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Are You Working Too Much? Post-Fordism, Precarity, and the Labor of Art

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Introduction

Let's be clear about something: it is infuriating that most interesting artists are perfectly capable of functioning in at least two or three professions that are, unlike that of art, respected by society in terms of compensation and general usefulness. And compensation—which is money—is not only for feeding lavish lifestyles or taking spontaneous beach vacations. Ask anyone who has children or sick relatives in a country without good health care—which could by now be almost any country, as the administration of life is deferred more and more to the private sphere of personal finance. This only makes the question of fair compensation all the more pressing. It is no longer an issue of some kind of moral or ethical principle, but of life itself. So why should so many talented and hyper-qualified artists submit themselves willingly to a field of work (that is, in art) that offers so little in return for such a huge amount of unremunerated labor?

For some reason, either due to artists' own vanity, to being hypnotized by some sort of authorial diva imperative that promises large-scale recognition, or to the expectations of the culture itself (not the field of "cultural production" but the de facto one, the less dynamic and slower moving one) and its own befuddlement with regard to artists' usefulness, the artist is left to expend an enormous amount of professional energy in the doldrums of a murky pseudo-profession that absorbs work under the auspices of some kind of common belief in its higher value.

But art is not a religion, and, though it often seems structurally similar, it is not a charity either. This idea of a "higher value" that presides over—and indeed fuels—an idea of art labor as free labor must be contested. All are to blame for it: though classical exploitation is rampant, it may actually pale in

comparison to the amount of self-exploitation—the willingly inconclusive, highly generative work that is either too useless or too stubborn to ever align itself with the mundane, but remunerated, field of average labor: that of bakers, garbage men, police officers, cobblers, lawyers, engineers, day laborers, and so forth. These are the people you make your work about, and perhaps who your parents are. Art, you would like to think, is a shining vision of a possibility for something else.

So you secretly support your art work with your money job, even a high-paying one. You are your own sugar daddy and trophy wife in a single package. Your gallery sells your work, maybe for a lot of money, yet something does not line up there either. The work does not find its reception even when it is well received. You keep dumping your personal resources into producing your work, your relationships crumble, and the work simply doesn't find its audience the way an engineer's building plan will inevitably be constructed, for better or worse. One option is to blame it all on authorship and the cult of the author. But that seems frankly ridiculous. Erase your name, and not only will you not get paid for your time, you will not get credited either. It's like performing an act of charity for a plant. The only option available could be to simply work more—but while claiming the privileged capacity of the artist within the fields in which your determined amateurism has made you a functional expert.

Diedrich Diederichsen

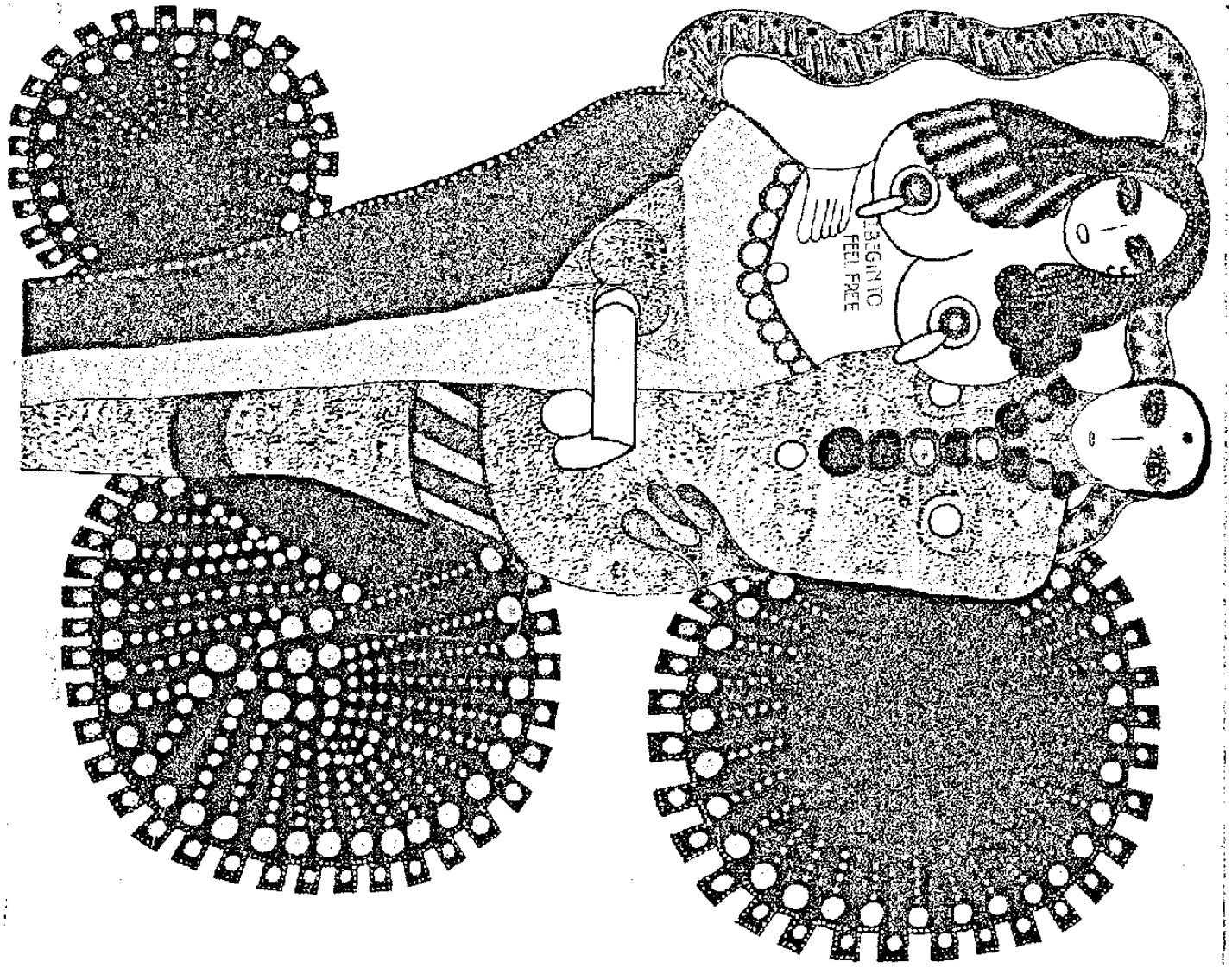
People of Intensity, People of Power: The Nietzsche Economy

1. Classical Music vs. Free Jazz

When an adult in Berlin or Vienna wants to spend an evening with company, there are two basic options: one can have a cozy dinner with friends at a restaurant or someone's apartment, or one can go out. The second option may not be a radical step into the unknown, as there are familiar signposts, but nevertheless, when we go out, we switch into an entirely different mode of experience.

Now "going out" can mean all sorts of things: an art opening followed by dinner with the artist or artists and a visit to a club, or a certain constellation of bars and clubs where we are sure to meet acquaintances. Or we go to a specific club straight away, one that offers everything in a single package. But really, the distances we cover, the outside world fading in and out of the theater of our increasingly inebriated perceptions, the glistening pavement, diffuse light, car doors slamming, unexpected music in the cab: these are all part of it, the whole program.

The first variant, dinner with friends, is not necessarily any shorter or more sober. This sort of night among friends can be no less long—and no less boozy. Here, however, we get intoxicated not in order to enable ourselves to react more smoothly to new stimuli, but so we can bear the social density and concentration. Friends often show up in couples, and when they don't, there are many long-term friendships boasting of accumulated intimacy not too different from the monogamous relationships that become the dominant model as we get older. This means that many possible constellations of arguments, agreements and disagreements of taste, antagonisms and harmonies of temperament and mentality, have already been played out, and may well have reached a stage at which they no longer ruffle any feathers. Still, these evenings demand



Dorothy Iannone, *I Begin To Feel Love*, 1970. Collage, acrylic on canvas, 190 x 150 cm. Courtesy Anton Kern Gallery, New York and Air de Paris, Paris.

our attention. We are curious to discern minute new details in well-rehearsed scripts.

To do so is a perfectly rewarding labor, one we are often fond of, but it is also taxing, requiring a focused mind. Those who prefer not to engage in it, who are not really interested in their friends, will quickly grow bored and provoke a scene or a fight—but this is not a big problem, nor does it really disrupt an evening that is otherwise business as usual. Meeting friends is precision work, and all sorts of events, even unusual ones, are permissible, as long as they are truly interesting, providing intellectual stimulus. Such a meeting calls for a review session with a best friend, partner, or *significant other*, as the Americans say. If we could put them into writing, these review sessions would read like reviews of classical music recordings: in a hyper-precise specialist's language, the participants frame observations in ways that only absolute connoisseurs could appreciate.

The night out is different. Here, casual sensation is always preferable to precise observation. A permanent state of distraction is desired. In conversation, our eyes permanently wander just past our interlocutor. Do I know the person back there, or would I only like to know him, or isn't he actually kind of butt-ugly? Even in the rare event of a truly detailed conversation taken seriously, the aim is to stage an intimate colloquy for the public, a form of ostentation, not the colloquy itself. That promises are made is what matters most, not that they are fulfilled. Everything breathes potentiality: Brecht's "So much might yet happen" rules the night.

And of course this pleasant feeling that so much might happen is sustained in the long run only by the things that do occasionally actually happen: the decisive events, beautiful or disastrous—either

one being preferable to the delicate work of the night in. Yet the sense that something must actually happen changes its meaning over the course of a lifetime of nights out. When we are young, the drama of going out is defined by the climactic event: sex, drugs, or sex. Later on, going out becomes an end in itself; any overly targeted attempt at picking someone up would disrupt its magnificent potentiality. The promise we sense, and the risk we feel, is more important than really having something to fear or to hope for. We need to realize, and commit to, only as much as is absolutely necessary for maintaining this diffuse mood. The important thing is to enter into brief and dense contact with as many people as possible, people who are as different and distant from one another as possible; realizing in each instance a maximum degree of commitment for a brief moment—and this moment had better be as brief as possible to keep the number of encounters high. In this way we playfully learn what the Nietzsche economy calls *networking*.[1]

We keep the number of encounters high, while perceiving each one as less binding, entailing less commitment, because this strategy maintains the sense of freedom and potential whose fundamental message is that we are all interconnected to each other, or at least to those present. In encounters that entail commitment—whatever that means—I must act as a responsible and self-aware *I*; in the dense but noncommittal encounters that make up a hyperactive social—and sometimes sexual—promiscuity, I can shed my self-awareness and step outside myself. It is only when I am ecstatic, outside of myself, that I can be with everyone, that I can float in a sense of potential. A networker must always be ecstatic, must maintain a slightly exaggerated enthusiasm, must get high on the potential

of so many contacts that can never be realized or translated into actual collaboration, using this high in turn to leap to the next encounter.

Coming home after an evening of this type—it is usually very late or already the next morning—we don't need to review anything, there is no need to go over our friends' texts with philological precision; it is enough to take pleasure in the birds singing outside our windows—so early and already so chipper!—signifying a world that is great and wide open. The word we use to describe the past six or eight hours is: *intense*. Now that was a pretty intense night. The resident of a metropolis like Vienna or Berlin leaving home at six in the morning will meet all these smiling faces, satisfied goers-out—sometimes even a newly formed couple, but most are alone—floating homeward, buoyed by the wealth of potential they have just inhaled. "Anything is possible," they think before falling asleep.

We may dispute what the word "intensity" means. We might argue, for instance, that the focused self-examination of a circle of friends, the refined micro-debates over micro-problems or the molecular shifts in articulating grand and tenacious problems that mar familiar vitae—that is to say, all that we experience when meeting friends—could also be called intense; whereas the openness and potentiality of a night out fail to fit the term. If I nonetheless call the experience of a night out intense, it is for two reasons. One is a matter of musical aesthetics: both types of experience can be compared to certain aesthetic experiences. The dinner with friends corresponds to the focused attention to a piece of classical music that has long been familiar or at least potentially familiar. The point is not what the next note will be, but rather how it arrives—how, within a set of elements

defined with regard to instrumentation, timbre, sound, and so forth, everything is decided by subtle shifts and small movements. The key term here would be *focus*.

The night out, by contrast, corresponds to the aesthetic experience offered by free jazz and certain excessive styles of rock or electronic pop music: what matters is density proffered with a grand gesture, backed not necessarily by musical substance but, more often, by its social content. Physical exertion to the point of exhaustion tends to trigger euphoria or aggression: elevated registers of emotion, in every possible direction on the scale. Writers and critics who have followed the phenomenon, but also the musicians themselves, have always spoken of intensity in this context, down to a very technical use of the term in describing music: "And then he played an intense solo on the tenor sax"—that is to say, he used certain overblowing techniques, the solo had a certain minimum duration, and so forth.

The second reason for my suggestion of using the opposing notions of focus and intensity to designate these two ways of spending an evening is the role intensity played in the self-conception of hedonistic countercultures during the 1970s and 1980s—years I would describe as formative in the development of a phenomenon we see emerging today: the revaluation of this wasteful way of life as a form of work that is not merely productive, but a model of productivity. An important landmark in this process is an essay by Jean-François Lyotard that, although he presented it as a lecture as early as 1972, was first published in the German-speaking world by Merve publishers in a 1978 collection of Lyotard's essays that bore the indicative title "Intensitäten"—intensities.[2]

2. Intensity vs. Intention

Lyotard's essay represents, as it were, the intermediary between what I would like to call on the one hand the Nietzsche economy and, on the other, the culture of intensity built by the hippies and, to a certain degree, by the punks, as well as by techno culture later on, and ultimately by the new type of metropolitan hedonist no longer distinguished by any subcultural identity. The concept of intensity allowed the so-called generation of '68 to preserve a part of its life, of its first decade after 1968, up through its political defeat. Intensity described a devotion to unreserved investment into the potential of grand moments—moments that were also a medium of collectivity—that might be salvaged and maintained even if the better world the movement foresaw could never be realized in this life. And it is clear that intensity was inscribed in people's biographies and aspirations as a concept that ran decidedly counter to the dreary everyday organizational chores of those who had chosen to become invested in politics.

In the abovementioned essay, Lyotard explicitly links his idea of intensity to concepts in Nietzsche as well as to the tradition of the artistic avant-gardes of the twentieth century. Lyotard, like other French writers of his generation, wants to inscribe the Nietzschean Übermensch in a radical identity politics that would continue to fight the battle of '68. Lyotard explains:

> These are the "people of intensification," the "masters" of today: outsiders, experimental painters, pop artists, hippies and yippies, parasites, the insane, inmates. An hour of their lives contains more intensity (and less intention) than a thousand words from a professional philosopher.[3]

And thus he introduces a second term that can stand as the opposite of intensity: *intention*. Indeed, the idea of the evening among friends can be described as one in which the intentions of planning subjects are in every respect highly important. Set entirely in the world of intentions, for instance, is the full agenda, the date set after a great deal of coordination, the date we keep meaning to set but fail to; compare, on the other hand, the euphoria with which a date is set in the rush of networking. Another element related to intentionality is a subtext that is always on our minds when we meet old friends: our effort to produce a well-rounded biography. How much control does a subject have over his or her life? Is control even desirable? Is it nice when someone accomplishes a goal he or she spoke of as a teenager, as we who have known him or her for a long time can clearly recall? The entire hermeneutics of friendship—"that is so *him*!"—is built on the question of how we relate the self-descriptions we have heard for decades to people's actual practice. Have we perhaps misread one another? Should we reproach the friend for being unfaithful to him- or herself? And do we even think that the concept of being faithful to oneself is a good idea?

But what did Lyotard mean when he spoke of Nietzschean intensity? Or what did we understand him to mean? Well, on the one hand, *intensity* was a hackneyed term, a hippie word; when *Intensitäten* came out in German in 1978, I was an adolescent who had sympathized with punk, but had begun to grow disenchanted with it. I thought that the idea of intensity was a form of self-betrayal. On the other hand, perhaps it was not the concept that was wrong, but what the hippies had made of it. *Intention* was certainly a game we

didn't want to play, with all its miserable numbers: responsibility, calculation, categorical imperative. We wanted to be further to the left, true, but not moral leftists.

But the distinctive feature of Lyotard's true masters and people of intensification seemed to be: if there was any sign that they might represent nothing but a return of the *authorities* whom our anti-authoritarian older brothers had overthrown (and hence not potential allies, so long as we wanted to remain leftists), they countered it by being clearly recognizable as outsiders—experimental painters, pop artists, yippies, inmates. Even Gilles Deleuze, a great admirer of Nietzsche and the schizos, cautioned that, by affirming (with Nietzsche) the unreliability of the lumpenproletariat and the asocial, the revolutionaries might turn out to have fallen for a political unreliability as well (one that would give them a nasty surprise, entirely beyond their intellectual horizon); meanwhile, we were still thankful for having escaped family, Protestantism, the authorities—anyone who was asocial was to us a liberated personality.[4]

A few years ago, a very popular "oral history" of this period appeared in print, Verschwende Deine Jugend (Waste Your Youth) by Jürgen Teipel. The title refers to an early song by the band DAF.[5] From today's perspective, the zeal for wastefulness, ignited also by the writings of Georges Bataille, is the most salient feature of the era for good reason: wastefulness is not a cause anyone would champion anymore. But the book also suggests that those youthful wasters who didn't die in the process were able to invest their wasted youth in a very productive midlife. At the time, by contrast, it seemed unfathomable for this wastefulness to be unable to flout any calculation or economy in the conduct of

life (in the interest of grand moments of potential and infinity), but neither could we imagine, in our wildest dreams, that this very wastefulness might perhaps be none other than the loss of the ability to defend our own interests, that wasting might perhaps simply mean relinquishing such things as rights, or a strategic position developed over time. But then it isn't all that simple, either.

What is certain is that wastefulness stands on the same side as intensity, and both of them stand in opposition to intention and focus. We coul construct a matrix composed of four elements that would give rise to all sorts of philosophical specula tions focus would play one role as intensity's counterpart, and another as that of wastefulness; intensity might act one way in opposition to intention, and another when set against focus.

If we hold on to this distribution of pairs of opposites, however, something else emerges: on th one side, we find the description of work, at least in the conventional sense; on the other, that of leisure Intensity and wastefulness, at least at first glance, obey extra-economic, if not counter-economic, principles. Someone who is wasteful neither saves nor invests; he or she does not speculate, does not even submit to the ritual calculation of the potlatch and its indirect benefits. Wastefulness is the opposite of husbandry. Intensity enjoys potential and irresponsibility: whatever happens, we do not put it in the biographical piggybank of subjectivity, heaping up experiences; nor does it even need to happen at all—it may well remain a dream. And the responsible utilitarian subject permits this for a single reason only: for the purposes of reproductior The complex of recreation and the domain called, in Marxist terms, the "reproduction of the commodity that is labor," which is, of course, indirectly

subject to utilitarian calculation, permits intensity during hours of leisure, in extreme sports or in the experience of nature or, if absolutely necessary, during a night out.

Work, by contrast, especially the traditionally more highly-valued, white-collar work, classically resembles the evening among friends: its principle is that of focused mutual observation, the negotiation of social hierarchies, and the finely tuned micro-observations of the structures in which our own working selves must prove their worth. Only in the working environments of white-collar work's substratum—and I would argue that the boundary divides industrial labor down the middle—of day laborers and unskilled workers and in jobs under harsh conditions, on the high seas and in construction, does something similar to the intensity I described above reappear: physicality, inconstant conditions, the pleasure of potentiality in wild dreams and petty crime, the absence of husbandry, and an economy of the worker's own biography: *freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose*, etc.

But the phenomenon we are interested in here is this: a society in which intention and focus are on top and intensity and wastefulness are at the bottom—also existing, perhaps, on the romantic margins of leisure, of bohemianism and puberty—is being reshuffled into a society where all these relations are reversed. And if we accept that this is a social fact, we can describe this development in terms of a larger diagnosis of the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism, from a society of discipline to one of control, as the victory of artistic critique described by Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, or in terms of the much-touted ideas of the artist as entrepreneur and of the creative cities in which the creative class allegedly leads a life that is as

creatively intense as it is economically productive and successful.

