a shift from discipline to practice or as a change from medium to mediation.

If art in modernity was mediated via defined mediums – mainly painting and sculpture, which were reproduced through specific disciplinary skills – this "craft-based ontology of mediums"[16] was radically questioned and transformed into art practices such as sound art or performance from the early 1960s onwards. Consequently, if the meaning of the modern artwork was mediated through its materials and the specific skills tied to these materials, the meaning of contemporary art began to spread out and constitute itself in the social.

Environments, happenings, task-based dance and event-scores are all examples of how this radical break with materials and skills opened up for the constitution of meaning at the level of the social. The practice in contemporary art must therefore be understood as a socialisation of the relations between subjects and objects and, when regarded as such, resonates with the concept of practice found in German philosopher Karl Marx's early writings.[17]

Because of its inherently social character, the basic premise and challenge for contemporary art is the question of unification. In other words, how does contemporary art become art? Who judges whether art is art, when anything can be art? How does art not simply stand in for any empirical object but instead come to have a particular function within modern capitalist society?

Writing in the late 1960s, German philosopher Theodor Adorno contends that one of the specificities with the modern autonomous (what he terms "nominalistic") artwork is its radical particularity and break with universals. Instead of subsuming itself to universals (posed as norms and conventions, such as 'perspectival painting') the modern artwork negates these and by doing so mediates new forms. This causes it to be placed in contradiction to all other artworks and as such cannot be judged according to its success in materialising pre-established conventions, instead of being judged on its own terms. The consequence of this understanding of the modern artwork's radical particularization is that it can only be understood dialectically, in the sense that the history of what art *is* can only be conceived of from the standpoint of what it *became*. From this perspective, art as such can never be understood as a totality of all different types of arts. Therefore, it is only possible to be unified temporarily and retrospectively. At the centre of the modern autonomous artwork we thus find a speculative basis in which particular artworks negate universals, which are under constant negotiation, and in so doing, they set their own standards, models and forms of mediation.

Adorno famously didn't follow through with his argument of the particular artwork to its contemporary form. In *Aesthetic Theory*, but even more so in the article *Art and the Arts*, he declares that the nominalistic dialectic between the universal and particular is destroyed with the so-called "erosion of the arts"[18], which is the "powerful trend"[19] that Adorno rightly recognises as the dominant tendency within art at the end of the 1960s. Adorno's argument is that the liquidation of the different arts resulted in artworks ceasing to mediate themselves with universals and instead ending up in "facticity" or literalness. This leaves the materials, he states, purely arbitrary and literal. Absolute individuation without technique, form or construction destroys the potential for art to mean anything at all.

However, rather than regarding the aleatory and post-disciplinary works of the 1960s as "unchecked", as Adorno does, they need to be understood as mediations of other universals than those which Adorno sets out. As British

13 Buchloh, Benjamin H.D. *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975*, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2003.
14 Joseph, Branden W. *Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts after Cage*, New York: Zone Books, 2008, p.101.
15 Rodenbeck, Judith. *Radical Prototypes: Allan Kaprow and the Invention of Happenings*, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2011, p.117.
16 Osborne, Peter. "The Fiction of the Contemporary: Speculative Collectivity and Transnationality in the Atlas Group", in: Avanessian, Armen and Skrebowski, Luke (eds.), *Aesthetics and Contemporary Art*, Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2011, p.116.
17 For an account of this understanding of practice see: Balibar, Etienne. *The Philosophy of Marx*, London: Verso, 2014 and Osborne, Peter. How To Read Marx, London: Granta, 2005.
18 Adorno, Theodor. "Art and the Arts", in: R. Tiedemann, (ed.), *Can One Live After Auschwitz?* A Philosophical Reader, Stanford University Press, 2003, pp. 384.
19 Ibid, pp. 369.

philosopher Peter Osborne argues: "For if modern art is to be true to its rejection of received universals in the name of subjective freedom, it must also reject the auto-destructive universalisation of its own inherent nominalism and enter into new kinds of relations with universals – both old and new."[20]

If avant-garde art mediated heterogeneity via social forms (such as the montage, monochrome and collage), art after the 1960s began to mediate heterogeneous activity through new social forms (such as the event-scores, the instruction and tasks). In its complete socialisation, contemporary art practice today must – if it wants to be art – continue to negate universals and by so doing produce new forms of mediation. If it fails in this it becomes as any other object and loses its function and meaning. In contemporary art – which PhDs by practice in art claim to be concerned with – practice is therefore not at all understood as an all-inclusive discursive activity that dissolves by levelling art with any other activity. Practice is here instead understood as a specifically cultural form of human production rendered visible through art, through its negation.

Towards a critical concept of "practice" within art?

What conclusions could we make from this brief exploration of practice within practice-based PhDs in art and practice as understood in a critical post-Kantian modern framework? Practice in both contexts is marked by a strong sense of generality and sociality. The real diversion between the two concepts at stake here comes to the aspect of unification, totality or, even judgement. Because if art can be anything and be made in any way, then how does art become art? How does it, so to speak, distinguish itself from anything else? If we follow a critical and dialectic concept of art, accounted for briefly above, the unification of art always occurs retrospectively and speculatively in its negation of universals. Art can only function as art if it breaks with these universals, and this rupture with universals is only possible to see retrospectively.

This causes a real problem for the evaluation and assessment of practice-based PhDs in the arts. What is judged in these degrees? Is it the method, the content or the contribution to the field of knowledge? What if art in itself isn't like any other type of knowledge that has universal pre-set standards? What if art negates universals and is only possible to judge retrospectively against what it became? What if this is the very function of art? These are the questions that any critical inquiry into the relevance or non-relevance of research in the arts needs to begin to grapple with.

20 Osborne, Peter. *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophies of Contemporary Art*, London: Verso, 2013, pp. 84.

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NINA POWER FROM THE CRITIQUE OF ACADEMIC CONSERVATISM TO THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY HQ: FROM '68 TO TODAY

Students are always too much, have always been too much... occupying (in every sense) a curious position in relation to the society that creates them, suspends them and yet expects them to rejoin it at a point in the near future. The depiction of students as a mass body, since the expansion of higher education in the 1960s, has tended towards extremes. According to the popular imaginary bolstered by the media, students are one or all of the following things, sometimes even several at once, even where there is tension between the terms: feckless, lazy, hedonistic, idealist, unworldly, scruffy, entitled, awkward, irreverent, sexually louche, indifferent towards their own organisation while pretending to know how the world should work...the student is at once the negative underside of the current world *and* the locus of optimism about a better, future one. The student protesters who occupied and smashed up the London Conservative Party Headquarters in 2010, who took over campuses up and down the country, who faced police violence and prison sentences for fighting the tripling of tuition fees, cuts to university funding and the abolition of the Education Maintenance Allowance, were fighting indeed for an image of a better world from the midst of one that seemed brutally determined to crush any such ambitions. So where do student protesters fit on the media-approved list of student characteristics? They are also too much, and express a peculiar paradox: the stereotype of the apathetic individual student suddenly morphs into panic about the active, protesting collective student body – "Go back to not caring!" is the implied message. Far easier to cope with one set of negative images than to have to disrupt them with a new host of categories.