Yet these diagnoses rarely account for how such transformations are framed in the experiences of those they concern, which are also the diagnoses these people use to make sense of these experiences. And in fact, these diagnoses often reveal how the structural transformations they describe have not truly entailed a migration of the old subversive lifestyles from the margins and the bottom of society to its center and to the top; rather they often describe cases in which intensity and experience are at stake in name only, in which the values have actually been shifted only from one place to another—in order not to preserve them but to betray them, to use them as pure decoration. In other words, the familiar and slightly paranoid tropes of *cooptation* and *assimilation* are very often mobilized to prove that capitalism has not yet choked on the values of its opponents or antagonists. Measured against their original meaning, as this view has it, these resistant values themselves fall by the wayside.

My point, however, is not that these diagnoses are entirely wrong: it is probably impossible to draw a straight line between the structural transformation or migration of an ethical or anti-ethical, a political or biopolitical principle on the one hand, and the betrayal of such a principle on the other. Nor am I trying to prevent others from reading my own observations as further evidence of one of the overarching diagnoses I have mentioned. Rather, my intention is to reconstruct a line that leads from the attitude toward life and the self-conception of the punk and Nietzschean left to a situation in which their will to power, which has always already existed, and was always already felt as such,

blossoms in a practice that is far removed from their original intentions.[6]

3. The Schöneberg Customs Office

First, the diagnosis: the focused labor of intent workers was appreciated and rewarded as long as capitalism was primarily shaped by instruments such as the analysis of existing markets, the design of production processes, and the study of complex needs—including a cultural understanding of how these needs could be aroused. The corresponding attitude was one of discipline, of hard, precise, and focused work—work that was constantly confronted with, and involved in the production of, a society ever richer in ever more divergent cultural offerings, and whose contents usually swung back and forth between romanticism and escapism. The television series *Mad Men* and movies such as *Revolutionary Road* have recalled this era to great acclaim: an era when executives lived with the intrinsic conflict between two roles, producing leisure offerings while their own practice—hard work and the occasional excessive party, to let off some steam—remained unrepresented. The focused, intent worker of this era was described, especially in the existentialism-tinged movies of the 1960s and 1970s, as bigoted and deeply dishonest; in a Buñuel film, the reward for hard work was typically a masochistic relationship with a dominatrix.

It was in the early 1970s that—for the first time ever, to my knowledge—executives (in the advertising industry, of course) hired artists for the specific task of interfering with business as usual. In the 1970s, Henning Brandis, a young man with a background in the Fluxus network, was hired at the advertising firm GGK Düsseldorf, where his job was to think up little assaults on the safety and

continuity of everyday company operations. One morning, for instance, three creative directors found their desks nailed, legs up, to the ceiling. Everything that had been on the desks had been glued to them and covered, Daniel Spoerri–style, with a layer of white paint. Or there would be surprising noises, abused furniture, adolescent pranks, pointless assignments, and other critiques of conformist work, ranging in intellectual quality from class clown to Joseph Beuys. Around the same time, the owner of März publishers, Jörg Schröder, had founded the advertising agency Bismarc Media, whose employees were told to produce nothing, and when they couldn't bear producing nothing, observe each other laboring under the pointless compulsion to be productive. A general manager was appointed whose task was to undermine any possible output. In 1984, I myself enjoyed an opportunity to spend half a year working at an agency founded by Michael Schirner that, following Bismarc Media's business model, undertook to do nothing, and had rented a former gallery for Conceptual art for this purpose. After a while, this agency ended up producing some thing after all, namely concepts—the *genius loci* may have been at fault—and ultimately it became a perfectly normal advertising agency.[7]

All these early models of a wasteful working environment, however, still have a good-naturec entrepreneur holding the whole thing together. Someone who is, deep-down, a Fordist planner, incorporating the irrationalism of disruption and wastefulness at selected moments, much like a for est official who shoots some game to manage the wildlife stock or a firefighter who sets a fire to fight a larger fire. This situation changes the moment the traditional style of entrepreneurial subjectivity —planning—meets two new competitors: on the

one hand, the casino-style capitalism that has served as its own form of income, but has also come under increasing public scrutiny; on the other hand, the invention of the "passion to perform"—prominently manifested in Deutsche Bank's motto: "Leistung aus Leidenschaft"—which is to say, the introduction of entrepreneurial principles into the everyday operations of business.

Several writers, including Boltanski and Chiapello, have characterized this process on the level of values officially articulated in management seminars, in corporate communications, and in the self-conception of the actors. The question is: how does it feel from the inside when the magic of potential and the intoxication of highly promising noncommittal interactions assume the form of a permanent networking imperative incumbent upon middle management and executives as well as academics? The point is, after all, that principles of intoxication and wastefulness function only when they are precisely not subject to deflective interpretation, watered down by entrepreneurs, instrumentalized, devalued: when we can believe in them without allowing ourselves to get screwed.

In today's working world, that belief can be sustained by agreeing to an exchange (outsourcing, freelancing, and sham freelancing provide the corresponding economic and social form) that functions this way: I forsake any possibility of projecting myself as a private self, independent from my work, ultimately also renouncing any chance at negotiation, co-determination, or living the conflict of interest between capital and labor, and instead project myself as a holistic total self that is identical to my work. In return, I regain the intensification, the force, the power of my early years. All the miserable humiliations I suffer, as well as the successes that fill me

with euphoria, are pushed as far as possible into the sub-subjective realm, the realm of psychology—of emotional experience. I agree to talk about them in the language and imagery of a widespread narcissism and its models and stereotypes, as events taking place between me and myself, between I and the self, where they constantly engender provisional objectivations of these experiences as they are displaced into my inner life. The result are rituals of introduction and bar-chatter openings of "I'm the kind of person who...."[8]

Within this model, the subjectivation of the self seizes, time and again, precisely on those vestiges of the structure that shaped them as objective social relations just before they were fed into the illusion of omnipotence harbored by the outsourced subject of the post-Fordist economy. But this model also reveals a subject within the subject, a highly self-possessed and possessing subject that can triumph in the victories of the person who has to survive all of this in addition to his or her defeats. This subject is strong, harboring no illusions, and is a master that constantly dissociates from its own loser-ish qualities, either kicking them when they're down or flirting with them, tender and bored. The sentences that start with "I'm the kind of person who..." allow for both.

And yet even the outsourced entrepreneur whose business is his or her own self, enjoying the self-possession that serves as compensation for economic defeat, has someone to look down upon: today's version of the intent and focused worker—living in a small, low-risk world where coworkers' birthdays, other coworkers' absenteeism, the irregularities of third parties, and other incalculabilities still matter. It is a world in which the affably precise—or paranoically exaggerated—incessant

hermeneutics of small hierarchically organized groups, a lifestyle designed to privilege long-term projects and intentionality, is alive and well. And it looks pretty paltry in comparison with the contingencies our heroes deal with all day, every day, in the cultural, gastronomic, information-dealing, symbol-processing culture of self-employment.

Berlin is one of the sensational places where especially drastic and beautiful manifestations of the confrontation between these two worlds are staged daily. There is a customs office in a no-go area near a highway interchange in the south of Schöneberg. You are ordered to show up there when you have received a shipment from abroad whose value the customs officers were unable to determine, either because they were unfamiliar with the contents of the parcel (having already opened it) or because the shipment was not accompanied by an invoice. The people ordered to come here are not only those who, like myself, have scored records on eBay; most are self-employed Übermenschen dealing, in the owner-operated dumps they call stores, with things like bodybuilding medications, American vitamin formulas, strange luxury watches, designer hi-fi components, Asian food products, plant porn, and other junk—junk that, through one customs loophole or another, makes for good business once they've identified their internet-based sub-sub-clientele. This processing facility for unidentifiable goods is where one finds people up to their ears in micro-cultural awareness, scrutiny of the economy, self-marketing, and adventurism.

An approximately knee-high counter separates such people from an open area where the customs officers officiate. These are, to the last man, lovingly preserved museum pieces from Social-Democratic times, looking like television

kiddie-show hosts from the early years of public broadcasting: coarse fabrics, no sense for color combinations, fairly out of shape, their movements slow and without haste. A sophisticated division of labor governs these movements, an elaborate scheme in which the clients they serve, who usually have to stand in line, must be seen by three different authorities before they can take their merchandise home. They are pedantic and very polite, working in accordance with highly complicated rules, which also seem to determine the interactions between them and their desks, laden with documents and objects and covered with funny stickers. Before them stand the self-fulfilling selves, gussied up and unshaven, repeatedly stepping out to take a call, impatient, their fierce eyes roaming over the drama of a bureaucracy in demise—a scene from the museum of the public welfare state as though it were directed by Christoph Marthaler and set-designed by Anna Viebrock. Outside, the winds of hazard are roaring, a hazard they accept with forced euphoria, feeding it, doped up and amped up, into a constantly efficient and ceaselessly active economic person, while on the inside the officers shuffle back and forth, the last people to distinguish between private life and work.

Yet there is an upper echelon, too, one that the members of the Nietzsche economy, the masters of intensification, look up to—and it is not populated only by successful people. Rather, it consists of those who, without lying to themselves, without having to will the *I* triumphant and the humiliated *I* into a single soul in order to experience their triumph and power, have been able to wholly transform their old waste-your-youth leftist Nietzscheanism into a pragmatic Nietzscheanism of efficiency. That is to say, those

who had no difficulty combining the Nietzschean enmity against the state Deleuze had praised—it was probably in reality never a leftist enmity, but perhaps people had been able to do something leftist with it—and the vitalist enmity against bureaucrats, to translate the result into an entrepreneurial attitude; those who, rather than dreaming their will to power into their freelancer identities, have indeed acquired actual power.

Since novels such as *American Psycho* (1991) appeared, this type has circulated, at first as a fictional pathological monster, now as a reality, and most recently also in popular culture as a stock object at which to direct the general hatred of casino capitalism. If we look at the actions of this type in the way we ought to in a Nietzschean economy, that is to say, "in an extramoral sense," his life, propelled by checks that might bounce at any moment, is not uninteresting. It is indeed this stuff that produces the truly great subjects, the ones that the contemporary arts repeatedly dream of, between Hannibal Lecter and Matthew Barney, between Jason Rhoades and Jonathan Meese—a theater of unfounded assertions, insane through and through, that has made it into the efficient heart of a well-organized economic routine. The dominant figure in this same routine, however, represents the other type described above, the omnipresent freelancer who doesn't worry about tomorrow because he can't afford to anyway, the overman driven not by the grandeur of excess but by naked want.

Several ideological constructs have been brought to the market promising to bridge the gap between these two models. The magazine *brand eins* is full of first-person biographical narratives from active economic agents who package the move from intention and focus towards intensity

and ecstatic involvement outside of themselves. The so-called digital bohème, as invented by Holm Friebe and Sascha Lobo, uses the term bohemian to dress up precisely the type I just called a Nietzschean. This brings a couple more people on board who prefer to describe the intensification of life through self-realizing work in slightly less brutal terms; it also leaves open the possibility of an implementation based on more than just will and vitality by using a technological paradigm shift as a solid foundation for calculation. The true economic Nietzschean, however, needs none of that—unlike thirty years ago, he doesn't want to be part of any movement: he just wants to move money into his own pockets.

Even back then, Jacob Taubes, back then a brillant and dazzling lead character of those who would later find their way via leftist Nietzscheanism into the all-nighter of capitalist adventure doped up on euphoria, expressed a skeptical view of this development. Taubes, a scholar of religion and philosopher who was the founding editor of Suhrkamp's "Theorie" series, was always open to an intellectual adventure. Yet in an interview in an early issue of the magazine *Tumult*, he cautioned against the "Nietzsche boys" who suddenly popped up all over places where a very rigid left had prevailed: the other side of the critique of power, as it were, was a new will to power—and it would ultimately find its way to power as well.[9]

1
This essay is not about Nietzschean philology. In the following, the name "Nietzsche" is used to refer to a specific reception of Nietzsche's work in France during the 1970s, and then in Germany during the 1980s, and to the ways this reading helped shape an atmosphere and attitude toward life that paved the way for the aspirations and life-defining decisions of people who are now middle-aged—and have jobs.

2
Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Intensitäten* (West Berlin: Merve, 1978).

3
Jean-François Lyotard, "Bemerkungen über die Wiederkehr des Kapitals," in *Intensitäten*, 32. As quoted in Jean-François Lyotard, "Notes on the Return and Capital," in "Nietzsche's Return," ed. Sylvère Lotringer, special issue, *Semiotext(e)* 3, no. 1 (1977): 44.

4
See Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, "Many Politics," in *Dialogues II*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 124–47.

5
Jürgen Teipel, *Verschwende Deine Jugend* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000).

6
For more on these types, see Jan Rehmann, *Postmoderner Linksnietzscheanismus: Deleuze & Foucault; Eine Dekonstruktion* (Hamburg: Argument, 2004). Especially instructive for the issues discussed here are pages 132–136, where Rehmann describes Foucault's strategy of mobilizing Nietzsche to outdo the Paris radical left in terms of its willingness to fight and its radicalism—but, as it were, on its own territory: the radical rejection of the status quo.

7
See Michael Schirner, *Werbung ist Kunst* (Munich: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1988).

8
See Diedrich Diederichsen, "Schönheitschirurgie am gewachsenen Schnabel: Der Genuß an der Selbstrezeption in der Floskel: Ich bin ein Mensch, der...," *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 52, no. 2 (2007).

9
Jacob Taubes in conversation with Wolfert von Rahden and Norbert Kapferer, "Elite oder Avantgarde," *Tumult* 3 (1982): 64–76.

Hito Steyerl

Politics of Art: Contemporary Art and the Transition to Post-Democracy

A standard way of relating politics to art assumes that art represents political issues in one way or another. But there is a much more interesting perspective: the politics of the field of art as a place of work.[1] Simply look at what it does—not what it shows.

Amongst all other forms of art, fine art has been most closely linked to post-Fordist speculation, with bling, boom, and bust. Contemporary art is no unworldly discipline nestled away in some remote ivory tower. On the contrary, it is squarely placed in the neoliberal thick of things. We cannot dissociate the hype around contemporary art from the shock policies used to defibrillate slowing economies. Such hype embodies the affective dimension of global economies tied to ponzi schemes, credit addiction, and bygone bull markets. Contemporary art is a brand name without a brand, ready to be slapped onto almost anything, a quick face-lift touting the new creative imperative for places in need of an extreme makeover, the suspense of gambling combined with the stern pleasures of upper-class boarding school education, a licensed playground for a world confused and collapsed by dizzying deregulation. If contemporary art is the answer, the question is: How can capitalism be made more beautiful?

But contemporary art is not only about beauty. It is also about function. What is the function of art within disaster capitalism? Contemporary art feeds on the crumbs of a massive and widespread redistribution of wealth from the poor to the rich, conducted by means of an ongoing class struggle from above.[2] It lends primordial accumulation a whiff of postconceptual razzmatazz. Additionally, its reach has grown much more decentralized—important hubs of art are no longer only located in the Western metropolis. Today, deconstructivist contemporary

art museums pop up in any self-respecting autocracy. A country with human rights violations? Bring on the Gehry gallery!

The Global Guggenheim is a cultural refinery for a set of post-democratic oligarchies, as are the countless international biennials tasked with upgrading and reeducating the surplus population.[3] Art thus facilitates the development of a new multipolar distribution of geopolitical power whose predatory economies are often fueled by internal oppression, class war from above, and radical shock and awe policies.

Contemporary art thus not only reflects, but actively intervenes in the transition towards a new post-Cold War world order. It is a major player in unevenly advancing semiocapitalism wherever T-Mobile plants its flag. It is involved in mining for raw materials for dual-core processors. It pollutes, gentrifies, and ravishes. It seduces and consumes, then suddenly walks off, breaking your heart. From the deserts of Mongolia to the high plains of Peru, contemporary art is everywhere. And when it is finally dragged into Gagosian dripping from head to toe with blood and dirt, it triggers off rounds and rounds of rapturous applause.

Why and for whom is contemporary art so attractive? One guess: the production of art presents a mirror image of postdemocratic forms of hypercapitalism that look set to become the dominant political post-Cold War paradigm. It seems unpredictable, unaccountable, brilliant, mercurial, moody, guided by inspiration and genius. Just as any oligarch aspiring to dictatorship might want to see himself. The traditional conception of the artist's role corresponds all too well with the self-image of wannabe autocrats, who see government potentially—and dangerously—as an art form.

Postdemocratic government is very much related to this erratic type of male-genius-artist behavior. It is opaque, corrupt, and completely unaccountable. Both models operate within male bonding structures that are as democratic as your local mafia chapter. Rule of law? Why don't we just leave it to taste? Checks and balances? Cheques and balances! Good governance? Bad curating! You see why the contemporary oligarch loves contemporary art: it's just what works for him.

Thus, traditional art production may be a role model for the nouveaux riches created by privatization, expropriation, and speculation. But the actual production of art is simultaneously a workshop for many of the nouveaux poor, trying their luck as jpeg virtuosos and conceptual impostors, as gallerinas and overdrive content providers. Because art also means work, more precisely strike work.[4] It is produced as spectacle, on post-Fordist all-you-can-work conveyor belts. Strike or shock work is affective labor at insane speeds, enthusiastic, hyperactive, and deeply compromised.

Originally, strike workers were excess laborers in the early Soviet Union. The term is derived from the expression "udarny trud" for "superproductive, enthusiastic labor" (udar for "shock, strike, blow"). Now, transferred to present-day cultural factories, strike work relates to the sensual dimension of shock. Rather than painting, welding, and molding, artistic strike work consists of ripping, chatting, and posing. This accelerated form of artistic production creates punch and glitz, sensation and impact. Its historical origin as format for Stalinist model brigades brings an additional edge to the paradigm of hyperproductivity. Strike workers churn out feelings, perception, and distinction in all possible sizes and variations. Intensity or

evacuation, sublime or crap, readymade or ready-made reality—strike work supplies consumers with all they never knew they wanted.

Strike work feeds on exhaustion and tempo, on deadlines and curatorial bullshit, on small talk and fine print. It also thrives on accelerated exploitation. I'd guess that—apart from domestic and care work—art is the industry with the most unpaid labor around. It sustains itself on the time and energy of unpaid interns and self-exploiting actors on pretty much every level and in almost every function. Free labor and rampant exploitation are the invisible dark matter that keeps the cultural sector going.

Free-floating strike workers plus new (and old) elites and oligarchies equal the framework of the contemporary politics of art. While the latter manage the transition to post-democracy, the former image it. But what does this situation actually indicate? Nothing but the ways in which contemporary art is implicated in transforming global power patterns.

Contemporary art's workforce consists largely of people who, despite working constantly, do not correspond to any traditional image of labor. They stubbornly resist settling into any entity recognizable enough to be identified as a class. While the easy way out would be to classify this constituency as multitude or crowd, it might be less romantic to ask whether they are not global lumpenfreelancers, deterritorialized and ideologically free-floating: a reserve army of imagination communicating via Google Translate.

Instead of shaping up as a new class, this fragile constituency may well consist—as Hannah Arendt once spitefully formulated—of the "refuse of all classes." These dispossessed adventurers described by Arendt, the urban pimps and hoodlums ready to be hired as colonial mercenaries and

exploiters, are faintly (and quite distortedly) mirrored in the brigades of creative strike workers propelled into the global sphere of circulation known today as the art world.[5] If we acknowledge that current strike workers might inhabit similarly shifting grounds—the opaque disaster zones of shock capitalism—a decidedly un-heroic, conflicted, and ambivalent picture of artistic labor emerges.

We have to face up to the fact that there is no automatically available road to resistance and organization for artistic labor. That opportunism and competition are not a deviation of this form of labor but its inherent structure. That this workforce is not ever going to march in unison, except perhaps while dancing to a viral Lady Gaga imitation video. The international is over. Now let's get on with the global.

Here is the bad news: political art routinely shies away from discussing all these matters.[6] Addressing the intrinsic conditions of the art field, as well as the blatant corruption within it—think of bribes to get this or that large-scale biennial into one peripheral region or another—is a taboo even on the agenda of most artists who consider themselves political. Even though political art manages to represent so-called local situations from all over the globe, and routinely packages injustice and destitution, the conditions of its own production and display remain pretty much unexplored. One could even say that the politics of art are the blind spot of much contemporary political art.