But who is the contemporary student, really? Where does his or her creative opposition lie? Can we position student protesters and occupiers since the 1960s on a kind of continuum, or has the content of the protests themselves altered too radically? What kinds of knowledge are generated by student protests, then and now? What kinds of knowledge do student protesters themselves pass on to their lecturers, to the media, to the broader culture? Despite the continued attempt to render students somehow separate from the world at large (the world of work, perhaps, the world of "real", "tough" decisions), the contemporary student is a complex amalgam of contradictory pressures - the subject supposed to know (eventually), the subject supposed to pay (eventually), the subject supposed to contribute to the social whole (...eventually). But even these constitutive postponements break down in the relentless colonising of life by the market: students are already workers. The attempt over the past decade or so to generate the image of the consumer or client-subject, "investing" in his or her future has not been entirely successful, nor could it be when the other side of this subject is the individual who can also be ranked, judged, who must operate in regimes of knowledge unrelated to the financial imperative. Is the student "buying" a degree, or merely purchasing the opportunity to learn, and to be judged on that learning? Is the degree the product, or is the student him or herself rather what is "produced"? It is not surprising, therefore, that the battle-ground for students in 2010 focused less on questions of the internal organisation of universities themselves, their myriad hierarchies and exclusions (which nevertheless continue to exist), and far more on the external economic constraints generated by government proposals. But it should be remembered that the UK student protests and occupations of 2010 were flush with the possible futures of others: these were not struggles to improve the lot of the current student, so much as a fight for those who would follow - and all those who would now not - in the financially punitive and anti-redistributive education system of the near future, the one we now, in fact, inhabit. The attempts to dissociate students from their role as indebted future workers, or, indeed, as currently existing workers who happen to study, was still prominent, as spectres of May '68, the combination of student and workers striking together, continue to haunt the existing order. To take one example, Electricians ("Sparks") who organised wildcat strikes over pay and working conditions were forcibly prevented by police from joining up with a 2011 London student march, because the most worrying thing of all would be the explicit practical recognition of common interests. It is instructive to look back to the famous student occupations and protests of the 1960s in relation to more recent events to see how similarities and differences play out across the decades. If we accept the central, though not all-encompassing, role of the economic in recent protests, what can we say of the demands to rethink

knowledge, rewrite curricula, to truly participate in the construction of education, to upturn hierarchies both institutional and personal that we associate with May ‘68 and with prominent UK events, such as the six-week occupation of Hornsey Art School in the same month? If Hornsey (among many other things) challenged the separation of theory and practice, stressed a processual relation to decision-making and privileged the creation of democratic networks over hierarchical knowledge-dissemination, where were the equivalent debates in recent student protests? Did art have a privileged role in the construction of imagined alternatives? We can see that the consequences of the revolutionary ideas at Hornsey were played out in the decades that followed, within and outside of the walls of the academy, where questions of the structure and management of universities and the knowledge they constructed became more central. In 2010, the Middlesex occupation, arguably the forerunner for the many subsequent student actions of the year, was similarly concerned with hierarchies - the decisions of senior management that would see the Philosophy department closed, despite its incredible success and prominence. The battlefield was less the content of the courses, or democratic participation in the institution, than the form of the contemporary university itself, overwhelmingly shaped by the mystical invocation of “market forces”. In this sense then, every university, whether an ex-Polytechnic (as Middlesex is) or a Russell Group institution, was united in its condemnation of the financial exclusions to come.

It is possible to look back at Hornsey in a way that fills one with a nostalgic sadness. If only we were in a position to talk about the things that really matter rather than having to constantly battle against the very survival of the university itself, as closure after closure follows from crude economic “analysis” and institutional income falls in the name of “austerity”. We could, instead, once again, destroy the university in order to save the university: as it stands, all we can do is try to save the university from those who would see it simply parceled off to the market.

5th of April 2014

DEAR COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS,

Two weeks behind deadline for this text, it is now close to midnight. Not reaching my collaborators on the phone, the only exchange possible for producing this contribution to the conference has been occasional and brief email exchanges. Due to their lack of time, they finally proposed I write a personal take on our collaborative work in Frankfurt. Nevertheless, I wish to thank them and the many others that have made this possible as well as the organising team of this conference for showing understanding for our delay.

What is it that keeps me writing, against all good intentions to stop working around the clock?

Fighting off self-accusations of self-exploitation and over-identification with the figure of the post-fordist worker, I remind myself that I could stop any time and that my surroundings have kept providing me outstanding opportunities to interact meaningfully with the world: as a dancer, performer, creator, writer, curator, alone and with others, both adult and in their teenage years, experienced, amateur and emerging artists. I've learned to work with (and in resistance to) institutions such as companies, theatres, museums, schools and universities.

The incessant switching of contexts is highly demanding, sometimes leading to disorientation and exhaustion. Each switch requires the adaptation of one's knowledge to the addressed context. It provides ample opportunities to challenge one's performance, skills, assumptions and values. Yet it also comes at the price of long working hours and discontinuous social relations. Sometimes overtaken by the demands of the work on the one hand, the need for this thing called life or private life on the other hand, and the anxiety produced by the precariousness of one's living situation, little time remains for reflecting on one's practice and that of others, for seeing it in relation to social and political developments, for resisting one's own demands and those of one's professional field.

Which brings me back to the seminal question: Why is it that I keep on writing tonight? It appears to me that the reason is similar to the one of choosing to - on top of it all - engage in the MA Choreography and Performance study program in Giessen. And maybe even similar to the reason for being one of the initiators and sustainers of ID_Frankfurt, an association of independent professional performing artists in Frankfurt and the region of Hessen. The motivation as it appears to me tonight is the hope of discussing the work of the past few years with colleagues and friends. Undeniably, there is also a social dimension. That of being temporarily part of a community, a community not defined by identity or any other forms of stable borders, but rather one assembled by a common problem, a common interest: the mind-boggling challenge of making art today and surviving as artists who seek to determine their own conditions of production.

Much of the work of ID_Frankfurt of the past few years has been driven by such concerns. It has been aiming at providing an environment that supports artistic development over time, makes space for other production rhythms than the ones determined by the market, sees artistic work both as process of positioning and searching, as a discontinuous practice that paradoxically benefits from sustainable spaces for social encounter, exchange and debate. I perceive the contemporary dilemma as a chance to partake in the development of new (temporary) institutions, to think about new modes of curating and conceiving festivals, making workspace and further resources accessible.

Another important dimension of such a space is the fostering of a sense of solidarity amidst a competitive market demanding high amounts of flexibility, mobility and individuality yet providing for mostly nothing but very precarious lives. In spite of increasing neoliberal tendencies, the welfare state of Germany still provides significant amounts of funding for the arts. The vanishing of the public space and increasing economic reasoning is reason enough for political action. Even more since it is precisely the smaller, critical and risk-taking structures that are more prone to rationalisation in times of budget cuts. Being unrepresented by workers' unions, I find it of great importance to not only delineate the socio-political dimensions of our work, but also to claim the right to be acknowledged as workers, and also to fight for the preservation and development of infrastructure that adapts to the changing nature of our work. Yet how does one act and speak with and on behalf of a scene that does not perceive itself as one?

Self-organisation has been useful for giving voice to shared concerns and needs amongst the heterogeneous *community* of artists in the realm of local and regional politics. A further benefit of organising ourselves was that

ID_Frankfurt has been able to gain the trust of cultural institutions. This then enabled individuals to gain access to their equipment and know-how and provide many with occasional sources of income. Beginning with more classical forms of political work, (petitions, surveys, podium discussions, press conferences, political forums and similar) the next step was to take action. Yearly festivals (ROUGH CUTS, Implantieren auf Naxos) created frameworks that gave local artists incentives to create and meet in and through their work. Through the setting up of a rehearsal center (Z Zentrum fu ̈r Proben und Forschung) and thanks to its usage by many local and international artists, the community became more tangible. So did the work of ID_Frankfurt.

Each of these initiatives being very low budget, their implementation relied (and still relies) on high amounts of engagement and conviction. With time, it became evident that the initiation and maintenance of such structures could not have taken place without the uplifting dynamics of friendship, passion for one's work and the fuel of resistance towards the status quo. This, of course, comes at the price of blurring the line between work and private life, and also at the cost of absolute openness. We do demand adequate working conditions *for all* and give great attention to *enabling participation* in decision-making. Yet we cannot (and do not wish to) deny that the nature of the events initiated by ID_Frankfurt is determined by the interests and desires of those implementing them as much as by the current state of affairs in Frankfurt.

The festival Implantieren auf Naxos, for example, was a result of ongoing debates around the funding of performing arts in Frankfurt, more specifically the project funding and the freelance scene. Exhausted by the endless (but much needed) repetition of the lack of funding and misbalance in distribution between state theatres and the freelance scene, we chose to launch a festival that would invite artists to produce specifically for a location. We had the luck to be offered the Naxoshalle, an industrial space of 2200 square meters, for two months. It had remained vastly untouched since it was shut down end of the '80s and then occupied by the Theater Willy Praml, which chose to be as minimally invasive as possible. The lack of technical equipment and staff (due to low budget) provided another restriction, yet a productive one as it turned out judging by the quality of the five works presented. Low budget also implied little expectations of sponsors needed to be cared for. All of these parameters encouraged us to seize the opportunity to re-ask the question how we, as artists, operate within a given context instead of trying to exhaust ourselves as hosts in simulating theatre-like conditions.

It is important to mention here that the ongoing debates that led to the festival were initiated by the results of an evaluation of the freelance dance and theatre scene in Frankfurt. Unfortunately, formulated in a polemic manner, four experts chosen by the arts council came to the conclusion that the scene in Frankfurt is dominated by a group of (almost strictly male) directors running their own theatres and companies since their foundation in the 80s, leaving little space for new developments and younger generations. Some reacted by trying to protect the status quo while others (me amongst others), withstanding accusations of neoliberalism, worked on revising the local funding policies to adapt them to the current diversity of modes of production, to professionalise the decision-taking procedures in hope of thereby ensuring better working conditions and more openness for new impulses in the arts.

It was in the wake of this conflictual process that Willy Praml, commonly identified with the "older" generation of directors in Frankfurt approached us with the proposal of making use of the Naxoshalle, the space he perceives as his. Even though this collaboration (as many other collaborations and events that have taken place through the work of ID_Frankfurt) has been great in many ways, it has also shown in a very immediate and often harsh way that government funded art production is closely linked to questions of power, economic interests and reasoning and painstaking bureaucratic and democratic procedures.

Facing the accusations by the ones that feel threatened by change, I wonder: Is the change I am promoting really for the best? Is it legitimate to subject myself to such an intense workload? Is this so called scene I defend more than a ghost? More than a strange by-product of my own romantic yearning for a sense of belonging? These doubts remain as I, now still awake and well into the night, send off this paper looking forward to meeting you at the end of May.

Yours, Norbert Pape for ID_Frankfurt e.V.

HARUTYUN ALPETYAN

CORRUPTION VS EDUCATION

> Dadaism sought to abolish art without realizing it; surrealism sought to realize art without abolishing it. The critical position since developed by the situationists has shown that the abolition and realization of art are inseparable aspects of a single transcendence of art.
>
> Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, §191

After we leave all the above mentioned questions for a while, let us imagine a context, or a situation, or just a state, in which an education is not needed at all. In other words it is useless. Since it seems to be a possible option, it's worth considering some of its aspects. Indeed this precarious assumption may or may not provoke questions, such as what is precisely meant by education – schools, university, academies etc – or, what is precisely meant by the statement that education is not needed at all. However, rather than immediately answering them, let us first simply observe the conditions from which this kind of assumption might emerge. Perhaps this observation will also shed light on its obscure sides. Endless talks around what education in Armenia should look like, and perpetual attempts towards and against importing and applying innovative programs upon it, maintain the false image of a real and existing educational system under development, while as such it does not exist at all. It is kaput. Although one can clearly observe a certain system behind it, the question remains: Does it have anything to do with education? Perhaps yes and no at the same time. No, in a sense that it is rather an experimental area. Where on the one hand there are the conservative believers in *good Soviet learning models*, and on the other hand, the believers in *so called Western models,* who are trying to recover once and for all the education system, the invalid patient suffering from the injuries of the '90s? (Interestingly enough, this endless treatment of our attempts to recover something that has long gone, that has been interrupted and damaged, is quite symptomatic of our society. Just as the phantom limb, when we still feel it hurting or itching after it has been completely amputated and removed.) Both sides seemingly succeed in terms of either structure or content, depending on the sphere of a particular institution. Even if they succeed in their attempts, the overall logistics of the reforms necessarily remains and reproduces the existing authoritarian framework, which involves marketing and representation of the ruling power.

Indeed one should not overlook the desperate attempts of a few individual professors, who try to implement their own programs as alternatives to the existing official ones, by defending an autonomous space of sorts within the general official system (by official I mean both the so-called public and private/commercial). One cannot be sure whether this will remain possible in the future, due to the tendency for several years now being to centralise decision-making and curriculum-building processes as much as possible. Then one can claim that this system in its entirety does have something to do with education of sorts, which is linked, however, to merely skilling and reskilling subjects in how to avoid studying. Yet, at the same time, attaining all the benefits this studying would ideally bring about - in other words, how to study without actually studying. This practice that proliferated in the early '90s still exists. And this very fact conditions the paradoxical phenomenon, where many students pay for studying whilst simultaneously paying for not studying, effectively meaning they bribe professors in order to get minimal grades, not even the highest ones. This absurdity is undoubtedly also conditioned by the fact that to be educated, or rather to have graduated, still notionally occupies the same symbolic space. While everyone would honestly acknowledge that it is rather a simulation of education, nonetheless most parents make huge efforts to pay for their children to graduate, as if they are paying for something real and substantial. Coming to the issue of privatisation and corporatisation of universities, and asking whether the corporatisation of the university is a global phenomenon, the answer would be "Yes it is, definitely".

However, besides the fact that here and there this corporatisation happens more or less differently, the remaining question is what is the effect of this corporatisation, or to put it differently, what do these corporations ultimately produce on a local level? What they specifically produce is not essentially the same. Their production differs, yet some shared qualities might be articulated here. Mainly the change of their status and the status of their production creates a space of sorts, which does not remain void, and quickly attracts something to inescapably occupy it. If the corporatisation makes the education lose its status of public good, then something else attains this status, thus making some substitutes to it necessarily appear, such as corruption. This is one particular case of how the public good is substituted in general. There is no conceptual

contradiction in the claim that corruption becomes public good. Indeed, this claim challenges the notion and the concept of public good (or rather the categories of both public and good) for it is normally perceived in a positive sense only. When substituted, these categories are actually redefined; therefore they change their meaning. Likewise, what is being changed is their essence, which is of a suppressive and emancipatory nature at the same time. To be determined, this nature is continuously being contested between different regimes or powers, or between powers and non-powers. This attribution and definition are hence the matter of a struggle – big or small, visible or concealed, yet still a universal struggle. What differs from place to place is the outcome of this struggle, which in general terms is the prevalence of either the suppressive or emancipatory element attributed to the essence of public and of good.