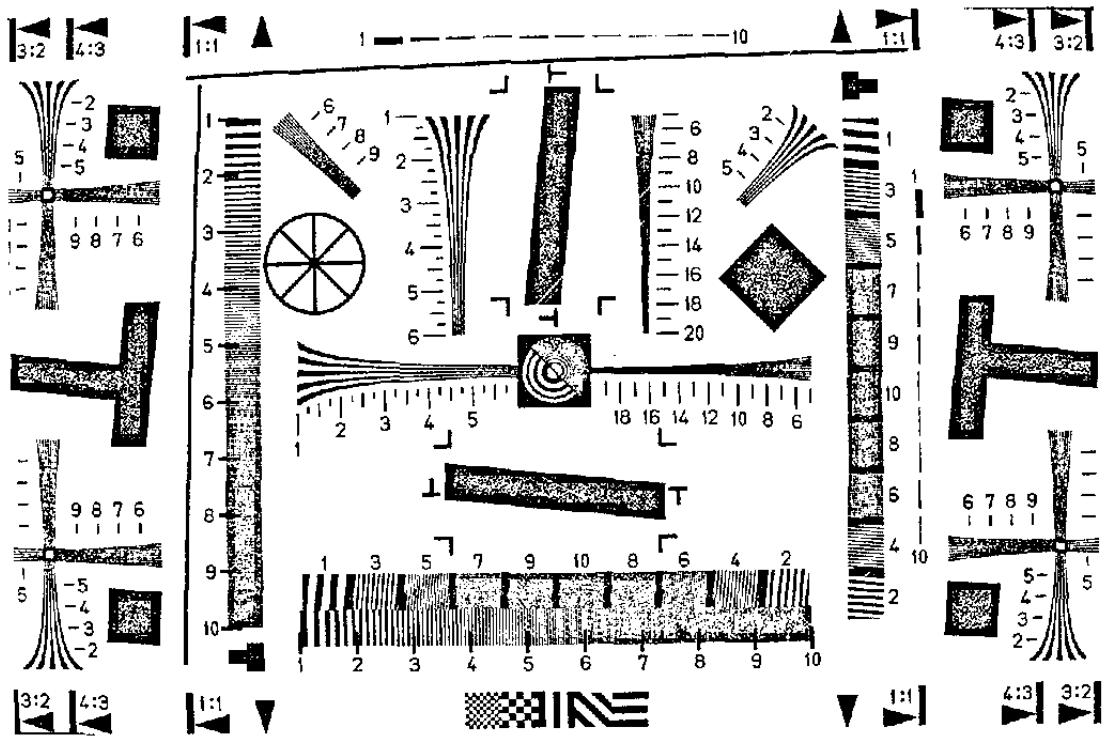
Of course, institutional critique has traditionally been interested in similar issues. But today we need a quite extensive expansion of it.[7] Because in contrast to the age of an institutional criticism, which focused on art institutions, or even the sphere of representation at large, art production (consumption, distribution, marketing, etc.) takes on a

different and extended role within postdemocratic globalization. One example, which is a quite absurd but also common phenomenon, is that radical art is nowadays very often sponsored by the most predatory banks or arms traders and completely embedded in rhetorics of city marketing, branding, and social engineering.[8] For very obvious reasons, this condition is rarely explored within political art, which is in many cases content to offer exotic self-ethnicization, pithy gestures, and militant nostalgia.

I am certainly not arguing for a position of innocence.[9] It is at best illusory, at worst just another selling point. Most of all it is very boring. But I do think that political artists could become more relevant if they were to confront these issues instead of safely parade as Stalinist realists, CNN situationists, or Jamie-Oliver-meets-probation-officer social engineers. It's time to kick the hammer-and-sickle souvenir art into the dustbin. If politics is thought of as the Other, happening somewhere else, always belonging to disenfranchised communities in whose name no one can speak, we end up missing what makes art intrinsically political nowadays: its function as a place for labor, conflict, and...fun—a site of condensation of the contradictions of capital and of extremely entertaining and sometimes devastating misunderstandings between the global and the local.

The art field is a space of wild contradiction and phenomenal exploitation. It is a place of power mongering, speculation, financial engineering, and massive and crooked manipulation. But it is also a site of commonality, movement, energy, and desire. In its best iterations it is a terrific cosmopolitan arena populated by mobile shock workers, itinerant salesmen of self, tech whiz kids, budget tricksters, supersonic translators, PhD interns, and other

digital vagrants and day laborers. It's hard-wired, thin-skinned, plastic-fantastic. A potential commonplace where competition is ruthless and solidarity remains the only foreign expression. Peopled with charming scumbags, bully-kings, almost-beauty-queens. It's HDMI, CMYK, LGBT. Pretentious, flirtatious, mesmerizing.



Resolution chart for digital cameras.

This mess is kept afloat by the sheer dynamism of loads and loads of hardworking women. A hive of affective labor under close scrutiny and controlled by capital, woven tightly into its multiple contradictions. All of this makes it relevant to contemporary reality. Art affects this reality precisely because it is entangled into all of its aspects. It's messy, embedded, troubled, irresistible. We could try to understand its space as a political one instead of trying to represent a politics that is always happening elsewhere. Art is not outside politics, but politics resides within its production, its distribution, and its reception. If we take this on, we might surpass the plane of a politics of representation and embark on a politics that is there, in front of our eyes, ready to embrace.

1
I am expanding on a notion developed by Hongjohn Lin in his curatorial statement for the Taipei Biennial 2010. Hongjohn Lin, "Curatorial Statement," in *10TB Taipei Biennial Guidebook* (Taipei: Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 2010), 10–11.

2
This has been described as a global and ongoing process of expropriation since the 1970s. See David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). As for the resulting distribution of wealth, a study by the Helsinki-based World Institute for Development Economics Research of the United Nations University (UNU-WIDER) found that in the year 2000, the richest 1 percent of adults alone owned 40 percent of global assets. The bottom half of the world's adult population owned 1 percent of global wealth. See http://www.wider.unu.edu/events/past-events/2006-events/en_GB/05-12-2006/.

3
For just one example of oligarch involvement, see http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/28/nyregion/28trustee.html. While such biennials span from Moscow to Dubai to Shanghai and many of the so-called transitional countries, we shouldn't consider post-democracy

to be a non-Western phenomenon. The Schengen area is a brilliant example of post-democratic rule, with a whole host of political institutions not legitimized by popular vote and a substantial section of the population excluded from citizenship (not to mention the Old World's growing fondness for democratically-elected fascists). The exhibition "The Potosí-Principle," organized by Alice Creischer, Andreas Siekmann, and Max Jorge Hinderer, highlights the connection between oligarchy and image production from another historically relevant perspective.

4
I am drawing on a field of meaning developed by Ekaterina Degot, Cosmin Costinas, and David Riff for their 1st Ural Industrial Biennial, 2010.

5
Arendt may have been wrong on the matter of taste. Taste is not necessarily a matter of the common, as she argued, following Kant. In this context, it is a matter of manufacturing consensus, engineering reputation, and other delicate machinations, which—whoops—metamorphose into art-historical bibliographies. Let's face it: the politics of taste are not about the collective, but about the collector. Not about the common but about the patron. Not about sharing but about sponsoring.

6
There are of course many laudable and great exceptions, and I admit that I myself may bow my head in shame, too.

7
As is also argued in *Institutional Critique*, eds. Alex Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009). See also the collected issues of the online journal *transform: http://transform.eipcp.net/transversal/0106.*

8
Recently on show at Henie Onstad Kunstsenter in Oslo was "Guggenheim Visibility Study Group," a very interesting project by Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas that unpacked the tensions between local (and partly indigenist) art scenes and the Guggenheim franchise system, with the Guggenheim effect analyzed in detail in a case study. See http://www.vilma.cc/2G/. Also see Joseba Zulaika, *Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa: Museums, Architecture, and City Renewal* (Reno: Center for Basque Studies, University of Nevada, 2003). Another case study: Beat Weber, Therese Kaufmann, "The Foundation, the State Secretary and the Bank – A Journey into the Cultural Policy of a Private Institution," http://transform.eipcp.net/correspondence/1145970626. See also Martha Rosler, "Take the Money and Run? Can Political and Socio-critical Art 'Survive'?" http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/107, and Tirdad Zolghadr, "11th Istanbul Biennial," http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/11th_istanbul_biennial/.

9
This is evident from this text's placement on e-flux as an advertisement supplement. The situation is furthermore complicated by the fact that these ads may well flaunt my own shows. At the risk of repeating myself, I would like to emphasize that I do not consider innocence a political position, but a moral one, and thus politically irrelevant. An interesting comment on this situation can be found in Luis Camnitzer, "The Corruption in the Arts / the Art of Corruption," published in the context of The Marco Polo Syndrome, a symposium at the House of World Cultures in April, 1995. See http://www.universes-in-universe.de/magazin/marco-polo/s-camnitzer.htm.

Marion von Osten

Irene ist Viele! Or What We Call "Productive" Forces

Irene ist Viele![1]

An extensive 2004 study undertaken by the Swiss Federal Office of Statistics (BFS) found that, in one of the world's wealthiest countries, of nearly fifteen billion annual work hours, eight billion went unpaid. Two-thirds of that free labor was performed by women, while women in the wage-labor sector were paid on average 18 percent less than men.[2] The study shows that the "invisible hand of the market," with its celebrated promise of economic equality, fails when it comes to social, cultural, and life-sustaining activities; furthermore, it appears that the "free market" has something against women. If, on top of this, the current form of capitalism is characterized by its extension of the logic of commodity production into the social realm (although, according to its classical self-conception, the capitalist economy actually claims to exclude the interpersonal realm), this means that not only wages and social services are reduced and cut, but above all that the reproductive reserves are plundered.[3] According to many contemporary theorists, what was considered in the Fordist system to be external to the concerns of the economy—communication, personalized services, social relationships, lifestyle, subjectivity—today establishes the conditions for the generation of wealth. Social and cultural competences and processes—the most varied forms of knowledge production and dissemination—are central to what Antonella Corsani calls "cognitive" capitalism.[4]

Thus the current debate surrounding precarity in Europe, as a neoliberal condition and a comprehensive mode of subjectivity, doesn't stop where wage labor or social-state welfare ends, but rather seeks out perspectives that help us to think beyond the reductive logic of the current conception of

work, and beyond the nation-state as well. This also means being able to consider the material, social, and symbolic conditions necessary for life as interconnected entities that can overcome the traditional dichotomies of public/private and production/reproduction to set new standards for living life with all its facets and contingencies.[5]

But how does a life look when it doesn't define itself in relation to the status of wage labor, but rather through the desire to freely decide one's own conditions for living and working, effectively comprising a demand for a flexible labor market? What does it mean for our work and life when the social, the cultural, and the economic cease to be clearly distinguishable categories and instead condition and permeate each other? Beyond this, what does it mean when people come to terms with these new forms of work as isolated individuals? What can forms of collectivity look like? And what does it mean when there is not only no consideration of the redistribution of wealth in the precarity debate, but also no consideration of a good life for all? How do we expect to work politically to develop overall social conditions when the theoretical premises of their transformation remain to a large degree unexplained?

In this text I will pursue these questions in relation to a 1978 film by Helke Sander titled *Redupers. Die allseitig reduzierte Persönlichkeit* (The All-Around Reduced Personality: Outtakes). At the end of the 1970s, this film already tried to consider the immanence of liberation ideals and self-determination in capitalist societies. In a way, it represents a possible historical starting point for the current debate over forces of production, precarity, and critical potential by illustrating that, even in the upheaval of changes in the capitalist as well as

gender order that took place in the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism, many networked and self-organizing production conditions (what today would be considered the source of "immaterial work") were already present—and were being analyzed by feminists.

In the Magnifying Glass of Non-Work

Redupers is set in the still-divided Berlin of the 1970s. The film begins with, and is continuously interrupted by, pans of Berlin's graffiti and slogan-covered facades, reminding us of the social struggles of 1968 or the binary socialist and capitalist power blocs. Against this backdrop of the city's ever-present division and the fading memory of the 1968 revolution, the film tells of the everyday life and work of a young press photographer and single mother who works with a feminist collective in addition to her regular job. Director Helke Sander plays the main character in *Redupers*, herself: a photographer who "produces," develops, prints, and sells images as a freelancer for a Berlin newspaper, lives in a shared apartment with her daughter and a friend, and is in a relationship with a man who is not the father of her child. She works with a feminist producers' collective on a countercultural project in the public sphere and, as part of a Berlin art collective, on an exhibition directed against the dominant capitalist image of West Berlin. The whole construction of the film doesn't only destabilize prevailing notions around the separation of public and private realms, or the classical division of labor between director, author, and actor, but can also be read as a document of a form of self-representation that destabilizes parliamentary democracies' claims that the will and interest of "the people" or the subaltern must be represented by institutions and the media in order to be valid.[6]

From the beginning, this can be understood as political positioning on the filmmaker's part. Helke Sander is also a central figure of the so-called First Women's Movement. At the 1968 conference of the Socialist German Student Union (SDS) in Berlin she delivered the speech on behalf of the Action Committee on the Liberation of Women, an event that ended with the famous tomato being thrown at her comrades. In this speech, Sander demanded that the functionalist precept rooted in political economy, according to which capitalism must determine all social conditions, be set aside. Power relations in the private sphere, which affect women above all, cannot be accommodated in this perspective, but are instead denied and dismissed as a secondary contradiction. The political project shared by leftist men and women could not, according to Sander, be successful as long as only "exceptional women" were recognized by the merit system of the leftist intelligentsia. The question of the political project lies, according to Sander, in the method by which it is practiced. What was necessary was a political practice that recognizes the private realm, the body, gender relations, and the realm of reproduction as a political sphere.

The politicization of the private is a central motif of the social movements of the 1970s and is found throughout the film. *Redupers* no longer places this critique of the normative role of the housewife at the center. Instead, the filmmaker uses the politicized perspective on the private to examine the most varied activities and constraints, drawing connections to the social, economic, and cultural fields, and the power relationships at work between them. The question of the mother's care for the daughter and their relationship plays an important role, although social conditions in the

film are indicated primarily by the ever-changing demands imposed upon the overworked protagonist, whose career as a press photographer requires her to be on location at irregular times, and with little notice. Beyond the unresolved question of care, the film remains attentive to all the invisible operations that comprise work within the culture as well—those not related directly to the sale of photographs: shopping for film, working in the darkroom, developing the film and printing the photos, drying and pressing the prints as well as retouching the images; but also: negotiating assignments, remaining informed about social events, maintaining contact with the persons photographed, which also goes beyond a working relationship, as well as submitting invoices and collecting honoraria, preparing tax returns, etc. The cash-value of the compensation that the photographer Edda receives in Sander's film for her photos, with which she defrays all expenses for both her daughter's and her own subsistence, and for all her other projects, can never make up for all of this activity. Even just with regard to the production of the photos, it doesn't even amount to a decent hourly wage. The sale of photographs as a finished product thus contains contradictions very similar to those of selling one's own labor to capital. As the photograph is only a snapshot of an instant in a live event, frozen and commodified, so also is the work performed for the production of the image not contained in the price. In a similar way, life-sustaining, social, and communicative activities are also frozen in the concept of labor, consumed by capital like a commodity.[7]

This understanding has a historical side: that of the discovery of work as a source of property and wealth, from John Locke and Adam Smith to Marx's *Systems of Work* and the political economy

as science. In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries thinkers of all stripes apparently agreed that "work" alone represents human beings' most productive means of shaping the world and forming values. Even when Karl Marx, in his critique of the Gotha program, strongly criticized the claim that work is the source of all wealth (he asserted that nature is also a source of wealth and that the fetish for work is an expression of bourgeois ideology), during the period of industrialization through the radical re-evaluation of the overall social status of work, there were a striking number of other activities that assumed that they could form world and value as well. The most obvious reason why the theorists of the nineteenth century weren't aware of the radical limitations of this concept of work is rooted, according to Hannah Arendt, in the fact that they only attributed work to the production of sellable goods.[8]

Throughout industrialization, the concept of work came to be understood according to its capacity for maximizing profit and producing value. But this also meant that such a concept can neither encompass "work" in the life-sustaining sense nor productivity in any non-capitalist sense. Karl Marx conceived of work in much broader terms than those of the male factory worker. He also considered "making the audience laugh" (cultural work / entertainment industry) to be work, and protested against those of the workers' movement who only understood traditional industrial labor as work. Sweat and muscle power, real manpower, and the machine hall were apparently easier to politicize than the comics, entertainers, or women—for whom the "other" industry of unpaid caretaking, childrearing, shopping, and housework were intended—on the basis of their so-called feminine characteristics.

The circumstances of their exploitation were hidden, but no less brutal in their effects. In contrast to the entertainment industry, which was quite small at the time, this second industry concerned almost the entire "other half" of society. Alongside the sticky psycho-social dependency of the genders, the dichotomy formed by the woman's dependency upon the money of the man would determine the entire symbolic order of industrial capitalism.

But reducing work to production also went beyond this to lock the theoretical approaches inside the factory, so to speak. It did not take long for the critique of capitalism to consider the gendering of paid and unpaid labor alongside its role in producing capital as well.[9]

Living a life that unfolds in opposing directions, the main character in Helke Sander's film points to the imprecision of this discourse. While her "free time" is spent working with her female friends on an art project—as she says "one interesting project or another is always blowing into my house"—her days remain filled with different activities characterized by usefulness and/or idealism, both informal and normally undocumented. While her work as a press photographer secures her income and is what she describes as her actual career, the other activity—working on a cultural project—fulfills her desire for a collective, feminist practice, for change and cultural and political empowerment. At the same time, both are work, as is caring for her daughter. But in these apparently self-determined conditions, as the film shows, the unpaid care work remains not only the responsibility of women, but also invisible to the commodity forms of knowledge and cultural production. Self-organized work is also split into remunerative work offering financial support and artistic, self-actualizing, collective work

that brings in cultural and social capital. And yet the care work at home is taken into account by neither occupation. While her cultural-political work is coupled with the actualization of meaningful individual and collective desires, the care work must somehow be organized around it. Her work with a group of women on a project to design a counter-image to the dominant one of a divided and cut-off Berlin is indeed more meaningful than freezing into photographs "events which are of publishable value for the newspaper." The women's project for the Berlin art association doesn't only reflect the de-valuation of care work to that of a burdensome activity, but also points to the different levels of their own participation in the same dominant condition, as well as to their individual desires for public recognition. The sexist logic of society and the desire to change it thus come dangerously close to one another. In this way, the film's politicization of the private dissolves into new concepts of occupation and career, but while it finds its place in the self-actualization of "more meaningful" work, it no longer locates this change in the social conditions themselves.[10]

All-Around Reduced Views

Sander's film focuses on this absence in its descriptions of all the daily activities we perform in private and public space. For more than thirty years, feminist economists have examined work relationships and conditions from the perspective of non-work, calling our attention to the fact that the field of political economy (which is about two hundred and fifty years old) has until now only addressed commodity production and not the question of how to bring about sociality. On the one hand, this is because the field developed alongside mechanization and industrialization and

was in a position to theorize these new production systems and capital relations, but also because a specific ruling form of subjectivity became central to the development of Western capitalist society: the *homo economicus*, the subject of this economy, with white skin and masculine gender, who follows his own interests and whose self-interest is also believed to serve the interests of all others. According to Elisabeth Stiefel, an economist from Cologne, the *homo economicus* represents not only the tasks of the public economic sphere, but also those of the head of household, while the interior of the household is *terra incognita* for economic theory. The social and the cultural thus remain fundamentally exterior to the understanding of the economical. As classical economic theory assumed care work to be self-evident—and therefore performed for free—women had to take on unpaid "extra-economical" activities for "cultural" reasons, and this gendering of paid and unpaid work, which even today finds a significant disparity in the pay of men and women, has not hurt capital in the slightest in two hundred years.

The separation of social, cultural, and economic discourses from those of production and reproduction has solidified a theoretical reductionism which has made it difficult to discern where and how to economically position the analysis and critique of post-Fordist work and life conditions, especially because it is precisely those extra-economic conditions that have become central for the production of added value. How can we begin to bring these into a discussion about the re-distribution of wealth, when above all wage labor can no longer be guaranteed? How can we demand payment for something that is not yet considered in an economic sense work? And do we even want to recognize and

monetize non-work as "work" at all, thereby economizing all aspects of life?

It becomes even more complicated to address these questions when they extend, together with gender duality and its location in the (neo-) classical work imperative, into the desire economy of a "good life."