So why corruption? Corruption is a universal substitute and effectively works in many instances. (In order to check its applicability or eligibility in each instance, one should simply ask whether something – in this case education – is actually needed if there is a perfectly functional corruption.) That which works well or is simply efficient is quite often perceived as a good, regardless of its content or nature. An obvious case of this is charity. It is worth mentioning a special form of charity, set up by high ranking politicians and their benevolent wives, which mostly takes pathetic shapes and implies the following cynical messageČ “Look, we steal and appropriate more and more of what belongs to you, we change the legislation so that our businesses develop and your life complicates. However, we kindly reward those of you who are in deepest need, who are sick, who starve, who want to study in Oxford and Harvard after all”. In this case the charity appears as a perversion, a cynically open substitute to social security and social services in general. However, this cynicism simply replicates the one with which improvements in social services are usually made, literally presented as a good turn or a big favour. And unfortunately, it’s being accepted. (Seen globally these cynical mechanisms work perfectly on the larger scale of international politics and economy and humanitarian discourse.) Clearly corruption never functions explicitly while what it develops is always visible, and represents itself through the same structures that it affects and imitates concurrently. That is where the substitution that maintains the illusion of existence, and at the same time the existence of illusion, happens. Again, everyone admits the perverted inadequacy, illegitimacy, and fakeness of something, however continuing to treat it as genuine. (Perhaps the analogy with phantom limbs might be relevant here too.)

Let us now come back to the issue of education and the claim upon its uselessness, and finally the purpose of such a claim. Taken seriously, this claim should trigger a general necessity to negate that which is now being constantly (re)produced and received as education. This necessity repeatedly manifested itself in the most radical cultural protests that all – despite their contextual differences – had in common this very necessity of negation. (If the observation of the protesting students of Santa Cruz was “the jobs we are working toward will be no better than the jobs we already have to pay our way through school” then in the Armenian context, this would certainly sound like, “if the jobs we are working toward, and the jobs we and our parents have in order to pay our way through school and university, are equally accessible through corruption, and are definitely not accessible with the fragmented knowledge we are supposed to get, then why do we need it?”.) One might have made two points about this negation. Firstly, when its necessity appears it must be manifested and enacted; otherwise it will be appropriated, instrumentalised, and recuperated, by the very object of negation – the force(s) that have conditioned it. Secondly, its manifestation should go beyond the abstract negation – which is indeed of a critical and basic prerequisite – and go even beyond the proposals of alternatives to what is negated, which is also an essential component, for the negation is implicitly constitutive. What its manifestation should also ultimately entail is a constitution of a body of pure negation that is sensible and implies the logics of the *counter* rather than the *anti*. Simply because counter denotes an opposition to the way the object is rendered and represented, while anti denotes an opposition to the object itself, its existence). What this practice may integrate is (was) always the matter of specific instances, from counter-revolution to counter-education, counter-knowledge, counter-learning in counter-institutes, counter-art, counter-culture, etc. One might also think of counter-public and counter-good, where the public and the good are not opposed with the private and the evil but are opposed with – and perhaps further transcended to – another public and another good. This could possibly be the way we may avoid being blamed for seeking to abolish *something* without realising it, and seeking to realise *something* without abolishing it.

GAL KIRN

FORGOTTEN HISTORY OF THE COMMONS IN SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA: A CASE OF SELF-MANAGED CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE PERIOD OF 1960S AND 1970S

Introduction: Re-orienting commons to social ownership?

In recent literature that criticizes neoliberalism and austerity policies, the concept of the "common(s)" has been very often used as central to both the theoretical imaginary and to political strategy to unite different social groups and agencies in the struggle *against* dispossession and privatisation, and *for* the struggle for commons. Despite a deep validity for the political and theoretical usage of commons in the emancipatory strategies, this article will make a critical step towards a few now already established claims of the chief theoretical protagonists of the commons – Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri[1] – who offer a way out from the allegedly false binaries and dilemmas between private or public, state or market, capitalism or socialism. My approach could be aligned with some theoretical remarks that David Harvey, Jacques Rancière and Vittorio Morfino[2] directed against Hardt and Negri; especially on the level of a certain disavowal of Marx's analysis of fictitious capital, troubles with the commons in the light of scarcity of resources and decentralisation, and the blurred border between ontology and history (subjectivation of the multitude), which makes it extremely difficult to imagine a consistent strategy for the commons.

However, this critique works in the theoretical background of this article, while the main objective focuses on a historical example that has been largely ignored in the literature on the commons: social ownership in socialist Yugoslavia. As is known for Hardt and Negri, but also for some other "autonomist" thinkers and philosophers of communism, socialism is described as a historical failure, a political deadlock, or merely one of "false alternatives", the other one being capitalism.[3] What follows is not a (Yugo)nostalgic account, but both a critical and affirmative evaluation of self-management politics, which today deserves a more precise historicisation and contextualisation. I would join the assessment of theorists Dolenec and Žitko, who find it "amusing"[4], when observing the contemporary fashionable importation of the theory of commons into the (post)Yugoslavian context, which comes without any political and theoretical reflection on

1 Hardt, Michael and Negri, Antonio. *Commonwealth*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 2009. Also, in parts of the Occupy movement, Social Forum, and many other political initiatives the "fight for common" became a master-signifier. Unquestionably there are other important definitions of common, such as Ostrom, Elin. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1990; Federici, Silvia. "Feminism and the Politics of the Commons", 2010 accessible: http://www.commoner.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/federici-feminism-and-the-politics-of-commons.pdf; Cafentzis, 2010 "A Tale of Two Conferences. Globalization, the Crisis of Neoliberalism and Question of the Commons", accessible: http://www.commoner.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/caffentzis_a-tale-of-two-conferences.pdf. Ana Vilenica correctly states that one central paradox of the commons is its arbitrary meaning, which through a correct critique of the authoritarian state and private property, mostly boils down to potentialisation of decentralisation and autonomy of space in the city (Vilenica, Ana and kuda.org, 2012, "Preuzmimo grad! Kako?",2012).

2 Rancière, Jacques. "On the Actuality of Communism", in: *Post-Fordism and its Discontents* (ed. Gal Kirn): JvE Academy: Maastricht, 2012, pp. 127-138). Harvey, David, "Commonwealth: an Exchange" Artforum 48: 3 (Nov 2009), pp. 210-221; Morfino, Vittorio, "The Multitudo According to Negri: On the Disarticulation of Ontology and History", in: *Rethinking Marxism*, vol.26 (2), 2014.

3 Hardt and Negri argue "whereas socialism ambivalently straddles modernity and antimodernity, communism must break with both of these by presenting a direct relation to the common to develop the paths of altermodernity" (2009, p. 107), while at the very end of their book they announce that "the problem of transition must be given a positive, nondialectical solution, leading toward democracy through democratic means." (2009, p. 363). Apart from my critical reservation towards equating democracy with a "positive, nondialectical solution", my introductory chapter in my dissertation promoted a view that without a strong theoretical and historical consideration of political organisation and hegemonic struggles we cannot imagine the transition in the communist perspective. In other words, I argue that the proponents of the "idea of communism" reduce socialism to an evolutionary and productivist experiment and also strip it from its communist core. Thus, rather than presenting an exclusionary alternative, my reading suggests a critical, and yes, dialectical relationship, between those terms. If at first glance it seems more appealing to embrace a representation of communism, which is associated with a teleological becoming of multitude, or a clear cut event and jump into communism, this might lead us to an extremely limiting representation of what the struggle for the commons, and struggle for communism, consist of. Contrary to this, my interpretation rather conceives the path to communism without any (class) contradictions and without a long pain-staking struggle, which takes socialist and compromise forms that do not in itself guarantee any communist future.

4 Dolenec and Žitko's text convincingly tackles the problem of commons and rightly criticizes it when not intergated in a larger anti-capitalist project that strives for abolition of private property (Dolenec Danijela and Mislav Žitko, "Ostrom and Horvat: Identifying Principles of a Socialist Governmentality", *Group 22 Working Paper Series*, 2013, p.1). They work especially with the theory of Yugoslav economist Branko Horvat.

self-management. We surely cannot expect to find a critical reflection in the dominant revisionist nationalistic and anti-totalitarian narratives. *Either* we are forced to forget this history and reduce it to the "totalitarian" past, *or* as is the case with Yugo-nostalgic approach, one idealizes the "good old times", where Tito's rule worked for the benefit of all. However, for anyone interested in the emancipatory and leftist reading of struggles for/of the commons, it is of theoretical necessity to evaluate and compare these conceptions and real concrete historical experiences to move beyond and fail better. What follows should then not be read as part of a (Yugo)nostalgic account, but wants to launch both a critical and affirmative evaluation of self-management politics, which today deserves a more precise historicisation and contextualisation.

In order to critically evaluate how the idea of self-management changed and materialized, I will sketch the contours of the Yugoslav cultural scene, especially in the field of *film* from the late 1950s to 1970s. The introduction of social property and self-management forms will be evaluated via the nascent cultural infrastructure, budget planning and the status of cultural work.

The commons in socialist Yugoslavia = self-management social ownership

When reading certain passages that define organisation of multitude and struggle for commons, there are some that deeply resonate with the project of self-management. Negri, for example, imagines the "law of common" that needs to: "…follow the phenomenon of cooperation of the labour force, of self-valorisation, that introduce a surplus productive capacity of the individual and collective labour force."[5]

Common needs to "define itself as an arena of democratic participation coupled with distributive equality".[6] This comes close to defining socialist self-management as described by the official ideologues of Yugoslav self-management, and thus it comes as a surprise that there is almost no historical and theoretical reference to this experience.

Yugoslav socialist self-management was born in the early 1950s and moved, both ideologically and politically, beyond the alternative between state and market, and in many respects contributed to the invention of a specific form of ownership: social ownership. One could immediately object that workers' self-management was imposed "from above", from communist leadership, however, even if this is formally true and not without irony, it is more adequate to trace its emergence from the split with Stalin and Informbiro in 1948. Also, being isolated from West and East, the policy of workers' self-management was an attempt to sustain a strong popular support in the now "necessary" independent path to socialism. Taken from a more theoretical perspective,[7] we should see self-management as a political practice that targeted two points: on the one hand it continued to dismantle capitalist exploitation, and on the other hand, it exerted an internal critique within the international workers' movement targeting state socialism and the hierarchical nationalized planned economy that minimized workers' democratic forms. Despite internal strife within the Communist Party around the clear future orientation, the argument against state ownership won[8] and the politics of "nationalization" of economic capacities and infrastructure was identified as excessive bureaucratic control and thus a (gradual) defeat of the path to communism. For the realization of communism, Yugoslav communists called for a return to Lenin and his idea of a "withering away of state".[9] This demanded not only a critique of bureaucratic control, but also a real process that moved away from a "nationalisation" to a "socialisation" of the means of production and consequently, also the means of reproduction. In 1950, the first formal step was taken when adopting the *Basic Law on Management of State Economic Enterprises and Higher Economic Associations by the Workers' Collective*[10], while the politics of self-management had long-term consequences for socialist reproduction and development in Yugoslavia. This reform introduced new political forms, such as workers' councils into all production units (socialist enterprises), where the majority consisted of the employees/workers, and who would also delegate their members to higher political levels of workers'

5 Negri, Antonio, "The Law of the Common: Globalization, Property and New Horizons of Liberation", in: Finnish Yearbook of International Law (Vol. 21). Accessible at: http://www.jura.uni-frankfurt.de/42853388/GS-Negri.pdf, 2010, pp.24.

6 Ibid.

7 Mihajlo Marković, one of the main philosophers from the Marxist-Praxis school, made a good analysis of theoretical sources of socialist self-management ("Philosophical Foundations of the Idea of Self-management, *Self-Governing Socialism: A Reader*. Vol.1 ed. Horvat Branko, Marković Mihailo and Supek Rudi. NY: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1975).

8 Boris Kidrič was the chief political economist and minister for economy, who most openly called for the critique of state socialism. For the recent interpretation see Suvin, Darko. *Samo jednom se ljubi: Radiografija SFR Jugoslavije*, RLS: Belgrade, 2014.

9 For a good comment and historical evaluation of this politics see also Samary, Catherine. *Le marché contre l'autogestion: l'expérience yougoslave*. Paris: Publisud, Montreuil, 1988.

10 The summary of the most important points of this law can be found in English at: https://www.marxists.org/subject/yugoslavia/self-management/1950/06/x01.htm

representation. Unquestionably, the policy of self-management was adapted to historical circumstances and political discussions, and would become a dominant ideology, into which many different ideological forms translated. One of the central features of the self-management model was its constant renewal, but that does not mean that the development unfolded without contradictions and transitions. Socialism in its immanent constellation is a compromised form, which combines capitalist and communist elements, thus presenting a mixed economy.

In the reality of the 1950s, the self-management model stood mostly for the empowerment of workers in the organization of economic units while, on a more political level, self-management was identified with the process of decentralisation. This meant a gradual empowerment of lower levels, such as republics and (municipal and local) communities, which would fight against the bureaucratic monopoly of political and economic power. It also meant a proliferation of self-management forms into other non-economic fields of society: culture, science, health system, education, housing… In terms of political economy, what used to be a more homogenous force of bureaucracy, which used to dispose with the (whole) social capital in the name of working class, was now more and more decentralized. Here, it was technocracy (a social strata of experts and directors in factories, bank managers) that managed with the now multiple autonomous/independent capitals. This was reflected in "social ownership", which was a paradoxical formation, since it meant that the means of production, land, (social) housing, did not belong to anyone, but to the whole society. As Rastko Močnik claimed, "social ownership could have been able to permit the opening up of new horizons in the matter of political practices, if its political potential had not been sapped by the apparatuses of social management".[11] Moreover, a legal theorist Drago Bajt spoke about the "double inscription" of social ownership into legal and economic aspects, which means that "legally, enterprise would be the owner of the means of production, whereas the workers would manage it in reality. The workers' collective is then the economic owner of the means of production".[12] In other words, the enterprise had the "right of disposal", while the workers' collective had "managing rights". The major obstacle in the regime of social property is located in the improper institutional solution that could properly implement this division of ownership rights between the workers' collective and enterprise. Sociologist Veljko Rus claims that

> the workers' collective would decide about matters that relate to management, while the enterprise or rather its representatives would decide on matters that relate to disposal. If workers themselves would accumulate means/resources in their working organisation, then they would also be the owners of the enterprise's capital, while if these means would be invested by other subjects, e.g. banks, foreign investors etc., then they would have the disposal rights.[13]

The author above even suggested the re-introduction of private property (it was the late 1980s), but already, from its formal vagueness, the social property in its historical unfolding hit multiple political and "structural" obstacles very early on: from the mixing of workers' political participation with the shareholding tendency, to a greater role that would be played by the market, that is, by the strengthening of the capitalist tendency. The place of the class struggle concentrated much less on the form and question of property, and more concretely formed around the question of management, appropriation, and the distribution of value. This was the key place where the paradox of self-management could be located.