Sander's film also speaks to this. The figure of the photographer also plays a double role in the film: as both occupation and as a self-actualization project. The photographer historically represents an exception to the gendered division of labor, as it was one of the first occupations to witness an altered discourse of visuality brought about by new technologies, and this opened possibilities for self-sufficiency and financial independence to not just men. The female photographer thus functions as a kind of role model for women, since the possession of her own money in this "creative occupation" could be associated with liberation from the heterosexual regime. Thus it was not unusual for these self-sufficient women to live with other women and not be married to men. The techno-emancipative role model in Sander's film witnesses this historical narrative at the end of the 1970s, in a new situation between diligent self-organization and a relatively bureaucratic information and culture industry, in which the underpayment of freelance workers has become the rule. At the same time, Sander's figure of the photographer shows who has access to the representation of the world and who selects, determines, and utilizes it.

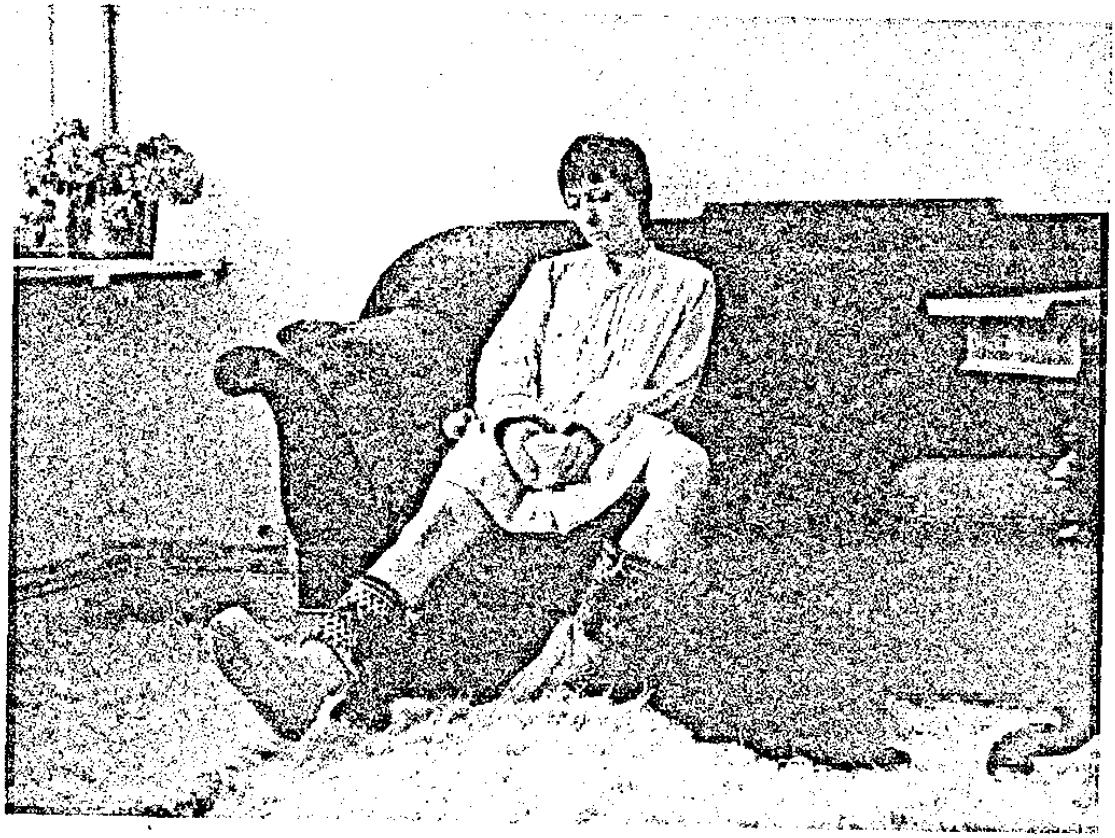
In a central scene, in which the photographer Edda calls the newspaper editors seeking payment due to her, and her just-awoken friend finds the bathroom full of developed film, a conflict emerges: the good, non-heteronormative life together—

being self-sufficient and earning money from home—and being dependent on editors. The economic reality of self-employmentthat was previously understood as emancipatory eats more and more into Edda's personal relationships. The emancipatory struggle that had the good life as its objective now reappears in the unsatisfied longing for change and the struggle to survive.

Against this backdrop, the film reflects the fact that the desire for feminist, occupational, and cultural-political self-sufficiency—the personal responsibility of earning money and working in the counterculture—have inverted to become their opposites. They are not only unable to resolve the social contradictions that they set out to overcome, but become mired in them instead. The protagonist's various motivations for wanting to become self-sufficient (by becoming a press photographer and an artist) connect completely in the film for the first time when the protagonist enters a new relationship with herself by going on a visit to the editorial floor of the magazine *Stern* to promote her feminist art project. In the scene, the photographer Edda puts on makeup and perfume, and, thinking as she walks down the hall to the journalist's office, "if I really wanted to represent what is right in my job as press photographer, I would have to be at home here (in the halls of *Stern*)." In this situation, it is her cultural self speaking, but not her career self, and certainly not her activist self. The interplay of her various repertoires—the fragmentation of her person—is especially clear here. This scene suggests how, by working by herself and on projects outside of her career, Edda finds options for a "better position" on the horizon. The mix of positions and activities also becomes a "portfolio": what she has done without pay and possibly with a higher degree of political

investment accumulates social or cultural capital which is usable in other markets for a better position or a career in art. This points to a practice that has transformed into a dominant work-related demand today, in which unpaid internships and other indignities are part of a "normal career."

In Switzerland today, job seekers show their unpaid work in their résumés, on the one hand to signal their "willingness to work," but also to show their flexibility and versatility in the tightening job market. The feminist demand for the visibility of unpaid work seems realized here, but at the same time, the documentation of the informal serves only the efficiency logic of existing capitalist conditions by indicating a capability and readiness for wage labor.



Still from *Redupers. Die allseitig reduzierte Persönlichkeit*, 1978.
Courtesy Helke Sander.

The *Stern* editor was unresponsive to the film's protagonist. For him, she is "only" a figure of the women's movement—a feminist and a political activist. Not only is she denied the role of a cultural producer who can represent political conditions, but so is she denied any possible success as well. Here Sander illustrates what usually remains acknowledged in current theories on the emergent productivity of individual desires within neoliberalism: that pay for work performed in vastly different markets does not equal the sum of the parts. Viewed from today's perspective, the film not only caricatures government-funded start-ups and the plans of the Hartz commission, but also corrects the idea that the celebrated figure of the "entrepreneurial self" is not gendered or part of a hierarchy. The reflective, connection-forming, and knowledge-producing form of work sketched out here also points to a change in society through which new claims to activity, collectivity, and property can be negotiated.

The protagonist is not only photographer, feminist activist, and theorist, that is, cultural producer, but also a product of emancipatory demands and capitalist impositions, a subject who has pulled away from wage labor and its regulatory apparatus in the factory or in the office, as the Autonomia Operaia called for. At the same time, she is a *Reduper* (an all-around REDUced PERson)—a figure who cannot be located biographically, and instead requires a new form of subjectivity to be realized in the contradictions of capitalist socialization. In this way, *Redupers* marks the post-Fordist convergence of work relationships, subjectivity, desires, and political demands that has consequently brought about a multitude of all-around reduced personalities.

Creating Probabilities

Three decades after *Redupers*, the call for self-determination and social participation is no longer only an emancipatory demand, but increasingly also a social obligation. In the new conditions of governance, subjects are pushed towards maturity, autonomy, and personal responsibility. They seem to willingly subordinate themselves to the dispositions of power—they are "obliged to be free" (Nikolas Rose). Forms of discipline that were used in the time of mechanization and industrialization have been extended in post-Fordist societies into new forms of control. Contemporary forms of organization discipline subjects and their bodies less through "guilt and punishment," and more by aiming at internalizing productivity goals. This produces a new relationship of the subject to itself—friendliness towards customers, working with the team, increasing one's own motivation, self-organizing work routines, managing time efficiently, and being personally responsible for both the company's and one's own actions are not only demands being made on the work subject, but increasingly also on the unemployed. According to Michel Foucault, this new concept of governing "is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself."[11] One's behavior in a more or less open field of possibility therefore determines the path of success. Exertion of power consists, in this sense and according to Foucault, in the "creation of probability."[12]

Accordingly, it is not a disciplinary regime that guides the subject's actions, but rather a set of governing practices that mobilize and encourage

rather than "survey and punish." The new subjects of work should apparently be as contingent and flexible as the "markets." A work subject who is able to find a productive relationship between work time and life time is "supported and challenged," and within this relationship private activities are also geared toward economic use value. The entrepreneur of one's own labor should also be the artist of his/her own life.[13] The hope that these paradoxical demands could become dominant labor market politics is likely due to the fact that under such conditions, workers can always feel "liberated" from constraints, as Helke Sander's film was already able to show in 1978. It must be worked out, therefore, how the transition from liberation programs to job specifications takes place, and whether and for whom they are effective. Three decades after *Redupers*, we need to ask how the relationship between work and non-work can be politicized when their coupling has already become hegemonic in its representation.

Although the economic field, in a double sense, mobilizes and controls the social realm, the paradigms of capitalist production remain the same. They do not inform the "resources" of our social lives themselves, even (and especially) if cognitive capitalism has parasitically positioned itself at the side of reproduction. Acceleration and maximizing profit continue to be advanced as the necessary logic of the market. Life itself is subsumed under the rules of efficiency and optimization that were first encountered under the regime of automated industrial work in order to synchronize the body with machines.[14] Today, it is our cognitive capabilities that we are expected to optimize and our self-relation (to our work) that we are expected to correct in the interest of lifelong learning.[15]

Beyond this, the film *Redupers* shows that the anchoring of neoliberal ideology in the subject cannot only be considered to be a product of post-Fordist production or the information economy. Rather, the film points to arguments made by Ève Chiapello and Luc Boltanski, who in their book *The New Spirit of Capitalism* undertake a sociology of the critique of capitalism since 1968.[16] They examine the "social critique" that became engaged on the political level for the redistribution of wealth and for equal rights as well as the "artistic critique" that emerged from the artistic and intellectual avant-gardes such as the Situationists and various social movements of the postwar era. With demands for autonomy, authenticity, and creativity, but also through artistic practices beyond the classical concept of the work of art, these critiques attacked the use of the social as commodity form, discipline in the factory, bureaucratic inertia, and hierarchical power relations in the industrial societies. Boltanski and Chiapello then argue that it is precisely capitalism's adaptation to these "cultural critiques" that increasingly corroded the politicization of life and the social critique of property relations, thus paving the way for neoliberalism.

According to Yann Moulier Boutang, the classical conception of economic value and measurement changes in cognitive capitalism, since the growing use and exchange of knowledge in post-Fordist production extends far beyond its economic utilization as commodity.[17] The viral dynamics of new distribution technologies such as the internet renders information and knowledge far less accessible to supervisory bodies, as Sander's film also suggests. In the transformation of the old economy, these new possibilities also point to a new field of struggle—such as the conflicts and

arguments over *intellectual property* and the so-called *commons*.

After viewing *Redupers* against a backdrop of contemporary economic analysis, it seems insufficient to simply point out the limits in the study of political economy or to show that capitalism has incorporated certain concepts of life for its own advancement. Rather, we must also ask whether and how a critique of capitalism can make allowances for the alliance of work and life within the subject's own domain—its biopolitical preparations and desires—without getting mired in merely describing them as another advanced form of exploitation.

1

"*Irene ist Viele*" refers to Helke Sander's film *Eine Prämie für Irene* [A Bonus for Irene] (1971), in which the voiceover says "Irene ist Viele" (Irene is many). In the film, the figure of Irene stands for the many factory workers who are single mothers. *Eine Prämie für Irene* was one of the first films in Germany to suggest the interrelations between the public and the private spheres. "Irene ist Viele" was also the title of a film program I curated together with art historian Rachel Mader in the Shedhalle Zürich in 1996, in which films by feminist filmmakers from Germany and Switzerland were reviewed and reevaluated together with the filmmakers. Helke Sander was part of this important event that also tried to bridge older and younger generations.

2

According to a 2004 study by the Swiss Federal Office of Statistics (BFS), two-thirds of all unpaid work is performed by women. This corresponds to an equivalent of 172 billion Swiss Francs or 70 percent of the gross domestic product. In the future, unpaid work is to be economically evaluated on a regular basis. Although this calculation, based upon an estimation of market costs, is necessarily inexact, this sum corresponds to nearly the entire yearly wages of employed workers in Switzerland.

3

Mascha Madörin, "Der kleine Unterschied in hunderttausend Franken," *Widerspruch* 31 (1996): 127–142. See also Pauline Boudry, Brigitta Kuster, and Renate Lorenz,

eds., *Reproduktionskonten fälschen! Heterosexualität, Arbeit und Zuhause* (Berlin: b_books, 1999).

4

Contemporary production models are characterized by their transformation of workers' learned skills not used in the workplace into a productive force. The post-operaistic theorists in France and Italy have shown that all immaterial and affective work gains significance in post-Fordist production. With investigations into the reorganization of the automotive and textile industries in northern Italy and the image industries in Île de France, these theorists of "immaterial work" have also shown that communication and subjectivity are not only components of postindustrial, informalized, and informal production, but also themselves become an applied process in the industrial sector and the scene of new struggles. See Maurizio Lazzarato, "Immaterielle Arbeit. Gesellschaftliche Tätigkeit unter den Bedingungen des Postfordismus," in *Umherschweifende Produzenten. Immaterielle Arbeit und Subversion*, ed. Thomas Atzert (Berlin : ID-Archiv, 1998), 39–52, and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

5

Affective and communicative interaction and the creation of sociality and subjectivity never become economically valuable, but are rather always valuable for life itself. The social doesn't stop when one leaves the workplace, whether this be at home or in the office, and thus it can also never fully be absorbed by capital, since affects cannot be exclusively industrially organized (even if this is attempted in the image and film industry). If immaterial work, interaction, and communication can become a resource for accumulation, or even become a commodity, then this means that a vital aspect of the work force can no longer be clearly determined through measurements such as working hours, price comparisons, or possessions. The subjectivity of the workers doesn't end in an imaginary factory, but has rather a further effect on different social processes which are not only marked by their economic value, although they can, in the reverse argument, generate it. This also means asking how we ourselves reproduce or bring about the conditions that we criticize. See the project Atelier Europa, which I developed together with Pauline Boudry, Brigitta Kuster, Isabell Lorey, Angela McRobbie, and Katja Reichard, in which we carried out a "militant investigation" with cultural producers; see also *Be Creative! The Creative Imperative*, which I organized with students and theorists for the Museum of Design, Zurich, http://www.k3000.ch/becreative/.

6

The film is the expression of these demands for (self-)representation which emerged from the struggles against the exercise of control over subjectivity and are and were central to both the social and global emancipation movements.

7

It was Marx's achievement to have analyzed the abstraction process in which work is transformed in the capitalist accumulation into labor (*Arbeitskraft*, lit. work-force): into a seemingly measurable size. Capital doesn't buy all the necessary and living work, nor even the social, cultural, and spatial conditions to afford them, but rather a time-energy-money equivalence, in which life-sustaining activities are unnamed but apparently included. Labor was therefore also bought in the time of industrialization as a pre-produced commodity, in which the actual production relations which produce the commodity labor remain hidden. Thus capital in the time of industrialization had command over care work, communication, and lifestyle.

8

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

9

This missing perspective refers to the "becoming-subject" of factory work as a masculine muscular body with white skin, which would have to be analyzed in order to make a complete critique of the discipline

and the making-effective of the body and its exploitation—up through existential destruction in the time of industrialization.

10
Today, this means that migrants are underpaid to perform the remaining non-prestige care work so that the men and women wrapped up in their wage work or prestige work can carry out their paid or unpaid status work. Care work, which under traditional gender regimes was coupled to the subject position of the housewife, is now bought as a service on the market, or pushed upon those who can't buy it. After finishing cleaning and care work, the servant cannot afford a servant of his/her own who would perform this work in their own home.

11
Michel Foucault, "About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self: Two Lectures at Dartmouth," in *Political Theory*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (May, 1993): 198–227, 203f. Foucault's conception of governing as "determining the conduct of individuals" focuses on how "the contact point where the individuals are driven by others is tied to the way they conduct themselves." Foucault's argument is that, by means of these so-called "technologies of the self," a much more profound integration of the individual into power takes place, without which the functional modes of modern Western society are difficult to imagine.

12
Originally "Schaffung der Wahrscheinlichkeit," in Michel Foucault, "Das Subjekt und die Macht," *Jenseits von Strukturalismus und Hermeneutik*, eds. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1987), 255.

13
See G. Günter Voß and Hans J. Pongratz, "Der Arbeitskraftunternehmer. Eine neue Grundform der Ware Arbeitskraft?," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Soz-ialpsychologie* 50, no. 1 (1998): 131–158.

14
The effects of this acceleration and its attendant standardization are especially clear in the service sector, the *care economy*, and the entire health and social systems that come under the constraints of quality management and increased efficiency as well as austere fiscal policy. The same is also true according to the Bologna negotiations for the education system of the entire European Union.

15
See a collection of texts devoted to this question, *Norm der Abweichung*, ed. Marion von Osten (Vienna: Springer, 2003).

16
Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *Der neue Geist des Kapitalismus* (Konstanz: UVK Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 2003).

17
See Yann Moulier Boutang, "Neue Grenzziehungen in der Politischen Ökonomie," in *Norm der Abweichung*, 251–280. This crisis becomes clear, for example, in the suggested VW pay scale introduced in 2003 by Peter Hartz, member of the Volkswagen board and the personification of labor market reform. Here Hartz establishes the so-called "job family," in which the different levels of a production process should now be viewed and paid as an "organic whole" of various productive forces. From a designer to a mechanic to a painter, a job family is a team brought into a dependence that is "productive" for the individual but nonetheless negative. We also see the crisis of the definition of necessary work in the discussion over a guaranteed income—in which the production of life as necessary prerequisite for a work life or an unemployed existence are considered.

Liam Gillick

The Good of Work

Art is a history of doing nothing and a long tale of useful action. It is always a fetishization of decision and indecision—with each mark, structure, and engagement. What is the good of this work? The question contains a challenge to contemporary practitioners—or "current artists," a term I will use, as contemporary art no longer accounts for what is being made—that is connected more to what we have all become than to what we might propose, represent, or fail to achieve. The challenge is the supposition that artists today—whether they like it or not—have fallen into a trap that is predetermined by their existence within a regime that is centered on a rampant capitalization of the mind.

The accusation inherent in the question is that artists are at best the ultimate freelance knowledge workers and at worst barely capable of distinguishing themselves from the consuming desire to work at all times, neurotic people who deploy a series of practices that coincide quite neatly with the requirements of the neoliberal, predatory, continually mutating capitalism of the every moment. Artists are people who behave, communicate, and innovate in the same manner as those who spend their days trying to capitalize every moment and exchange of daily life. They offer no alternative to this.

The notion of artists as implicated figures has a long history, visible in varied historical attempts to resolve the desire to examine high culture as a philosophical marker, attempts beset by the unresolvable problem that the notional culture being examined and the function of high cultural reflection are always out of sync—meaning the accusation that we are functioning in a milieu dominated by predatory neoliberalism is based on a spurious projection of high cultural function in the first instance that

cannot account for the tensions in art, which remain the struggle for collectivity within a context that requires a recognition of difference.

Theories of immaterial labor—an awareness of the informational aspect and cultural content of the commodity—have exerted a profound influence on the starting point of current artists, allowing them to perceive the accusation as framed by the doubts that form the base of art's work. As a result, the question "What is the good of work?" is at the heart of the work—it is not a symptom or product of accidental proximity. It accounts for the doubts and confusion that exist and explains why there seem to be moments of stress and collapse within any current art structure. These moments of critical crisis are an expression of resistance to the structure—a constant restructuring in response to the desire to avoid work within a realm of permanently unrewarding work.

The reason it is hard to determine observable differences between the daily routines and operations of a new knowledge-worker and those of an artist is precisely because art functions in close parallel to the structures that it critiques.

It requires precise and close observation of the production processes involved in order to differentiate between knowledge workers and current artists. If the question "Why work?" is the original question of current art, it is necessary, in order to counter the accusation that artists are in thrall to processes of capitalization beyond them, to look at a number of the key issues around control. And to address them in a fragmented way. What follows is a discussion of these issues—a negotiation of which is necessary in order to replace a critical mirror with a window.

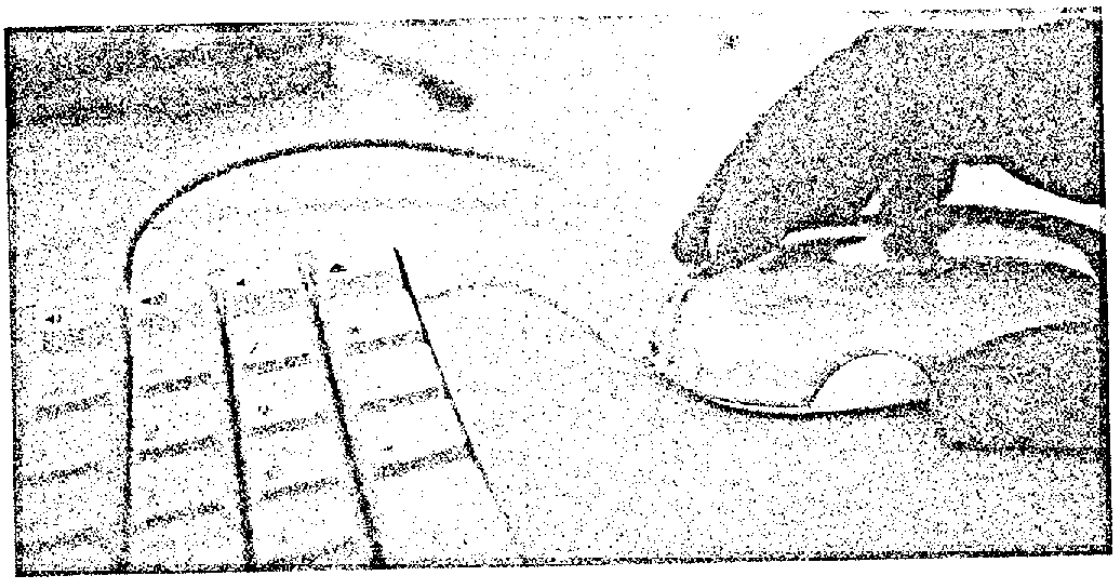
So what happened to the promise of leisure? Maybe this is what art can offer us now—a thing to use or reflect upon in a zone of permanent future leisure, as the "arts" as instrumentalized deployment becomes a more refined and defined capitalized zone. This zone is never geared towards artists alone but instead directed towards the general population as a way of rationalizing and explaining away innovations within the workplace as being part of a matrix of doubt and difference. Modes of leisure have been adopted by artists as a way to openly counter notions of labor as sites of dignity and innovation and in order to critique, mock, or parody the notion of an artistic life as role-play within the leisure zone. Yet the promise of leisure is not synchronized with artistic production. The withdrawal of labor and the establishment of structures in which intentions and results are uneven are markers that go beyond the promise of post-labor, which was always just the projection of a neurotic non-state.

So are we left with only the possibility of the good artist who fulfills the critical criteria? The artist who works—more or less permanently—and always finds a way to account for him or herself within a context demanding more and more interpretation? It is not leisure, but is it really work? Within this subset we have to engage in a careful process of categorization, meaning that we have to look at the methodological groupings that emerge within the art context rather than what is produced. One answer on offer over the last years was the formation of communities of practice forming new leisure/work modes. For artists are often creating new life in opposition to lifestyles. This involves a complete reorganization of relationships, wherein relationships themselves may become the subject

of the work and discursive models of practice become the founding principle rather than a result or product.

At the opposite extreme there is deliberate self-enforced isolation and a concurrent lack of accountability, amounting to a structural game within a context where notional support structures are mutable and dynamic. The two main trajectories of current art both attempt to clear us of the accusation: restructuring life (ways to work) and withdrawing from life (ways to free work). Categorizations of art in this case can superficially appear to mirror attitudes to work. It is quite appropriate for artists to co-opt working models and turn them to their own ends, from the factory to the bar and even to the notion of the artist's studio, as specific sites of production that can be used to either mimic established daily structures or deliberately avoid and deny them. Categorizations of art are not limited to what is produced but are connected more deeply to how things might be produced. It is necessary to focus on production rather than consumption (including the new formalism of responsible didactic criticism) if one is to unlock art's potential and permit a recasting of the accusation.

The notion of withdrawing or limiting production is the key to decoding the anxiety about work. One of the enduring powers of art, and one of the devices used by contemporary artists to consolidate specificity once they have attained a degree of recognition, is a withdrawal of labor or a limiting of supply. Doing the opposite—operating freely, openly, and on demand—is viewed as a problem within the gallery structure and resists the simple commodification of art. This shift to production



Liam Gillick, *Everything Good Goes*, 2008. Video loop. Courtesy of the artist.

consciousness by current artists, away from reception consciousness by contemporary artists, is a form of active withdrawal.

This notion of withdrawal can be understood in relation to the following: are there answers or questions in the work? This is central to the defense against the accusation. A postmodern understanding is that the current artist asks questions of the viewer while standing beside them. It is this sense of art as something that asks questions of the viewer that is misunderstood in the knowledge-worker accusation. The shift of position from confrontation to proximity is in practice a shift in category. Within the realm of the knowledge worker, the new consumer is always activated and treated as a discriminating individual who can be marketed to directly—spoken to face to face. Documentary practice places the user and the producer alongside each other. The exhaustion created by the continual capitalization of the recent past and the near future

has its source in the knowledge worker's attempt to account for every differentiation, whereas the artist is producing every differentiation alongside the recipient of the work.

This dynamic is linked to a game the artist plays with control over the moment of completion. For current art, the moment of judgment is not exclusive to an exterior field. The sense of control or denial exercised over that moment marks a zone of autonomy within a regime of excessive differences.

A response to the accusation is the creation of one's own deadlines, as opposed to the apparent creation of imposed deadlines. The notion of the deadline is a crucial applied structure that links the accused with the flexible knowledge worker. The number of deadlines increases exponentially, and they are created by the producer as much as they are introduced by others. An awareness of the constructed nature of deadlines allows one to electively engage and disengage and thus to create a zone of semi-autonomy.

Working for a long period with limited deadlines is a prerogative of not just the artist, but also of the occasional worker, whose job description is one of unbearable tedium but includes hard-won rights over steady employment. This prerogative marks the tension between the notion of applied flexibility and a critique of flexibility that permits a projection of potential.

Observing versus living is the most profound difference here. The notion of endlessly observing rather than taking part links the artist with the ethnographer and the alien. It is a continual flow between states of engagement and disengagement that provides potential and allows us to understand the *why* of production as opposed to the *what*.

Relationships with others are crucial. Roles are recast daily—alone together, together alone. For artists do not operate in isolation. And artists can only function in complete isolation. The acquisition or rejection of relationships is a crucial marker in art production, defining an artistic practice over and above a super specific knowledge-producing activity peppered with deadlines. This means that the entry of the artist into the apparently undifferentiated territory of infinite flexibility is made critical by a recognition of a series of encounters, borders, humps, and diversions.

The identification of ethical barriers emerges in the course of making art under the stressful circumstances of the accusation. Circumstances and subjects in this case appear as moral zombies—undead and relentless victims—that artists reject or accept in tension with the creation or rejection of ethical barriers. Ethics are not stable, easy to reach, feed, or kill off.

Under these stressful circumstances there is an assumption that art extends memory forwards and backwards. In other words, art is not necessarily synchronized to the present. What appears to be a methodology linked to present works is an illusion. Art deploys flexibility in order to account for the moral zombie—to navigate the terrain of ethical mutability. Art extends and reduces memory using tools that were instead developed to shorten memory—that is, capitalize the near future and recent past.

As there are no limits to work there are also no limits to not working. The idea that artists find a way to work is a defining characteristic of current art, emerging in the context of post-labor anxieties and the creation and dismantling of ethical barriers.

Research and reading as activities are not accounted for in the accusatory model. Artists whose modes of production are primarily informed by research are assumed to be the "good" workers. To research in a directed way and then present the results as a final work is not a leisure pursuit. But accounting for things and relationships in the world leads to displaced work, the creation of structural subjects. There is a sense in which all new art accounts for all other work previously made. This awareness is not necessarily accompanied by full knowledge of all the other work, but a sense that all the other works exist somewhere.

Even in documentary work, in addition to the creation of didactic structures or the replacement of a super-self-conscious and worn-out fourth estate, there is a sense that the nature of art is being questioned. The pursuit of documentary strategies is also a critique of the flow and capitalist logic that is applied to the commodification of art. The documentary is permanently working off of other fields. It also offers the possibility of being arrested while thinking about art. This is not possible while working as a knowledge worker.

This leads us to the equation: "just another citizen in the room versus everything I do involves a special perspective on the specificity of others." At the heart of the latter artistic persona is the assertion of citizenship combined with an invitation to view the extraordinary ordinary. It makes the biographical a locus of meaning. As art became more specific the biographical became both more generic and more special, a way to present the specific in a form that would encourage more specificities and more difference. Art now is an assertion of difference, not an assertion of flexibility.

How to find a better life in all of this? Current work undermines a sense or possibility of infinite leisure. Infinite leisure is only one form of utopia based in religion—a nightmare full of virgins and mansions. Will there be dogs? Oh, I hope there will be dogs. To be a clerk would be heaven for some people. A breakdown of the barriers between work, life, and art via direct action is a rather more rewarding potential outcome. Art appears to be result-based but is generally action-based and occupation-based. It is towards something. It reaches out. It only has meaning within a context and that context will always determine what activities might be necessary to improve the context.

This leaves us explaining everything in total communication anxiety about differentiation. Art viewed as a generalized terrain of collectivity and difference operates within a *real* of anxiety that is merely a reflection of multiple apparently contradictory moments of differentiations chiming simultaneously. Anxieties about too many artists, overproduction, and lack of ability to determine quality are all ideologically motivated and defer to a defeated series of authorities who would prefer the attainment of a neo-utopian consensus, a market consensus, or at least the regime of a big other consensus. All of these things are attacked and are permanently defeated within current art. Otherwise things will default towards authority and control. The entropic quality of art's structural and critical trajectory is its resistance.

For the relation between art production and the development of creative tools for decentralized production is also a historical coincidence. It is only necessary to look at what is produced though the primary defensive mesh arrayed against predatory capitalization—its structural

approaches to tools that may well have been developed for other purposes.

Art is not a zone of autonomy. It does not create structures that are exceptional or perceivable outside their own context. Therefore current art will always create a sequence of problems for the gen-erally known context. For example, with regard to the undifferentiated flexible knowledge-worker who operates in permanent anxiety in the midst of a muddling of work and leisure, art both points at this figure and operates alongside him or her as an experiential phantom.

Art is a place where the rules of engagement are open to question. The knowledge worker also appears to challenge rules of engagement but can only do so in the production of software or a set of new fragmented relationships. The artist can create alienated relationships without all these intricacies. A different sense of "super-self-conscious" commodity awareness is at the core of current artists' desire to come close to the context within which they work. Projection and speculation are the tools they reclaim in order to power this super-self-conscious commodity awareness. Artists project into the near future and the recent past in order to expose and render transparent new commodity relations. The surplus value that is art is not limited to its supposed novelty value but is embedded in its function as a system of awareness.

Art is a series of scenarios/presentations that creates new spaces for thought and critical speculation. The creation of new time values and shifted time structures actually creates new critical zones where we might find spaces of differentiation from the knowledge community. For it is not that art is merely a mirror of a series of new subjective worlds.

It is an ethical equation where assumptions about function and value in society can be acted upon. There is no art of any significance made in the last forty years that does not include this as a base-level notion of differentiation.

The idea of the "first work" or the development of ideas is no longer directed towards the total production of all work in the future. This fact creates anxiety within the culture in general and leads to a search for analogous structures that also appear to temporarily function with a contingent potential for projection.

A sense of constantly returning to ideas or structures by choice rather than by intuition is an aspect of contemporary art that defies the logic of capital. The notion that an artist is obsessed by a structure or by an idea-context is sometimes self-perpetuated. The apparent work is no more than a foil to mask a longer deferral of decision-making. The art becomes a semi-autonomous aspect of lived experience, for the artist as much as for the viewer.

Not thinking about art while making art is different to not thinking while preparing a PowerPoint presentation on the plane. Of course I am working even when it looks as if I am not working. And even if I am not working and it looks as if I am not working I still might claim to be working and wait for you to work out what objective signifiers actually point towards any moment of value or work. This is the game of current art. Art production and work methods are not temporally linked or balanced because the idea of managing time is not a key component of making art, nor is it a personal or objective profit motive for artists. Unless they decide that such behavior is actually part of the work itself.

Working alone but in a group is a contradiction at the heart of current art practice. It is always an active decision to give up the individual autonomy of the artistic persona with the goal of working together. Within the flexible knowledge community the assertion of individual practice always has to be subsumed within the team-worked moments of idea-sharing. Art as a life-changing statement is always the product of a specific decision that involves moments of judgment that cannot be controlled exclusively by the artist but are also operated on by all other artists. The them and us is me and us and us and us and them and them.

The assumption that there is a "they" or "them" is part of the problem involved in understanding how artists function within society. Artists are also "they" or "them" who have made a specific decision to operate within an exceptional zone that does not necessarily produce anything exceptional. For adherence to a high-cultural life is a negotiated concept within the current art context. This critical community is simultaneously subject and audience. Therefore we have a situation in which an artist will propose a problem and then position it just out of reach precisely in order to test the potential for an autonomy of practice.

Reporting the strange in the daily—that which cannot be accounted for is at the heart of artistic practices, yet not for purposes that can be described outside the work itself. And still, working less can result in producing more. The rate of idea-production within art is inconsistent, which is a deliberate result of the way art is produced and how it can become precise and *other* even while it flounders and then proudly reports back to us within the self-patrolled compound masquerading as a progressive think tank.

Artists function in micro-communities of discourse that are logical and contingent within their own contexts, as well as (often) generationally related. Current artists are caught within generational boundaries. The notion that artists are a perfect analogue of the flexible entrepreneurial class is a generational concept that merely masks a lack of differentiation in observation of practice and the devastating fact that art is in a permanent battle with what came just before. That is the good of work. Replacing the models of the recent past with better ones.

At the beginning of his film *Dear Diary*, Nanni Moretti says: "Why all? Why this fixation with us 'all' being sold out and co-opted!" "You shouted awful, violent slogans. Now you've gotten ugly," the characters say in the film he is watching, full of depressed sell-out nostalgia from the perspective of success and authority. "I shouted the right slogans and I'm a splendid forty-year-old." "Even in a society more decent than this one, I will only feel in tune with a minority of people. I believe in people but I just don't believe in the majority of people. I will always be in tune with a minority of people." This is easy for an artist to say and hard for a knowledge worker to understand. Maybe here we can find a space where there is real antagonism and difference rather than just questions of taste or manners.

Lars Bang Larsen

Zombies of Immaterial Labor: The Modern Monster and the Death of Death

Undead and abject, the zombie is uncontrollable ambiguity.[1] Slouching across the earth, restlessly but with hallucinatory slowness, it is a thing with a soul, a body that is rotten but reactive, oblivious to itself yet driven by unforgiving instinct.

It follows that if the zombie is defined by ambiguity, it cannot be reduced to a negative presence. In fact, it could be a friend. So why does it lend itself so easily as a metaphor for alienation, rolling readily off our tongues? Resorting to the zombie as a sign for mindless persistence is unfair to this particular monster, to be sure, but also apathetic and facile in the perspective of the historical space we inhabit.

My proposal, perverse or braindead as it may be, is that the zombie begs a materialist analysis with a view to contemporary culture. Such an analysis is necessarily double-edged. The zombie is pure need without morality, hence it promises a measure of objectivity; we know exactly what it wants—brains, flesh—because this is what it always wants. Abject monstrosity is naturally impossible to render transparent, but abjectness itself harbors a defined function that promises instrumentality (of a blunt and limited kind, admittedly). In this way we may proceed to address contemporary relations of cultural production, at the same time as we reflect on the analytical tools we have for doing so.

Thus the following is an attempt at a sociological reading of the zombie that draws its necessity from the pressure that the capitalization of creativity has exerted on artistic practice and spectatorship in the recent decade. But it is also the inevitable subversion of the conclusions of such an analysis, as we begin to return to artistic thinking.

1. Marxploitation of the Gothic

The zombie as a figure of alienation is the entranced consumer suggested by Marxian theory. It is Guy Debord's description of Brigitte Bardot as a rotten corpse and Frederic Jameson's "death of affect"; and of course what media utopianist Marshall McLuhan called "the zombie stance of the technological idiot."[2] Thus zombification is easily applied to the notion that capital eats up the body and mind of the worker, and that the living are exploited through dead labor.

When Adam Smith invoked the moral operations of the "invisible hand of the market", he had something else in mind than an integrated world economy that recalls Freud's *unheimlich*: "Severed limbs, a severed head, a hand detached from the arm, feet that dance by themselves—all of those have something highly uncanny about them, especially when they are credited with independent activity."[3] Under the globalized reinforcement of capital, the independent activity of ghost limbs is increasingly only apparent, yet no less gratuitous and unsettling.

Economy and production have in this way often been dressed up in Gothic styles; just think of William Blake's "dark satanic mills" of industrialization. It is doubtful, of course, that Marx would have endorsed the zombie as a figure of alienation, inasmuch as it incarnates a collapsed dialectics (between life and death, productivity and apathy, etc.) that can only be recaptured with great difficulty. However, leafing through *The Communist Manifesto* of 1848 one finds rousing Gothic metaphor. The power of class struggle is famously likened to a ghost that is haunting Europe—the "specter of Communism"; we are also told that with the proletariat, the bourgeoisie has produced

"its own gravediggers," and that modern bourgeois society "has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange" that it is like "the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the netherworld whom he has called up by his spells."[4] The Gothic, understood as the revival of medieval styles in the seventeenth century and since, is the theatrical representation of negative affect that emanates from a drama staged around power; a pessimistic dialectic of enlightenment that shows how rationality flips into barbarism and human bondage. Thus it is puzzling (or populist, agitational) that Marx and Engels employ Gothic metaphor related to the middle ages "that reactionists so much admire."[5] The Gothic contraband in progressive politics is the notion that fear can be sublime. It is as if the reader of the manifesto cannot after all rely on the "sober senses," but needs a little extra rhetorical something to compel her to face her "real conditions in life."[6] How did the excess of counter-enlightenment tropes come to prominence in processes of political subjectivation? As Derrida writes in *Specters of Marx*, "Marx does not like ghosts any more than his adversaries do. He does not want to believe in them. But he thinks of nothing else. . . . He believes he can oppose them, like life to death, like vain appearances of the simulacrum to real presence."[7] Once it becomes clear that Marxist ghost-hunting is already corrupted by a Gothic impulse, it allows for a reconstruction of Marxist critique; a new "spirit of Marx," as discussed by Derrida. In terms of traditional aesthetic hierarchies, the Gothic definitely belongs amongst the underdogs of genres, to the embarrassing aesthetic proletariat. Maybe this is what spoke through Marx, like spirits inhabiting a medium, and helped shaped his formidable literary intuition?

In this perspective there is no political reason to exclude the Gothic. The New York artists collective Group Material were among the first to establish a link between the Gothic and a Marxist line of cultural critique, before the former became a curatorial trope.[8] The flyer for their 1980 show "Alienation" mimicked advertising for *Alien,* and the film program included James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931). In their installation *Democracy* (1988), a zombie film was continuously screened throughout the exhibition: *Dawn of the Dead*, "George Romero's 1978 paean to the suburban shopping mall and its implicit effects on people." The film was "an especially significant presence . . . , one which indicated the pertinence of consumer culture to democracy and to electoral politics."[9]

Franco Moretti makes it clear that you can't sympathize with those who hunt the monsters. In his brilliant 1978 essay "Dialectic of Fear" he notes that in classic shockers such as Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* "we accept the vices of the monster's destroyers without a murmur."[10] The antagonist of the monster is a representative of all that is "complacent, stupid, philistine, and impotent" about existing society. To Moretti this indicates false consciousness in the literature of fear; it makes us side with the bourgeoisie. But by passing judgment on the literature of fear through a dialectic of reason and affect (Stoker "doesn't need a thinking reader, but a frightened one"), Moretti's ideology critique joins the ranks of the destroyers of the monster and thereby, on a cultural level, of those fictitious characters he criticizes. In fact, Moretti kills the monster twice: he doesn't question its killing in the text, and he has no need for it outside the text.