Cultural policy in Yugoslavian cinematography: From film infrastructure to "technique to the people"

How was the transition to self-management organisation exerted in the cultural field? I would like to illustrate the changes of the marketisation of social ownership in the field of film infrastructure and production. Katja Praznik's recent illuminative dissertation sketches the institutional frame and shifts within cultural organisations in the following manner:

- Up until 1948, cultural matters were strictly regulated through the "federal ministry of culture and republic's ministry of education…. In combination with popular committees on three levels". This also meant a very centralised funding system with strong ideological control.[14]

11 Močnik, Rastko, "Excess memory": http://www.transeuropeennes.eu/en/articles/202/Excess_Memory, 2010.

12 Bajt, Aleksander. "Social Ownership-Collective and Individual" *Self-Governing Socialism: A Reader*. Vol.2 ed. Horvat, Branko, Marković, Mihailo and Supek, Rudi. NY: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1975, p. 159

13 Rus, Veljko. "Neekonomski vidiki lastništva", in *Družboslovne Razprave*, 6 (1): 5-22. http://druzboslovnerazprave.org/clanek/pdf/1988/6/1/, 1988, p. 19.

14 Praznik, Katja. *Intelektualno gospostvo: sodobna umetnost med vzhodom in zahodom*, Filozofska Fakulteta: Ljubljana, 2013, p. 108. For historical background see also Gabrič, Aleš. Socialistična kulturna revolucija: Slovenska kulturna politika 1953-1962, Cankarjeva založba: Ljubljana, 1995; and Goulding, Daniel. Liberated Cinema. The Yugoslav Experience 1945-2001. Bloomington and Indiannapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002.

- Between 1953 and 1974, political authority (instead of federal and republican authority) implemented executive "councils and commissions for education and culture, where government nominated the president and portion of the members, whereas associations and cultural institutions delegated others".[15]
- From 1974 to 1989, instead of a municipal committee and republican council, the regulation came into the hands of the municipal cultural community and the cultural community of each republic, where members were voted in through the council of (cultural) users and producers.[16]

In the field of cinematography, and generally in culture, the infrastructure after WWII was completely destroyed, thus it had to be re-built. Also, Yugoslav film had no serious and long-term film production or dissemination before WWII.[17] Following the categorisation above, the sphere of culture was at first strongly connected to the state regulation and ministry of culture, which in practice meant saturation and impregnation of all cultural products with the propagandistic and ideological means. However, during the congress of writers in 1952, Miroslav Krleža's intervention stated a clear rejection and abandoning of the socialist realism from the cultural workers themselves; this would be generally referred to as the opening to socialist aesthetical modernism, which promoted the independent path of Yugoslavia into socialism.[18]

However, as early as 1946, the Party instituted a cultural policy called "Technique to the People", which will later yield non-anticipated effects. The socialist authority established a special institution *Narodna Tehnika* (Popular Engineering Society), which concentrated on amateur and informal radio[19], photographic and film infrastructure and activities. At this point the ministry for culture remained in charge of larger investments, the building of infrastructure, and ideological control, while in the 1950s, it was substituted by the municipal and local communities. The latter were expected to be involved in setting the cultural infrastructure in a way that would enhance the mediation and socialisation of technology. Ana Janevski's recent study noted that the major aim of the policy "Technique to the People" was to "organise, sponsor and promote different amateur activities. Even though they were under the 'political' control of the centre and were hierarchically organised, they were mostly left to their own devices as peripheral 'amateur reservations'."[20] From the late 1950s onwards this "hierarchical" and "political" control relaxed and agitprop commissions were dissolved.[21] That does not mean that Yugoslav political leadership abandoned attempts to discursively set certain guidelines, but it would be erroneous to speak about the atmosphere of complete repression and absence of freedom.

There were two further important changes in the 1950s in the film industry. Firstly, the totality of film activity was reorganized in three areas, as Ian Goulding describes, *film production* fell "under the category of economic activity with 'special cultural significance'; *film trade* under the category of domestic and international commerce; and networks of *film distribution* and theatrical showings under the category of 'service activities of a communal character'."[22] These changes would in reality show in the transformed "tripartite division" of labour in the film activity. One part of this division includes "enterprises and workers involved in technical bases of film." Another comprises film studios that would allocate economic resources, contract personnel, services … so that they "became the sole owners of the finished film". The third involves "free associations of film-artistic workers".[23] These artistic workers were, from the 1950s onwards, positioned as "freelance" workers, who entered into short-term contracts with the film studios. In this tripartite system everything revolved around the film studios.

The last big legal change formalised these processes in 1956, when the Basic Law on Film was introduced. The Law instituted a shift from the funding via republics, and also a differentiated system of "self-financing", which would transfer 15% of film admission tickets directly to the film production. This decentralisation in the early years also meant the downsizing of the first big film studio, as the other film studios started to operate in all other republics. Due to the opening to the West, the improved Yugoslavian film infrastructure yielded a big growth in audience; the profit gained by this would also be transferred back to the domestic film production.

15 Praznik, ibid., pp. 108-109.
16 Praznik, ibid., p. 109.
17 Šentevska, Irena. "Celluloid building sites of socialist Yugoslavia: Cinema fiction and unfinished modernisations", in: Unfinished Modernisations: Between Utopia and Pragmatism (eds. Kulić, Vladimir and Mrduljaš, Maroje), Zagreb: CCA, 2012, pp. 96-120.
18 Goulding, ibid.
19 *Nek se čuje i naš glas* is an amazing short documentary from Krsto Papić, which shows that the period of the 1960s was marked by a creative proliferation of pirate radio stations developed in the countryside, where people were broadcasting on a diverse range of subjects from music & recipes, to shows and political discussions. It is this popular activity that came into conflict with the official licensing authorities, which would give away the frequencies.
20 Janevski, Ana. "On Yugoslav experimental film and cine clubs in the sixties and seventies" 3-16, *Quaderns portatils:* Macba, Barcelona, 2012, p.4.
21 See also Aleš Gabrič (ibid.) study on the specific ideological contours of cultural policy.
22 Goulding 2002, p.35. (italics, emphasis mine).
23 Goulding 2002, pp. 35-36.

In the improved economic conditions that consciously invested into the domestic production, and with strengthened activity in film theory and criticism, the grounds were prepared for the emergence of the most productive period in the history of Yugoslav film.

Cinema clubs as preparatory grounds for film explosion: unveiling of self-management paradox?

However, despite the importance of this legal and economical infrastructure that was organised by the state and republics, we should bring into account yet another important grassroots self-management infrastructure, which played a huge role in the development of new Yugoslav film. Ana Janevski evaluated an almost forgotten part of Yugoslav film history: cinema clubs.[24] Cinema clubs emerged in all major Yugoslav cities: Split, Novi Sad, Zagreb, Belgrade, Ljubljana, Sarajevo… They were social spaces, where people watched films together and engaged in (in)formal discussions, within the process of self-organised education. It was in these clubs where the underground, experimental, and amateur young people started interdisciplinary projects that would bridge cinema to other arts and media. Aside from their primary function (of the socialisation of technology and cinematography), cinema clubs also worked as small independent production units. Cinema amateurism received public assistance and young directors often worked with 8 mm and 16 mm film tapes. Many of the amateurs and self-educated filmmakers from these cinema clubs later became internationally renowned filmmakers.[25]

Importantly, cinema clubs were also crucial spaces where alternative and low-budget film festivals took place. Firstly, there were festivals of amateur film that rotated between the cinema clubs and created the film platforms for all-Yugoslav discussion and amateur production. Secondly, in 1963, Zagreb's cinema club launched the GEFF (The Biannual Genre Experimental Film Festival).[26] Janevski rightly asserts that GEFF's inclination

> to connect all human activities was expressed, not only in the field of art, but in science and technology as well, overlapped with the broader world tendencies and interest in film as a subject of historical and theoretical research (2012: 16).