George Romero analyzes the conflict between

the monster and its adversaries in a similar vein. Crucially, however, his trilogy *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), and *Day of the Dead* (1985), reverses Moretti's conclusion, thereby turning cultural space inside out. In Romero, antagonism and horror are not pushed out of society (to the monster) but are rather located within society (*qua* the monster). The issue isn't the zombies; the real problem lies with the "heroes"—the police, the army, good old boys with their guns and male bonding fantasies. If they win, racism has a future, capitalism has a future, sexism has a future, militarism has a future. Romero also implements this critique structurally. As Steven Shaviro observes, the cultural discomfort is not only located in the films' graphic cannibalism and zombie genocide: the low-budget aesthetics makes us see "the violent fragmentation of the cinematic process itself."[11] The zombie in such a representation may be uncanny and repulsive, but the imperfect uncleanness of the zombie's face—the bad make-up, the failure to hide the actor behind the monster's mask—is what breaks the screen of the spectacle.

Brian Holmes writes in "The Affectivist Manifesto" (2009) that activism today faces "not so much soldiers with guns as cognitive capital: the knowledge society, an excruciatingly complex order. The striking thing . . . is the zombie-like character of this society, its fallback to automatic pilot, its cybernetic governance."[12] Holmes's diagnosis gets its punch from the counterintuitive tension between the notion of control and the zombie's sleepwalking mindlessness. Even our present culture's schizophrenic scenario of neoliberal economy and post-democratic reinforcement of the state apparatus cannot be reduced to evil. But if Holmes uses the monster trope to define a condition of critical

ambiguity, he follows Marxist orthodoxy by setting this definition to work dialectically vis-à-vis an affirmative use of the manifesto format. The manifesto is haunted by its modernist codification as a mobilization of a collective *We* in a revolutionary *Now*. This code, and the desire it represents, is invariably transparent to itself, as opposed to the opacity of the zombie.

2. Monster of Mass and Multitude

What most informs metaphorical applications of the zombie is perhaps the functional dimension that its abjectness seems to lend to it. According to Julia Kristeva's definition, the abject is what I must get rid of in order to be an *I*.[13] The abject is a fantasmatic substance that must be expelled—from the body, from society—in order to satisfy a psychic economy, because it is imagined to have such a likeness or proximity to the subject that it produces panic or repulsion. This, Hal Foster writes, echoing critical preoccupations in the art of the 1980s (the abject) and of the 1990s (the "return of the real"), qualifies the abject as "a regulatory operation."[14] The obverse of the abject is a hygienic operation that promises a blunt instrumentality of getting rid of—of expulsing, excluding, severing, repressing. As we have seen, things are not so clear. The abject sneaks back in as a supplement, subverting attempts at establishing hygienic categories.

I will therefore hypothesize that the zombie's allegorical (rather than merely metaphorical) potential lies in trying to elaborate and *exacerbate* the zombie as a cliché of alienation by using it to deliberately "dramatize the strangeness of what has become real," as anthropologists Jean and John L. Comaroff characterize the zombie's cultural function.[15] Why would one want to do such a thing? As

Deleuze and Guattari had it, the problem with capitalism is not that it breaks up reality; the problem with capitalism is that it isn't schizophrenic and proliferating *enough*.[16] In other words, it frees desire from traditional libidinal patterns (of family and religion and so on), but it will always want to recapture these energies through profit. According to this conclusion, one way to circumnavigate capitalism would be to encourage its semiotic excess and its speculation in affect. Capitalism is not a totalitarian or tyrannical form of domination. It primarily spreads its effects through indifference (that can be compared to the zombie's essential lack of protagonism). It is not what capital does, but what it doesn't do or have: it does not have a concept of society; it does not counteract the depletion of nature; it has no concept of citizenship or culture; and so on. Thus it is a slave morality that makes us cling to capital as though it were our salvation—capitalism is, in fact, what we bring to it. Dramatization of capital through exacerbation and excess can perhaps help distill this state of affairs.

The zombie isn't just any monster, but one with a pedigree of social critique. As already mentioned, alienation—a Marxian term that has fallen out of use—is central to the zombie. To Marx the loss of control over one's labor—a kind of viral effect that spreads throughout social space—results in estrangement from oneself, from other people, and from the "species-being" of humanity as such.[17] This disruption of the connection between life and activity has "monstrous effects."[18] Today, in the era of immaterial labor, whose forms turn affect, creativity, and language into economical offerings, alienation from our productive capacities results in estrangement from these faculties and, by extension, from visual and artistic production—and

from our own subjectivity. What is useful about the monster is that it is immediately recognizable as estrangement, and in this respect is non-alienating. Secondly, we may address alienation without a concept of nature; a good thing, since the humanism in the notion of "the natural state of man" (for Marx the positive parameter against which we can measure our alienation) has at this point been irreversibly deconstructed. In other words: the natural state of man is to die, not to end up as undead.

Franco "Bifo" Berardi describes how Italian Workerist thought of the 1960s overturned the dominant vision of Marxism. The working class was no longer conceived as "a passive object of alienation, but instead the active subject of a refusal capable of building a community starting out from its estrangement from the interests of capitalistic society."[19] For the estranged worker, alienation became productive. Deleuze and Guattari were part of the same generation of thinkers and overturned a traditional view of alienation, for example by considering schizophrenia as a multiple and nomadic form of consciousness (and not as a passive clinical effect or loss of self). They put it radically: "The only modern myth is the myth of zombies—mortified schizos, good for work, brought back to reason."[20]

The origin of the zombie in Haitian *vodoun* has an explicit relationship to labor, as a repetition or reenactment of slavery. The person who receives the zombie spell "dies," is buried, excavated, and put to work, usually as a field hand. In his book *The Serpent and the Rainbow,* ethnobotanist Wade Davis tells the story of a man called Narcisse, a former zombie:

> [Narcisse] remembered being aware of his predicament, of missing his family and friends and his land, of wanting to return. But his life had the

quality of a strange dream, with events, objects, and perceptions interacting in slow motion, and with everything completely out of his control. In fact there was no control at all. Decision had no meaning, and conscious action was an impossibility.[21]

The zombie can move around and carry out tasks, but does not speak, cannot fend for himself, cannot formulate thoughts, and doesn't even know its own name: its fate is enslavement. "Given the colonial history"—including occupation by France and the US—Davis continues:

> the concept of enslavement implies that the peasant fears and the zombie suffers a fate that is literally worse than death—the loss of physical liberty that is slavery, and the sacrifice of personal autonomy implied by the loss of identity.[22]

That is, more than inexplicable physiological change, victims of voodoo suffer a *social* and *mental* death, in a process initiated by fear. The zombie considered as a subaltern born of colonial encounters is a figure that has arisen then out of a new relationship to death: not the fear of the zombie apocalypse, as in the movies, but the fear of becoming one—the fear of losing control, of becoming a slave.

In pop culture the zombie is a twentieth-century monster and hence related to mass phenomena: mass production, mass consumption, mass death. It is not an aristocrat like Dracula or a star freak like Frankenstein; it is the everyman monster in which business as usual coexists with extremes of hysteria (much like democracy at present, in fact). The zombie also straddles the divide between industrial and immaterial labor, from mass to

multitude, from the brawn of industrialism to the dispersed brains of cognitive capitalism.

With its highly ambiguous relationship to subjectivity, consciousness, and life itself, we may hence consider the zombie a paradigm of immaterial labor.[23] Both the zombie and immaterial labor celebrate logistics and a colonization of the brain and the nervous system. The living dead roam the world and have a genetic relationship with restlessness: they are "pure motoric instinct," as it is expressed in Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*; or they represent a danger "as long as they got a working thinker and some mobility," as one zombie hunter puts it in the novel *World War Z* by Max Brooks.[24] The latter, counterintuitive reference to the zombie's intellectual capacity may be brought to bear on the terms "intellectual labor" and "cognitive capitalism," used to denote brain-dead—and highly regulated—industries such as advertising and mass media. Or, the "working thinker" in the zombie's dead flesh is an indication of the Marxist truth that *matter thinks*. As Lenin asked: What does the car know—of its own relations of production? In the same way, the zombie may prompt the question: What does the zombie's rotting flesh know—of the soul? As Spinoza said: what the body can do, that is its soul.[25] And the zombie can do quite a lot.

In Philip Kaufman's 1978 film *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, a space plant that duplicates people and brings them back as empty versions of themselves spreads its fibers across the Earth as if it were the World Wide Web. The body-snatched don't just mindlessly roam the cities in search of flesh and brains, but have occupied the networks of communication and start a planetary operation to circulate bodies, as if proponents of the great transformation from industrialism to immaterial labor,

in which production is eclipsed and taken over by a regime of mediation and reproduction. This is our logistical universe, in which things on the move are valorized, and in which more than ever before the exchange of information itself determines communicative form. The nature of what is exchanged recedes in favor of the significance of distribution and dissemination. Exigencies of social adaptation, by now familiar to us, also appear in *Invasion*. Somebody who has clearly been body-snatched thus tells the main character, played by Donald Sutherland, to not be afraid of "new concepts": imperatives to socialize and to reinvent oneself, shot through with all the accompanying tropes of self-cannibalization (self-management, self-valuation, self-regulation, self-consume, and so forth). Thus the body snatchers are a caricature of ideal being, incarnating mobility without nervousness.[26]

3. "Solipsistic and asocial horror"

The necessity of a sociological reading of the modern monster derives, for our purpose, from the pressure that the capitalization of creativity has in the past decade exerted on artistic practice and thinking. Art has become a norm, in a different way than it was under the cultural order of the bourgeoisie. In short, within the "experience economy," art's normative power consists in commodifying a conventional idea of art's mythical otherness with a view to the reproduction of subjectivity and economy.

Ten years ago, management thinkers James H. Gilmore and B. Joseph Pine II launched the concept of the experience economy with their book *The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre and Every Business a Stage*. Here they describe an economy in which experience is a new source of profit to be obtained through the staging of the memorable.

What is being produced is the experience of the audience, and the experience is generated by means of what may be termed "authenticity effects." In the experience economy it is often art and its markers of authenticity—creativity, innovation, provocation, and the like—that ensure economic status to experience.[27]

Gilmore and Pine advise manufacturers to tailor their products to maximize customer experience, thus valve manufacturers could profitably increase the "pumping experience"; furniture manufacturers might correspondingly emphasize the "sitting experience"; and home-appliance manufacturers could capitalize on the "washing experience," the "drying experience," and the "cooking experience."[28] The "psychological premise" of being able to "alter consumers' sense of reality" is a central theme.[29] Gilmore and Pine's mission is to highlight the profitability of producing simulated situations. Their arguments will not be subverted by simply pointing out this fact: the experience economy is beyond all ideology inasmuch as it is their declared intention to fake it better and more convincingly. In the experience economy's ontological displacement towards an instrumentalized phenomenology, it becomes irrelevant to verify the materiality of the experienced object or situation. Memorable authenticity effects are constituted in a register of subjective experience. In other words, one's own subjectivity becomes a product one consumes, by being provided with opportunities to consume one's own time and attention through emotive and cognitive responses to objects and situations. Similarly, when the experience economy is applied to cultural institutions and the presentation of art works, it revolves around ways of providing the public with the opportunity to reproduce itself as consumers of cultural experiences.

It is difficult not to see the consequences of the experience economy as the dismantling of not only artistic and institutional signification but also of social connections. Thus the syllabus for the masters-level experience economy course offered by the University of Aarhus explains how consumers within an experience economy function as "hyper-consumers free of earlier social ties, always hunting for emotional intensity," and that students of the course are provided with "the opportunity to adopt enterprising behaviours."[30]

Cultural critic Diedrich Diederichsen calls such self-consume *Eigenblutdoping,* blood doping. Just as cyclists dope themselves using their own blood, cultural consumers seek to augment their self-identity by consuming the products of their own subjectivity. According to Diederichsen, this phenomenon is a "solipsistic and asocial horror," which reduces life to a loop we can move in and out of without actually participating in any processes.[31] Inside these loops, time has been brought to a halt, and the traditional power of the cultural institution is displaced when audiences are invited to play and participate in an ostensible "democratization" of art. In the loop, audiences ironically lose the possibility of inscribing their subjectivities on anything besides themselves, and are hence potentially robbed of an important opportunity to respond to the institution and the exhibitionary complex where art is presented.

The zombie returns at this point, then, to stalk a new cultural economy that is necessarily already no longer current; nor is it ever outdated, because it cancels cultural time measured in decades and centuries. The time of the experience economy is that of an impoverished present.[32]

Group Material, *Democracy: Cultural Participation*, 1988, Dia Art Foundation, New York. Courtesy Julie Ault. The TV plays George Romero's *Dawn of the Living Dead* continuously on loop.

4. The Death of Death

There are several reasons why we need a modern monster. Firstly, it can help us meditate on alienation in our era of an immaterial capitalism that has turned life into cash; into an onto-capitalist, forensic culture in which we turn towards the dead body, not with fear, but as a kind of pornographic curator (as testified to by any number of TV series about vampires, undertakers, and forensics). As Steven Shaviro writes, "zombies mark the rebellion of death against its capitalist appropriation ... our society endeavors to transform death into value, but the zombies enact a radical refusal and destruction of value."[33] Shaviro sharply outlines here the zombie's exit strategy from that strangest of scenarios, the estrangement of death itself. But at the same time, one wonders whether it can be that simple. Immaterial capitalism's tropes of self-cannibalization render it more ambiguous than ever whether the abject is a crisis in the order of subject and society, or a perverse confirmation of them. In other words, beyond the destruction of value that Shaviro discusses, it all revolves around a riddle: If, during our lifespan as paying beings, life itself has become capital, then where does that leave death?

One answer is that, in a world with no outsides, death died. We are now witnessing the death of death, of which its overrepresentation is the most prominent symptom. For the first time since the end of the Second World War there are no endgame narratives. Apocalyptic horizons are given amnesty. A planet jolted out of its ecological balance is a disaster, but not something important. In art, the mid twentieth century's "death of the Author" and "death of Man" are now highly operational, and the "death of Art," a big deal in the 1980s, is now eclipsed by the splendid victory of "contemporary

art." This in spite of the obvious truth that art, considered as an autonomous entity, is dead and gone, replaced by a new art (a double?) that is directly inscribed on culture; a script for social and cultural agency. There is nothing left to die, as if we were caught in the ever-circling eye of the eternal return itself. As the blurb for George Romero's *Survival of the Dead* (2009) goes: "Death isn't what it used to be." This ought to be a cause for worry. Endgame narratives have always accompanied new paradigms, or have negated or problematized the reproduction of received ideas.

The zombie is always considered a post-being, a no-longer-human, an impossible subject. But can we also think of it as a pre-being? Can we turn it into a child; that most poignant embodiment of the monster and the ghost (the "child-player against whom can do nothing," as Spinoza put it), or at least allow it to indicate a limit of not-yet-being?[34] That is, the lack incarnated by zombie is also present at the level of enunciation in the zombie narrative. In Romero's films, the zombie apocalypse gradually recedes into the background and other—inter-human, social—problems become prominent during the unfolding of the plot. The zombie, always mute, is never at the center of the plot the way Dracula or Frankenstein are, hence its presence cannot be explained away as a mechanism for reintegrating social tension through fear. It is a strange, tragicomic monster that displaces evil and its concept: the zombie isn't evil, nor has it been begot by evil; it is a monstrosity that deflects itself in order to show that our imagination cannot stop at the monster. It is irrelevant if you kill it (there will always be ten more rotten arms reaching through the broken window pane). The zombie pushes a horizon of empty time ahead of it; whether that time

will be messianic or apocalyptic is held in abeyance. Or, the zombie represents the degree to which we are incapable of reimagining the future. So the question becomes: How can we look over its shoulder? What future race comes after the zombie? How do we cannibalize self-cannibalization? The only way to find out is to abstract the zombie condition.

Sooner or later, the opacity of our fascination with the zombie exhausts sociological attempts at reading it. There is ultimately no way to rationalize the skepticism the zombie drags in. A similar mechanism is at work in art. Whereas sociology is based on positive knowledge, art is based on the concept of art and on culture's re-imagining of that concept. Beyond the experience economy, and beyond sociological analysis of these, there lie new artistic thinking and imagining. Thus we can witness how it all falls apart in the end: sociology, zombie as allegory, even the absence of the end that turns out to be one. What is left are material traces to be picked up anew.

1
I am grateful to Brian Kuan Wood for the title of this essay.

2
"The Playboy Interview: Marshall McLuhan," *Playboy*, March 1969, available at http://www.nextnature.net/2009/12/the-playboy-interview-marshall-mcluhan/. I am grateful to Jacob Lillemose for this reference.

3
Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock (1899; London: Penguin Books, 2003), 150.

4
Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, trans. Samuel Moore (1848; London: Penguin Classics, 1967), 78, 94.

5
Ibid.

6
Ibid., 83.

7
Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (1993; New York: Routledge, 2006), 57.

8
I am thinking of Mike Kelley's *The Uncanny* (1993; Cologne: Walther König 2004), Christoph Grunenberg's *Gothic: Transmutations of Horror in Late-Twentieth-Century Art* (Boston: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1997), and Paul Schimmel's *Helter Skelter: L.A. Art in the 1990s*, ed. Catherine Gudis (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1992), which had the subtitle *Art of the Living Dead*).

9
David Deitcher: "Social Aesthetics," in *Democracy: A Project by Group Material*, ed. Brian Wallis (New York: DIA Art Foundation, 1990), 37. (Deitcher erroneously states that *Dawn of the Dead* appeared in 1979; the correct year is 1978. I have corrected this in the quotation.)

10
Franco Moretti, "Dialectic of Fear," in *Signs Taken for Wonders: On the Sociology of Literary Forms*, trans. Susan Fischer, David Forgacs, and David Miller (London: Verso, 1983), 84.

11
Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body* (1993; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 91.

12
Brian Holmes, "The Affectivist Manifesto: Artistic Critique in the 21st Century," in *Escape the Overcode: Activist Art in the Control Society* (Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum; Zagreb: What, How & for Whom, 2009), 14.

13
See Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

14
Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996), 156.

15
Jean and John L. Comaroff, "Alien-Nation: Zombies, Immigrants and Millennial Capitalism," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, no. 4 (Fall 2002): 779–805. I am grateful to Kodwo Eshun for this reference. The allegorical impulse behind bringing the zombie back to the Marxian concept of alienation derives from the dynamics of the zombie's ruinous (lack of) existence. Thus George Romero's famous trilogy is a sequence of allegorical variation: a critique of racist America (*Night*), a critique of consumerism (*Dawn*), and a critique with feminist overtones (*Day*).

16
See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (1972; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

17
See also my introduction in the exhibition guide *A History of Irritated Material* (London: Raven Row, 2010).

18
Karl Marx, "Estranged Labour," in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, available at http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm.

19
Franco "Bifo" Berardi, *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy*, trans. Francesca Cadel and Mecchia Giuseppina (New York: Semiotext(e), 2009), 23.

20
Deleuze and Guattari: *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 335.

21
Wade Davis, *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985), 80.

22
Ibid., 139.

23
See also my article "Brains" in *Muhtelif* no. 4 (2008).

24
Max Brooks, *World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie War* (New York: Gerald and Duckworth, 2007), 96.

25
See Berardi, *The Soul at Work*, 21.

26
In the Spanish translation the body snatchers are *ultracuerpos*: ultra-bodies, as if particularly well-adapted mutations.

27
See also my *Kunst er Norm* (Aarhus: Jutland Art Academy, 2008).

28
James H. Gilmore and B. Joseph Pine II, *The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre and Every Business a Stage* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999), 16.

29
Ibid., 175.

30
See the Aarhus University, Faculty of Humanities website:, http://studieguide.au.dk/kandidat_dk.cfm?fag=1062.

31
Diedrich Diederichsen, *Eigenblutdoping: Selbstverwertung, Künstlerromantik, Partizipation* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2008).

32
Žižek discusses the zombie in terms of suffering. Of Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*, he writes: "The 'undead' are not portrayed as embodiments of pure evil; of a simple drive to kill or revenge, but as sufferers, pursuing their victims with an awkward persistence, colored by a kind of infinite sadness." The dead make their melancholic return because they haven't been properly buried—just like ghosts, zombies return "as collectors of some unpaid symbolic debt." Žižek points out that "the return of the dead signifies that they cannot find their proper place in the text of tradition," an insight that we can use for our own sociological ends. Similarly, the experience commodity cannot find its place in the text of tradition and culture, inasmuch as this is what the experience economy is undoing. Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992), 22–23.