Cinema clubs assumed multiple roles and functioned both as a creative experimental laboratory for new practices on the one hand, and as a specific self-management amateur production unit on the other.

There are competing interpretations on the naming, timing and even method of the new Yugoslav film – Black Wave.[27] I arguably pick the year 1963 as the initiation of the new Yugoslav film. In this year, three young film-directors Živojin Pavlović, Marko Babac, and Kokan Rakonjac directed their second omnibus *City*.[28] The film was officially banned. What followed is particularly illuminating for one of the central paradoxes of the Yugoslav self-management. The banning of this film led many to expect and suspect that a tough repression of the then flourishing arts would ensue,[29] which could lead to a crackdown on the cinema clubs and all critical film production. But, quite on the contrary, the next ten years became the most exciting years in the whole history of Yugoslav film and became referred to as a "golden age" for Yugoslav film.[30]

Apart from assigning cinema clubs and the underground cultural milieu an important role, this paradox further proves the inadequacy of the binary opposition between underground art (dissident) and the official state (repression), which in more recent readings flirts with certain dissident paradigms that give over emphasis to repression in socialist times.[31] How could it be then possible that such an immense and critical film production was sustained for the whole decade, especially as some of the films openly criticized socialist authority? Pavle Levi (2007) rightly assumes that the existence of these critical films is a sign

24 Janevski, Ana. (ibid, pp. 4-16). See also the catalogue of the exhibition on cinema clubs, *This Is All Film! Experimental Film in Former Yugoslavia 1951–1991*, exhibition curated by Bojana Piškur, Ana Janevski, Jurij Meden and Stevan Vuković, Museum of Modern Art Ljubljana, 2010. It is noteworthy that also in other, Western and Eastern countries cinema clubs existed and provided a strong basis for cinephilic culture.

25 Already in 1955 Dušan Makavejev filmed *PEČAT,* Kokan Rakonjac directed *BELA MARAMICA*.

26 It was held in 1965, 1967 and 1970.

27 For an interesting and critical dialogue see especially DeCuir, Jr., G. (2010), "Black Wave polemics: rhetoric as aesthetic", *Studies in Eastern European Cinema* 1: 1, pp. 85–96; Jovanović Nebojša, "A Commentary on 'Black Wave polemics: rhetoric as aesthetic' by Greg DeCuir" in *Studies in Eastern European Cinema*, 2012.

28 Ian Goulding (2002) argues that the Black Wave starts already in 1961 with films that addressed existentialist and love topics usually associated with the French new wave. For example, DVOJE (AND LOVE HAS VANISHED) was directed by Aleksandar Pavlović unfolds into an existentialist dilemma of the couple that opens into a love triangle; another very poetic work PLES V DEŽJU (DANCING IN THE RAIN) was directed by Boštjan Hladnik.

29 On the flourishing of modernism in Yugoslavia see Germani, Sergio. "Jugoslavija – misterije organizma" In: *Socijalizam*. Nr.17/18. . Up&Underground: Zagreb 2010, pp. 265-292.

30 Vuković, Stevan. "Notes on Paradigms in Experimental Film in Socialist Yugoslavia", in: *This Is All Film! Experimental Film in Former Yugoslavia 1951–1991*, exhibition curated by Bojana Piškur, Ana Janevski, Jurij Meden and Stevan Vuković, Museum of Modern Art Ljubljana, 2010, p. 53.

31 For the critique of this binarism see Kirn 2012 and Jovanović 2012.

of freedom in the self-management and, I would add, the self-management conditions and infrastructure opened ways for a more flexible production and dissemination of movies. More so, the paradox was laid with the fundamental premises of the socialist authority that (over)valued the role of film in cultural and political education. In this context, most of the films received a huge reception and, as Želimir Žilnik claims, all critical films received immense review and (media) coverage. This means that political authorities were worried about what came onto the (cinematic) screens, and invested great effort to persuade those critics that they were misrepresenting the socialist reality.[32]

Cinema clubs evidently could not be completely autonomous, since they needed to rely on the technical infrastructure that was provided by the major film studios in all socialist republics (Avala, Viba, Jadran, etc.)[33] The formal infrastructure was also used and rented by amateurs from cinema clubs. Žilnik acknowledges: "This was the time when filmmaking was entirely dependent on film technology and infrastructure…. (which was) not only expensive, but also extremely inaccessible. The process depended on huge laboratories, editing tables and machines that not even all the federal republics had".[34] Also, at least two independent young filmmakers every year were given the opportunity to make feature films within the major film studios.

Independent film production: Neoplanta as a paradigmatic case of commons?

One should also note that from the early 1960s, film (like music), due to the relatively well-organised infrastructure, benefited progressively from the market reforms. In other words, the fields of music and film developed a certain market with growing audiences. As sales show, this could be measured not only in the growing domestic market, but also on the international film market, which on the one hand entered into Yugoslavia with major co-productions, while on the other, Yugoslav film production invested in marketing a genre of partisan film which became its trademark. Furthermore, the alternative auteur films travelled to international film festivals. The conditions of "autonomy" of the film field were materially present in the hybrid of the market and state support.

Due to the growing flexibility of the economy and the implementation of market criteria, improved financial revenues were demanded. The big film companies thus demanded even more precarious contractual relationships for the young directors. The contract openly stated the financial plan and either the willingness of film-directors to invest their own work in advance as a part of starting capital, or they were also asked to take a loan from the bank. If the film were successful in awards and sales, then the film-author would participate in the gained surplus value. This is why it was so important to have a good film collective and a solid financial plan.[35] Co-production between different republics became one of the possible organisational principles of alternative film production. Let us state that in the year 1968 the film output was enormous: 32 domestic films and 9 co-productions.

The self-management model, as mentioned before, was particularly harsh towards the film workers in the tripartite division of labor, which on the one hand pushed workers in more precarious and flexible positions, while on the other hand, it also pushed them to start improving their own political organisation. Film-workers could create film collectives and also participate in the new independent film production companies. By the end of the 1960s we would have an emergence of new film companies, which undermined the binary structure between cinema clubs and large republican film studios. The most famous examples of these film companies were Novi Sad's Neoplanta (Žilnik, Godina, Makavejev, and many others worked there), and in the 1970s Belgrade's Art Film 80 ("Prague school"). Neoplanta was of major importance for the late phase of "new Yugoslav film", where political authorities sharpened their attack and stigmatised them as "Black Wave".[36] It is not coincidental that a large majority of the Black Wave films and short critical films were done in Neoplanta.