33
Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body*, 84.

34
Quoted from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1991), 70.

Keti Chukhrov

Towards the Space of the General: On Labor Beyond Materiality and Immateriality

1. Basic Provisions for the Theory of Immaterial Labor

In his programmatic work *A Grammar of the Multitude*, Paolo Virno describes a number of signs of post-Fordist capitalism that mark radical changes in the First-World production system's relation to labor over the past forty years. Most importantly, he states that post-Fordism has annulled or complicated the traditional Marxist correlation between the worker's labor time and the degree of his or her exploitation.[1] As labor is dematerialized and the division of labor in industrial production erodes, capital not only occupies the working hours during which products or goods (and its surplus value) are produced; it absorbs all of the worker's time, as well as his or her existence, thoughts, and creative desires. Products or goods are produced not to be consumed, to be swallowed directly, but as a set of new modes of communication, knowledge, languages, or even worlds.

Labor coincides increasingly with the creative maneuvers of a virtuosic performer, with active memory and an engagement with knowledge. According to Maurizio Lazzarato, the aim of consumption today is not merely the production of goods, but the multiplication of new conditions and variations for production itself.[2] The prerogative of immaterial industry becomes the production of subjectivities and worlds—and these are cultural and creative categories, not economic ones. Consumption in turn gives rise to a consumer who does not merely devour, but communicates, is "creatively" engaged. In this way, production activates and occupies life, social and societal space, the intellect, the "soul." Contemporary material labor only reproduces this scheming of worlds, situations, and events automatically, finding itself on

the periphery of strategies of modern production.[3] Despite all this, Virno believes a positive aspect of post-Fordist capitalism can be found in its having created the conditions for the emergence of non-private, non-capitalist public benefits—languages, network-based know-hows, systems for informational and cultural dissemination.[4] Virno as well as other theorists of post-operaism (André Gorz, Maurizio Lazzarato, Antonio Negri, Enzo Rulani, Antonella Corsani) refers to what Karl Marx called "general intellect."[5] As Virno puts it,

> Marx ... claims that ... abstract knowledge—primarily yet not only of a scientific nature—is ... becoming no less than the main force of production and will soon relegate the repetitious labor of the assembly line to the fringes. This is the knowledge objectified in fixed capital and embedded in the automated system of machinery.[6]

This knowledge is social and general; it is a collective competence that creates a shared common space of production. Although it is true that post-industrial capitalism has blurred the boundary between consumption, information, cognition, and communication, this doesn't mean that post-Fordist capitalism automatically generates a post-capitalist utopia. On the contrary, when corporations vie for control over the power of knowledge objectified, the space of the commons becomes a real battleground. Slavoj Žižek, in a recent talk at the "Idea of Communism" conference in Berlin, made an apt observation: the wealth of monopolies like Microsoft or Nasdaq derives not so much from their sales profits, but mainly from the fact that they are acting in the name of a universal, nearly Enlightenment-style standard of "general intellect."[7]

The French researcher of immaterial and creative production André Gorz has presented a variety of examples of the new postindustrial economy in which cognitive, symbolic, and aesthetic value exceeds both use and exchange value.[8] Added value and profit depend on an immaterial, imaginary dimension of the goods involved. And it is for this reason that most industrial enterprises do not create their own brands, but simply provide services to firms whose products are immaterial. For instance, as Gorz points out, Nike doesn't actually own any machines or equipment at all. The company only develops footwear concepts and designs, and, in a sense, even the "philosophy" of a certain product. All other production (including the creative stage of advertising and marketing) is handled by partner companies and license holders. However, at the same time, the central-office company that produces the product concept buys up the goods produced in these industrial enterprises at very low prices and makes enormous profits by reselling them as brand-name products.

So on the one hand, the field of immaterial production allows capital to occupy an increasingly generalized territory, the space of the common good. On the other hand—and the ambivalence of post-operaist theory is revealed here—all the theoreticians (Virno, Negri, Lazzarato, Gorz) agree that modern postindustrial goods contain such a density of creative and communicative effort that even its commodity form cannot cancel it out completely; the process of creative and intellectual work, still evident in the commodity, reconnects the result of immaterial labor back to a commonly owned general social knowledge.

It is on this basis that the concept of the "communism of capitalism" emerges in the work

of Virno and Lazzarato.[9] In other words, the hope emerges that if capitalism itself so quickly gave birth to technologies that allow for the socialization of industry and information, and the transformation of labor and economy into knowledge, then the opportunity will arise to "subtract" this knowledge away from capital. It becomes possible to imagine the reappropriation of the commons and their leaving the grasp of a capitalist economy. The political subject or agent for this withdrawal or "exodus" must be a class of immaterial workers—the so-called cognitariat, or the cognitive multitude.

In *Les Révolutions du capitalisme*, Maurizio Lazzarato confirms that he considers it possible to draw up new forms of activity in such a way as to precisely dissociate the creation of common goods from the accumulation of profit by a company.[10] This should provide access to a non-exploitative type of temporality that "allows for the creation of subjectivity as well as material values." By subjectivity, Lazzarato means the factor of creative, intellectual, and political independence from the interests of capitalist production. One of the specific tasks in the struggle against the privatization of public goods involves, on the one hand, distinguishing invention from occupational, automatic, and routine reproduction, and on the other hand, neutralizing the division between mindlessly repetitive routine labor as subjugated activity and creative or intellectual invention. Bearing in mind that industrial production facilities are located in Third-World countries while large companies' branding and strategy whizzes live in the First-World, it is striking that today this division takes on not only a social but also a geopolitical character.

André Gorz, in turn, sees potential for overcoming capitalism in the overcoming of productiv-

ism (i.e., in endless production), which, in a sense, counters post-operaist positions.[11] Gorz insists that the Marxist position is more about overcoming post-Fordist economism, in which humans are in service to production rather than production serving human development, as the post-operaists would have it. In that sense, Gorz explicitly acknowledges that, just as Fordist capitalism did, post-Fordism entails a massive intensification of labor. If the former captured people's bodies, the latter now captures people's souls. This totality of immaterial production leaves no time free of work.

Meanwhile, the common good is obtained not only through productive labor (material or immaterial), but via any other free activity, which is not just optimizing this or that productive achievement or goal. Gorz refers here to one of the most important components of the common good in the frame of a socialist and communist project—free time, enabling one to develop artistic, or, as Gorz writes, "non-instrumentalized capacities."[12]

2. A Few Contradictions in the Theory of Immaterial Labor

Most scholars of cognitive capitalism position themselves as Marxists when speaking of immaterial ("spiritual" or general) values. However, the post-operaists understand the very categories of the general (as in "general intellect"), the "immaterial," and the "common" in a somewhat one-sided manner. Immaterial labor—especially for Virno and Lazzarato—is often identified only with intellectual production or entrepreneurial virtuosity. In Virno's thought, for instance, the concept of virtuosity (which is interpreted in culture, art, and performance more as a superficial spectacular stunt founded on mere mechanical dexterity than

as a thought-through apprehension of creative activity) constitutes an essential property of both political and creative activity.[13] In this case Virno identifies the category of the general with the intellect and its efficiency factor, which is to say that immaterial production in any form and the postindustrial economy overall are synonymous with the production of the common. But this means that only developed cognitive capitalism and technologically advanced forms of production can generate general values. Correspondingly, the new general forms of the commons can only develop in countries of the First or, in extreme cases, the Second World. (By the way, this is one of the reasons why the industrial and postindustrial lag of the Soviet economy that began in the 1960s is identified among Western leftists with the political, philosophical, cognitive, and creative "immaturity" of Soviet society.) We end up with an idea that it is only possible to imagine modern creative potentialities and intellectual inventions proceeding from the technological capabilities of developed countries. If we were to describe the classical Marxist notion of surplus value under the conditions of a late post-Fordist economy, we would have to acknowledge that immaterial labor today generates more surplus value than material labor; which in turn gives us the grounds to consider immaterial or creative workers as being the most exploited social layer. It is not surprising, then, that "revolutionary" vocabulary and "proletarian" poetics are predominantly employed in the discourse of contemporary criticism and the creative industries, and rarely emerge in the realm of unprestigious material labor.

But this formulation contradicts the generic and humanist horizon of Marx's notion of general intellect. (The notion of the "generic" stands out

Hans Hollein, *Mobiles Büro*, 1969. Austrian architect and designer Hans Hollein created a mobile office in the form of a plastic bubble. Inside, the individualized, nomadic worker was simultaneously shielded from the outside and connected to it by telephone and telefax. © Atelier Hollein.

as one reminiscent of the post-romantic work of Marx's youth, when he spoke of the social nature of all human practice, including language, in terms of generic being—an anthropological category gleaned from a dialectical critique of Ludwig Feuerbach's idealist philosophy.) The "general" in "general intellect" assumes not only quantity, availability, and technologies for the dissemination of knowledge, nor just the engagement of knowledge and creative abilities towards one or another goal (which is essentially a purely practical task). In fact, it also assumes the horizon of the "spiritual" that rests upon an exclusionary paradox: no immaterial, intellectual, or even creative production carries the scale and quality of general, non-private interests.

The following argument presents yet another contradiction preventing the universalization of the theory of immaterial labor. The class of immaterial workers often stands out as an avant-garde of political opposition based on proximity to the most modern postindustrial means of production. However, if we turn to Lenin's revolutionary motivation for singling out the proletariat as the class of struggle and universalization, here the foundation was not only the nature of proletariat's tools but also the fact that the proletariat was the most dehumanized and disadvantaged social group of its time. Unlike a certain echelon of immaterial workers (the so-called cognitariat), which is able to control the means of production to a significant degree, the proletariat could not.

Slavoj Žižek and Alain Badiou believe that the motivation for proletarian uprising did not spring from the proletariat's proximity to the means of production, but, on the contrary, from their detachment to them, from the impossibility of directing them.[14] And so, for example, when criticizing immaterial

workers' (in)capacity for resistance, one can argue that the worker already controls part of immaterial labor and its means of production, even if he or she does not own them. However, there is no way to explain why this does not lead to perceptible changes in the infrastructure of neoliberal societies. The reason lies in the fact that the social role of today's immaterial workers (in the sense of the concept of "precarity," the lack of social security) is very elastic. The "cognitariat" does not constitute a class. It is a social group that can include top managers of the highest echelon, white-collar workers, and service-industry workers on short-term contracts. The class gap within the "class" of immaterial workers is enormous and often depends on the area or country of residence. As André Gorz writes, in the US, for instance, workers in the immaterial sphere make up 20 percent of the working population, while only 5 percent of this 20 comprise the wealthiest part.[15] The bulk of immaterial labor workers make no use whatsoever of their higher education and are working outside their specialization.

3. The Theory of Immaterial Labor and the Post-Soviet Labor and Production Space

And so, the central contradiction of the theory of immaterial labor consists in the fact that the zones of oppression, physical exploitation, and material labor often lie beyond its interpretation of the commons (general intellect, culture, artistic creativity, science, etc.). These zones are automatically isolated from the spaces of the general, from artistic creativity. It is interesting that the work of Western artists investigating routine, industrial, poorly paid labor is always conspicuously marked by the impossibility of a shared cultural space constructed by a pan-European middle class that

includes material-labor workers and representatives of non-prestigious professions.[16]

In the social space of developed countries, physical labor is invisible; and if it comes into view, it is seen as something hovering between the exotic and the obscene. In the works of artists such as Artur Żmijewski, Michael Glawogger, or Mika Rottenberg, material labor testifies to the fatal division between routine, mechanical labor, and the intellectual-creative and cultural space of middle-class life and activity. In Artur Żmijewski's *Selected Works*, an industrial worker's twenty-four cycle appears as bare life, akin to that of an animal, split between existential survival and the material-physical labor necessary for that survival.[17] The cultural, creative, or cognitive dimension of the worker's life is entirely out of the question here. Michael Glawogger tries to emphasize this same effect of "bare life" in his labor epic, *Workingman's Death*, which depicts Nigerian workers at a livestock factory, a private team of Donetsk miners who have organized illegal coal mining and sales out of an abandoned mine, Pakistani welders taking apart old ships at a scrap-metal yard, and Indonesian peasants gathering sulfur to sell to tourists. Each group is shown as marginal beings torn away from the life of any rational community.

For our purposes, it is interesting to see how the film depicts the history of Soviet industrialization, the Stakhanovite movement, monuments to the heroic shock workers, and the industrial heritage of the Donbass as unnecessary remnants of industrial trash. The director does not see them as part of the historically emancipated genealogy of labor that, despite its physical component, was an irremovable part of productive and industrial processes in the Soviet Union. The postindustrial

remnants of the heroic feats of Soviet labor and the paid labor of self-organized work teams find themselves on the same side of the scale.

This is not surprising. Many zones of post-Soviet industrial production were subjected to closure in the mid- to late 1990s. However, to this day neither alternative industrial enterprises nor any postindustrial development have emerged to take the place of the old production facilities. Thus, a great number of former Soviet industrial regions have become postindustrial not because they exceeded their industrial capacities, but rather because they were simply made inaccessible. While industrial parks in the West now serve as testaments to the next step in an ongoing urbanization, post-Soviet industrial "trash" presumably reveals the opposite: the deurbanization and cultural provincialization of many post-Soviet cities. The possibilities for so-called creative industry are concentrated in the few major cities of an enormous country, while a rather significant portion of the population is keyed into products of the creative industry only at the level of passive consumption (through television, advertising in various media, and so forth). The economic paradox of the post-socialist countries is that in the absence of developed technological and social infrastructures, the expansion of a middle class there leads to the abuse of underpaid service labor by that very middle class. This is the reason why the rise of the creative industries under the auspices of a resource economy (which is the case in post-Soviet space as well as in other non-First-World countries) may often be combined with a return to serf labor provided mainly by illegal migrants. While it is possible in the Western European context to talk about a certain homogenous cognitive component of immaterial

labor and about its (at least) potential function in the emancipatory transformation of society, in Russia immaterial labor often appears as a zone of privileged job placement for prestigious residential areas. It is more likely to denote social segregation and gentrification zones than social development.

In Glawogger's film, there is an episode on post-Soviet Ukrainian miners who extract coal from a closed mine and subsequently sell that coal to illegal clients. These are the exact opposite of the images in Dziga Vertov's *Donbass Symphony* (1930). Despite the Taylorist elements in the Soviet project of shock work, in the latter film, physical labor does not prevent us from imagining these workers as producers of immaterial, "spiritual" values.

The scholar, revolutionary, poet, engineer, and highly qualified metalworker Aleksei Gastev—who was also the founder and director of the Central Institute of Labor (1920–1938) and author of the Labor Configurations (1924)—used to call his directives relating to the organization of labor "poetological epistles."[18] Devoting a great deal of attention to the Taylorist rationalization of labor, he nevertheless believed that material labor and its organization do not cancel out poetry, creativity, and invention. On the contrary, the becoming of a creative personality was inseparably tied to the goal-oriented and volitional configurations in the organization of labor directed towards socialist construction. When not reduced to its Stalinist background, shock work is not just extreme overproduction. The worker's satisfaction derives from a belief in him- or herself as the subject in the project of building a new society, defining goals and procedures and sharing the means of production. Contrary to interpretations of physical overwork and production results as the only goal of socialist industrial modernization

between the 1920s and 1960s, it should be noted that it was not only physical overwork that counted as emancipatory, but also the opportunity for an industrial worker to lay claim to values beyond factory and overwork—the values that, despite a worker's physical engagement in production, could exceed his or her particular skills or efficiencies.

In his article "Dialectic of the Ideal" (1963), the Soviet philosopher Evald Ilyenkov goes far beyond the concept of "general intellect" by reintroducing the concept of the "ideal" into the materialist dialectic. He asserts that it is impossible to think about material prerequisites without ideal prerequisites. But the ideal in this case is not Hegel's idealism. It is "a specific mode of reverberation of the surrounding world by the human brain," which would never appear without material preconditions.[19] Thus the Marxist interpretation of the ideal presupposes

> the real process, in the course of which the material life and activity of the social human being start to produce not only the material, but the ideal product; but having appeared, the ideal in its own turn becomes part and parcel of the material life of the social human being.[20]

Unlike post-operaist theoreticians, who state that general knowledge and common goods are an external coordination of equipment, knowledge, and societal organs, and that the category of the "general" is identical to these qualities, Ilyenkov emphasizes the ideal as a permanent horizon of human *existence*.[21] It cannot be reduced to pure brain function, to the physical-material form of one object or another, nor to some material or immaterial activity. Labor as a social-human activity that separates things and life from their natural qualities

is also related to the dialectical category of the ideal.[22] But labor in its turn—be it material or immaterial—cannot be reduced to the thing produced or the labor process. Labor is a form of a person's vital activity, yet it lies outside the person and is realized in the form of the "things" he or she creates. According to Ilyenkov, the possibility for such vital activity lies in the very potential of the ideal in the context of human existence. If labor is not exploitation of a person's will and consciousness, then it is a "spiritual" category, the possibility of a dialectical connection between the material and the ideal—independent of its materiality or immateriality.[23]

Interestingly, in the most recent films of the so-called post-Soviet new wave (particularly in Boris Khlebnikov's *Free Floating* [2006] and *Crazy Aid* [2009]), physical labor does not separate people from the areas of cognition, creativity, reflection, and, even less, ethical action—unlike in the above-mentioned Western works addressing material labor.[24] The simplicity of the provincial worker does not contradict the potential for a poetic or political relationship to reality. For a person with a Soviet background, it is not difficult to unite the elderly physicist-inventor and the Belorussian guest-worker in their collective ethical justice project (*Crazy Aid*), which they bring about by inventing and creatively implementing absurd situations in urban space, helping their fellow citizens.

The unity of mental activity and physical labor is the heritage of the socialist project, in which general intellect appears not only as a distribution of abilities and knowledge, but also as a general, ideal, ethical presumption of cognition's availability to workers in any area. On the other hand, both of Khlebnikov's films demonstrate to what extent the humanist horizon of the socialist project has fallen

out of the collective post-Soviet consciousness; it has only been preserved in the form of rudimentary, merely personal, and therefore inevitably eccentric attempts to restore the space of the "general."

P.S.

Today, with culture having become one of the most prestigious forms of consumption, many, especially Russian, contemporary artists are going to extremes. Some see themselves in the manipulative role of a human office or enterprise for the production of art. Some, on the contrary, assess their artistic activity in the system of contemporary art as "precarious" and exploited immaterial labor. This is unequivocally the case. The creative industries exploit enthusiasm, desires, ideas, and feelings while simultaneously teaching that they should be expediently "packaged" as artistic services. These processes must be made self-conscious. However, we should also not forget that there does exist an area of the non-exploited and non-commodified. And this is not the field of "non-commercial" or public art (which often fails to distinguish art from social activism), nor that of the distribution of knowledge and information in society. Rather, this area is created from the presumed potential of the general without a segregation between material and immaterial labor—without an anthropological division of people into two races of producers.

1
Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, trans. Isabella Bertoletti, James Cascaito, and Andrea Casson (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004).

2
Maurizio Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labour," trans. Paul Colilli and Ed Emery, available at http://www.generation-online.org/c/fcimmaterial-labour3.htm.

3
Maurizio Lazzarato, *Les Révolutions du capitalisme* (Paris: Les Empêcheurs de penser en rond, 2004), 168–198.

4
Paolo Virno, "The Dismeasure of Art,", interview by Pascal Gielen and Sonja Lavaert, *Open*, no. 17, http://www.skor.nl/article-4178-nl.html?lang=en.

5
See Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1993), 706. "The development of fixed capital indicates to what degree general social knowledge has become a *direct force of production*, and to what degree, hence, the conditions of the process of social life itself have come under the control of the general intellect and been transformed in accordance with it."

6
Paolo Virno, "General Intellect," in *Lessico postfordista: dizionario di idee della mutazione*, eds. Adelino Zanini and Ubaldo Fadini (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2001), 146–151.

7
"The Idea of Communism: Philosophy and Art" was held in Berlin's Volksbühne theater, June 25–27, 2010.