In order to get a better understanding of the functioning of Neoplanta, I would like to shortly present a financial/budgetary overview that we published in the book *Surfing the Black*, which synthesizes five years of Neoplanta's

32 See my interview with Žilnik "Those Who Make Revolutions Only Halfway Dig Their Own Graves", interview with Želimir Žilnik, *Surfing the Black: Black Wave Cinema and its Transgressive Moments* (eds. Gal Kirn, Dubravka Sekulić and Žiga Testen, Maastricht: JvE Academy, 2012); also Žižek rightly pointed on many ocassions to a few major differences between communism and fascism precisely in the aspect of political education and Enlightenment tradition.

33 Mila Turajlić's film *Cinema Komunisto* present the scope of the film studio Avala.

34 Interview Žilnik, ibid., p. 92.

35 Ibid.

36 I explain the dilemma of the name Black wave elsewhere, see Kirn "New Yugoslav cinema: a humanist cinema? Not really", in *Surfing the Black: Black Wave Cinema and its Transgressive Moments* (eds. Gal Kirn, Dubravka Sekulić and Žiga Testen), Maastricht: JvE Academy, 2012b, pp. 10-46.

activities[37] (1966-1971). In short, one can define six different sources of revenue for Neoplanta: Fund for Cinematography from Socialist Republic of Serbia; Fund for Culture from Socialist Autonomous Province Vojvodina (two feature films, six short and two animated films per year); profit from past feature films from Neoplanta; fee for commissioned films; production of film documentation (about construction of large objects and urban development of the cities); and lastly the collaboration and work on projects for Television Belgrade and Novi Sad. Since the budget for short films was smaller, let me only remark that the production costs and revenues from seven feature films *Sveti pesak*, *Lepa parada*, *Rani radovi* (Želimir Žilnik), *Samrtno proleće*, *W.R. Misterije organizma* (Dušan Makavejev), *Doručak s djavolom*, and *Sloboda ili strip* (the latter was never finished, created by Žilnik and Godina). The financial picture was as follows: Neoplanta invested 7074809 Yugoslav dinars (with then existing exchange rate, would mean around 416000 dollars) and at the end of the cycle they received 2041993 dinars (around 120117 dollars) of added value, profit, which makes a yearly net income of around 25000 dollars. Part of the profit was reinvested in the film process, while the other part was given to film workers. What can be found from this 500-page document is that the Fund of Province and Neoplanta's own funds covered the major part of investments, while the remainder came from co-productions.

This technico-financial detour into cost-revenue analysis indicates that the independent film production was sandwiched between the federal and republic funds, and their own funds accumulated from their participation on the sales and awards (market). I would name this phenomenon a peculiar existence of a "public-private" partnership, where market self-management entered into relations with the state organised cultural activity. This mixed economy can only be "adopted" to a certain degree by other cultural activities, with a good example being an emerging musical industry epitomised in the major festival "Song of the year", with an audience of tens of thousands in around 40-50 major cities across Yugoslavia. But most of the other cultural fields, such as theatre, opera, ballet, were supported by the budgets at the municipal and republican levels and could not operate on such semi-autonomous grounds.

From the 1970s onwards, apart from the mentioned system of "self-financing", I would like to add another important system of financing in the form of "self-contribution". It was very often the case that citizens of municipalities held referendums, which decided on the building of the self-management infrastructure: from kindergartens, schools and hospitals to cultural centres and small theatres, etc. Instead of waiting for state initiative, it was the citizens that took initiative. Obviously a part from their own salary was already being invested into communal matters, such as social housing and cultural, welfare activities. However these referendums were then adding up a financial resource. One of the positive aspects of this self-managed organisation was that it inscribed the mechanism of collective solidarity at the centre of its financial redistribution, and hence moved beyond a mere individual charity principle or state initiative. However, the downside of the system of self-contributions consisted in being site-specific, meaning that the richer regions and republics would be able to invest in more and better infrastructure. Also, in the times of crisis there would be a tendency to invest less in infrastructure.

So far, very little scholarly attention was given to the precarious conditions of the cultural worker in socialist times apart from some observations made by Boris Buden.[38] The perspective of cultural worker is of particular relevance, because it embodies a borderline case in the more general system of socialist employment. Susan Woodward pointed out that Yugoslav economic policy focused primarily on those that were employed in the social sector, that is, those with a regular salary and all social benefits, while it ignored the private sector and a myriad of the seasonal, temporary, flexible employment, and most of all unemployment, which from 1960s onwards becomes a serious problem.[39] The cultural worker in some sense internally subverts, or anticipates, the figure of self-manager as a flexible and precarious worker with few securities, which was so well explained in the literature of (post) operaist thinkers. Here I would like to highlight that in the cultural sphere, and in particular in the case of film, the more flexible labour relationship became reality already from the late 1950s. In the words of Pavle Levi: "Workers' councils were thus introduced as decision-making bodies overseeing film production, distribution, and exhibition, while the creative personnel associated with the process of filmmaking (directors, cinematographers, screenwriters) were given the status of freelance professionals."[40]

37 "Those Who Make Revolutions Only Halfway Dig Their Own Graves", interview with Želimir Žilnik, *Surfing the Black: Black Wave Cinema and its Transgressive Moments* (eds. Gal Kirn, Dubravka Sekulić and Žiga Testen), Maastricht: JvE Academy, 2012, pp. 159-160.

38 Buden, Boris. *Zone des Übergangs: vom Ende des Postkommunismus*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009.

39 Woodward, Susan. *Socialist Unemployment: The Political Economy of Yugoslavia 1945-90*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995.

40 Levi, Pavle. *Disintegration in Frames*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, (2007: 15)

This freelance position was formally given to some artists and cultural workers by the ministry of culture. However, we can speak of the proliferation of cultural associations and independent cultural workers only in the late 1970s-1980s. The freelance status evidently did not just mean a (flex)secure and autonomous position that would be emancipated from the state, but had to do with an intensified precarious position, that did not enjoy the same social benefits as other regular jobs, meaning lower pensions and rarely paid holidays.[41] This precarious status effected socialist cultural workers in various collaborations with amateur cultural associations, to more established galleries, academies, and bigger cultural institutions. This resulted in what today is best known as irregular work on a project-basis. In this respect, there is no difference between the features from the post-socialist period, or their Western counterparts; that is, cultural work consisted of seasonal and intense work in some periods, and times of unemployment in other periods. Aside from this, certain groups of cultural workers and cultural institutions enjoyed a large degree of autonomy and relatively solid material subsistence; in particular, the younger generation, and a more independent alternative culture even if this remained within conditions that should not to be idealised.

Conclusion

This contribution showed in what ways social ownership in the self-management Yugoslavia already represented the major political invention of commons, which already from the 1950s onwards overcame the presupposed division between public and private, state and market. The theoretical critique that was in the departure point launched against Hardt and Negri's interpretation was here further validated by the case of social ownership in the film collectives and cultural self-managed organisations. Despite the contradictory nature of self-management and this non-property form, I argued that this model succeeded to yield impressive aesthetical impacts (new Yugoslav film) and even acquired a relative autonomy from the socialist state. The autonomy took shape not only due to the existence of market reform and official cultural policy, but I suggest to read it more along the lines of collective organisational efforts on the side of film workers (e.g. Neoplanta) and improved conditions of cultural infrastructure, where more transparency over the distribution and planning of funding was made during the 1970s. Nevertheless, access to public finances remained unequally distributed and in the activities outside the market, was of particular precarity, and this is why there is also no need to idealise this historical sequence and political invention.

41 For details see Praznik, ibid., pp. 95-101.

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We dedicate this publication to Randy Martin, a truly engaged and inspirational intellectual beyond the limits of academic research, who remained generous and enthusiastic until his very last, difficult days. We sincerely regret his too early departure.