8
André Gorz, *L'Immatériel: Connaissance, valeur et capital* (Paris: Galilée 2003), 31.

9
Virno, "The Dismeasure of Art."

10
Lazzarato, *Les Révolutions du capitalisme*, 193.

11
Gorz, *L'Immatériel*, 51.

12
Ibid.

13
Paolo Virno, "Virtuosity and Revolution," trans. Ed Emory, available at http://makeworlds.net/node/34.

14
This thought was expressed at several points during the "Idea of Communism" conference (see above).

15
Gorz, *L'Immatériel*, 52.

16
See the series of films by Polish artist Artur Żmijewski called *Selected Works* (2007); Michael Glawogger's film *Workingman's Death* (2006); and the American artist Mika Rottenberg's piece *Dough* (2006).

17
For more on the concept of "bare life," see Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

18
Aleksei Gastev, *Trudovye ustanovki* (Labor Configurations) (1924; Moscow: Ekonomika 1973). Also see his manifesto "Kak nado rabotat?" (How We Should Work), first published in *Organizatsiya truda*, 1921, and then in *Poesija rabochego udara* (The Poetry of the Worker's Blow) (1918; Moscow: Ekonomika, 1976), 270–297.

19
Evald Ilyenkov, *Filosofia y Kultura* (Philosophy and Culture) (Moscow: Political Literature Publishers, 1991), 240.

20
Ibid, 238.

21
Ibid, 256.

22
Ibid, 268.

23
Whereas classical German idealism considered the world existing outside human consciousness to be material, and everything conceived by that consciousness to be ideal, the Marxist interpretation of the ideal used by Ilyenkov allows it to be seen dialectically: i.e., not opposing the material and ideal, but assuming the ideal to be a human potentiality; with the "human" being understood through the potentiality of liberated labor.

24
The representatives of the new wave in Russian film today are considered to be Boris Khlebnikov, Aleksei Popogrebsky, Vasily Sigarev, Nikolay Khomeriki, Bakur Bakuradze and Ivan Vyrypaev.

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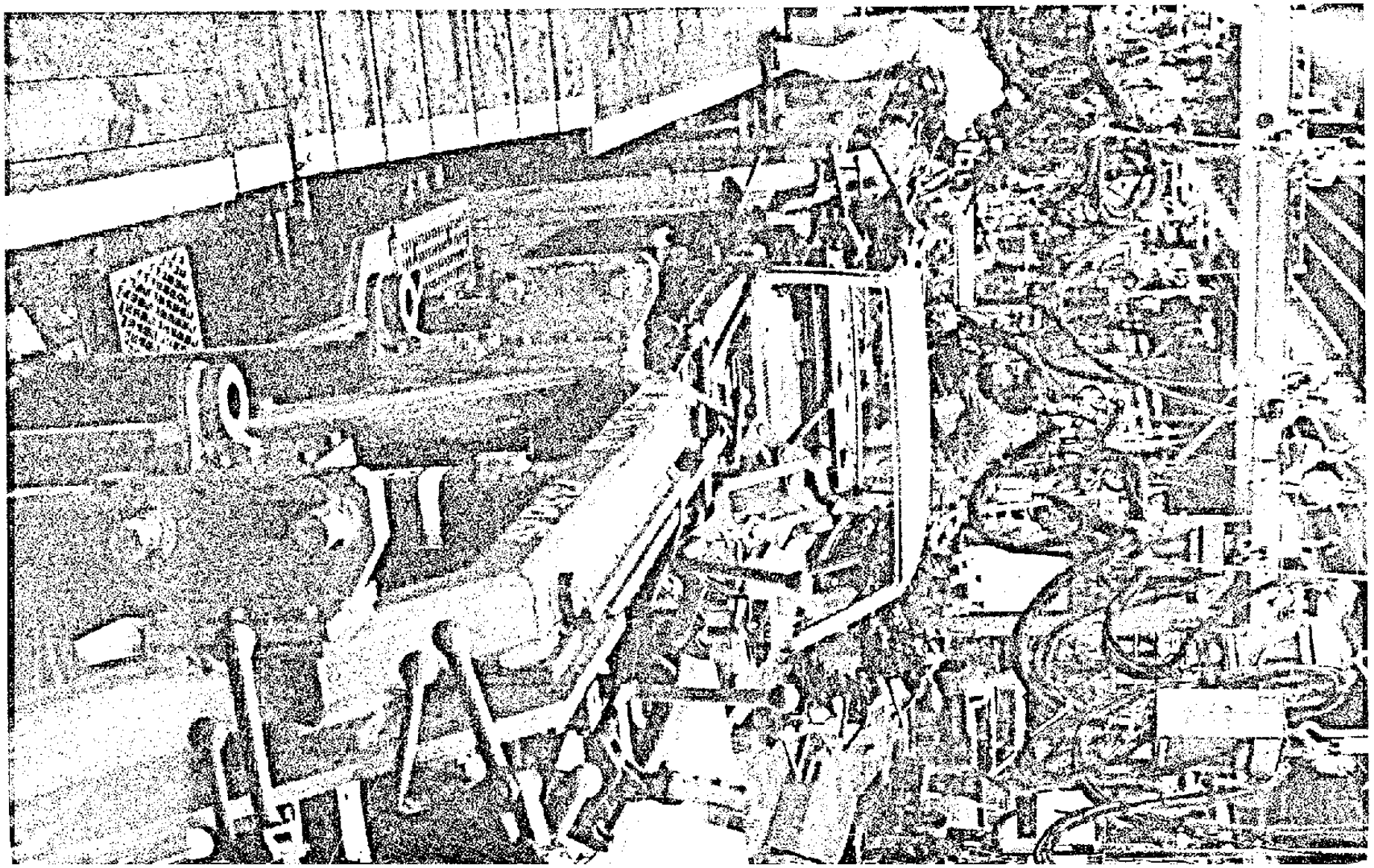
Tom Holert

Hidden Labor and the Delight of Otherness: Design and Post-Capitalist Politics

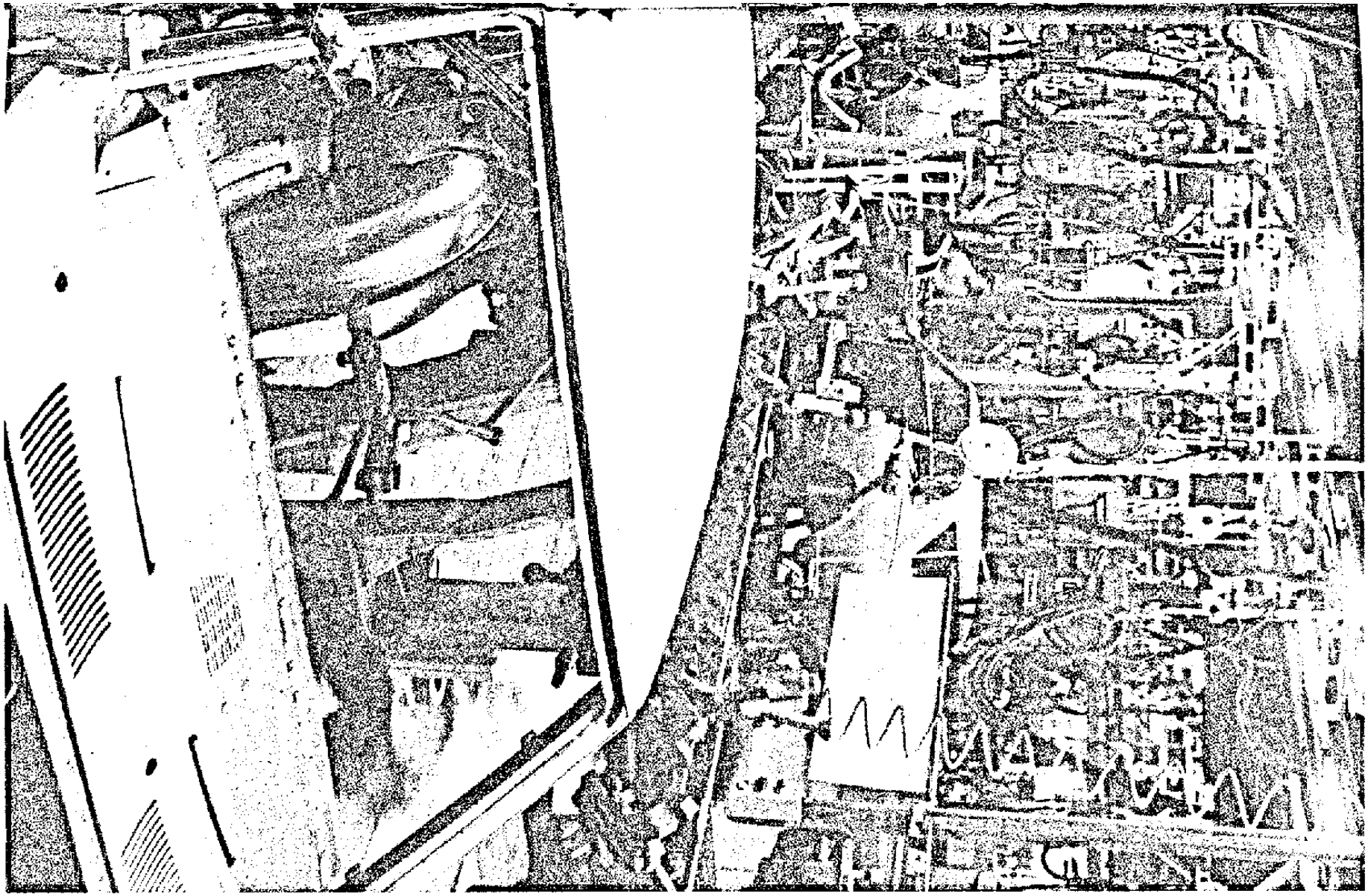
1. Ritualistic Negativity

One of the most intriguing tasks of the theme and thesis of this issue of *e-flux journal* is the imagining and reframing of cultural and aesthetic practice in decidedly post-capitalist terms—that is, as embedded in and engendered by processes of globally networked solidarity, diversity, cooperation, interdependence, and so forth.[1] I would like to begin by supplementing the notion of practice with the notion of design, which may provide the discussion with an initial spin. Of course, "design" is a contested term, and its meaning and function can differ dramatically. In this article, "design" will be taken to be synonymous with "urban design," though even this specification doesn't help much to reduce the problem of reference and cultural difference, as "urban design" is deployed in highly ideological ways and is necessarily steered by varying institutional interests.[2]

The very notion of "design," not to mention the ideologies and machinations implied in "designerly approaches to problem-solving as potential disciplining force," are most questionable.[3] Moreover, the "logics of design" are being mixed and modulated to transform society in heretofore-unknown ways. According to Michael Hardt, "design" has become a "general name" for post-Fordist types of production, which is to say that nobody can claim to be outside of design anymore. As Hardt argues, this marks "a position of great potential" for the immaterial laborer, and can also indicate "a certain kind of critique and struggle that can be waged from within."[4] Hence, the usual rebuttal of design (and urban design in particular) to accusations of being a top-down, master-planning imposition of value-making schemes of urbanity (justified as it may be) needs rephrasing, as it tends to freeze the



Robotic welding on the automobile assembly line at the Toyota Motor Corporation, Japan.



critique in predictable anti-capitalist stances without looking for ways of negotiating differing visions of urban and cultural production pursued within the practice itself. As Hardt points out, the immanence of design—the fact that design cannot be escaped because it effectively organizes post-Fordist subjectivity, both materially and metaphorically—necessitates a political and ontological reframing of design discourse, as a discourse on being as both designed and designing.

That said, a perspective might be proposed that goes beyond well-rehearsed figures of critique, namely, those accusing design and its practitioners of being complicit with capitalist commodification and, ultimately, exploitation; or looking at the neoliberal city in the only way that seems viable and acceptable from and for a position of the radical left: as something to be relentlessly opposed, denounced, and scandalized.

While there are certainly countless reasons for criticism, rejection, and disgust, one may also agree with Adrian Lahoud—an architect and critic from Sydney who maintains the (quite fantastic and tellingly titled) blog "Post-Traumatic Urbanism"—in his opinion that

> Lists and examples of urban injustices like uneven development, gentrification, and zero-tolerance policing make for an appropriate corrective to the historical account of capitalist development but fall short of any transformational consequence. . . . By constraining political agency to action within the confines of a given political landscape, we exclude the contours and limits of this landscape as a site for political action. The system itself must be up for grabs.[5]

Any consideration of "design" in this quest for political agency should allow for the dialectical tensions between, say, planning and change, destruction and construction, critique and mapping, and so forth. If there is no outside to design, political action would have to address the designed as much as the designable nature of reality, the techno-social fallouts and catastrophes of design processes and the palliative step-by-step cures of vernacular, informal, low-visibility ways of going about design. These tensions relate to the relationship between micropolitics and radical politics, between on the one hand a *longue durée* practice of small steps, dispersed moments of counter-hegemonic resistance amounting to change, and, on the other, the single decisive act—the "event" so eloquently evoked by Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek, and others—seems key. What is to be done to unchain criticism from ritualistic negativity, from being simply the "anti-" of capitalism or neoliberalism? The current dispensation connects thinking and doing to the idea of fighting rather than overcoming, of confronting the enemy directly rather than rendering it obsolete. The "system itself" must be up for grabs, indeed, but its suspension may not necessarily come through the means and strategies proposed so far.

2. Thinking Like a Craftsman

Dedicated to the ideas of libertarian communism, libcom.org is a website that pursues the "political expression of the ever-present strands of co-operation and solidarity." In March 2009 a contributor posting under the alias "Kambing" ventures the interesting thought that "the artisan" may qualify as "a rather attractive concept for a post-capitalist subject—it certainly beats the bourgeois star artist or proletarianized designer as a

way of organizing creative activity." However, "Kambing" continues, the concept of the artisan is at the same time

> doomed as an attempt to overcome capitalism, as it can be so easily drawn back into capitalist processes of accumulation and dispossession. This is precisely the problem with a lot of autonomist (and anarchist) strategies for resistance or "exodus"—including some forms of anarcho-syndicalism.[6]

This skepticism is only too familiar by now—any candidate put forward for the new revolutionary subject will be quickly rendered inappropriate, deficient, co-optable. The reasons for such pre-emptive skepticism, popular even among the most hard-line autonomists, anarchists, or anarcho-syndicalists, are manifold. However, a central argument for this co-optation is linked to the awe-inspiring malleability and adaptability of capitalism as such, accompanied by post-political renderings of "democracy," helpful in reducing politics "to the negotiation of private interests," as Slavoj Žižek puts it in his discussion of what he considers to be a symptomatic proximity between contemporary biopolitical capitalism and the post-operaist productivity of the multitude: "But what if, in a parallax shift, we perceive *the capitalist network itself as the true excess over the flow of the productive multitude*?"[7]

The structure of the argument has been so thoroughly rehearsed in past decades that it has assumed a somewhat mythical truth. Capitalism is the shape-shifting creature-beast always already ahead and above—regardless of which revolutionary force tries to overthrow or subvert it—as it continually vampirizes any signs of resistance. It

may be necessary to deploy the perceptual model of the parallax, as Žižek does, in order to maintain the structurally paranoiac—if absolutely legitimate—belief in capitalism's shrewdness, which sometimes seems to resemble the clever hedgehog family in the Grimms' fairytale "The Hare and the Hedgehog." Its remarkable ability to re-invent itself and stay alive even as the current full-fledged crisis in interlinked systems of state and corporate capitalism turn capitalism-as-such into a transcendent miracle and/or metaphysical force with increasingly violent repercussions on the ground, with its most recent turn being the recruitment of state and legal powers. Referring to Carlo Vercellone's 2006 book *Capitalismo cognitivo*, Žižek points to how profit becomes rent in postindustrial capitalism.[8] The more capitalism behaves in "de-regulatory, 'anti-statal,' nomadic, deterritorializing" fashions, the more it "relies on increasingly authoritarian interventions of the state and its legal and other apparatuses."[9] While the "general intellect" in reality doesn't appear to be that "general" or shared—with the products of the innumerable and increasingly dispersed multitudes becoming copyrighted, commoditized, and legally encapsulated as part of the accumulation of wealth by way of "rent"—the unity of the proletariat has split into three parts, following Žižek's Hegelian idea of the future: white-collar "intellectual laborers," blue-collar "old manual working class," and the "outcasts (the unemployed, those living in slums and other interstices of public space)."[10] Any possibility of solidarity amongst these factions appears to have been foreclosed, and in many respects the separation seems absolute. The liberal-multicultural self-image of the cognitive workforce doesn't rhyme particularly well with the populist, nationalist position of the "old" working

class, and both are further ostracized by the unruliness, illegality, and poverty of the outcasts who alienate white-collar workers and blue-collar workers alike, as they seem to indicate through their fate how imperiled their remaining privileges of citizenship may be.

But Žižek's Hegelian triad of postindustrial proletarian factions is debatable. The identities (intellectual laborers, working class, outcasts) are much too unstable, much too fluid and transient for a theorization of the (im)possibilities of overcoming capitalism. And it remains doubtful whether their insertion into the discourse provides more than a paralysis characterized by deadlock, tribal oppositions, and endless desolidarity.

In fact, these and other identities shift according to (but also against) the self-transformation of capitalist institutions enabled by various neutralizations and recuperations. And these self-transformations entail wars of position, to use Gramsci's term. As Chantal Mouffe put it a few years ago in pre-9/11, pessimism-of-the-intellect/optimism-of-the-will style: "although it might become worse, it might also become better."[11] Even Žižek—who has always endorsed a strong idea of capitalism, evincing a certain obsession with the task of proving capitalism's fascinating, horrifying, and stupefying superiority as one that could only be seriously challenged by a return to the Leninist act—is himself looking for other actors and different processes now. Currently, his hope lies with the hopeless, the people fooled and victimized by "the whole drift of history"—in other words, the very "outcasts" from the proletarian triad mentioned above, those who are forced into improvisation, informality, clandestinity, as this is supposedly all they are left with in a "desperate situation."[12]

To rely on the desperation of others for one's own idea of a successful insurrection is of course deeply romantic and utopian. Žižek may be right in asserting that waiting for the Revolution to be undertaken by others has been the fundamental error of too many leftists. However, would he count himself or anyone in his vicinity to be "desperate" enough to act, especially in a spirit of voluntarism and experimentation that would effectively dissolve the constraints of "freedom" as it is granted by neoliberalism?

The "artisan" evoked by "Kambing," though immediately disregarded as allegedly "doomed" to fail in the face of capitalism like so many others, may be an interesting figure to reconsider here—less out of interest in revolutionary politics than in envisioning alternate ways of organizing "creative activity" to replace and/or evade capitalist modes of production. As Raqs Media Collective have pointed out in their essay "Stubborn Structures and Insistent Seepage in a Networked World," the figure of the artisan arrived historically before the worker and the artist, before "the drone and the genius," while it enabled the "transfiguration of people into skills, of lives into working lives, into variable capital."[13] "The artisan," Raqs claim, "is the vehicle that carried us all into the contemporary world." However, after the artisan's role in "making and trading things and knowledge" had been replaced by those of the worker and the artist, by the ubiquity of the commodity and the rarity of the art object, the artisan now seems to be returning, but in different guises—the migrant imbued with all kinds of tactical knowledges, the electronic pirate, or the neo-luddite, many of whom are immaterial laborers, pursuing processes of "imagining, understanding, and invoking a world, mimesis, projection and

verisimilitude as well as the skillful deployment of a combination of reality and representation."

Interestingly (and similarly), "Kambing" distinguishes the "artisan" from the "bourgeois star artist" and the "proletarianized designer." However, one may also imagine these distinct figures aligning—with each other and with others beyond themselves. These alignments or fusions would depend on an ability and a willingness to recognize and accept difference and diversity not only in one's own social surroundings, but also within oneself as a subject. To acknowledge the fact that one may simultaneously inhabit more than one identity leads almost inevitably to co-operation with others that would go beyond the model of the homogeneous community.

But, in *Capital*, Marx is highly skeptical of "co-operation" as a way out of capitalism: "Co-operation ever constitutes the fundamental form of the capitalist mode of production." Its power is

> developed gratuitously whenever the workmen are placed under given conditions and it is capital that places them under such conditions. Because this power costs capital nothing, and because, on the other hand, the labourer himself does not develop it before his labour belongs to capital, it appears as a power with which capital is endowed by Nature—a productive power that is immanent in capital.[14]

The very power of co-operation that Marx located at the center of the capitalist project has become the keystone of post-operaist theories of post-Fordism. They have observed that the value-increasing function of co-operation has become increasingly tangible in a system based on an essential superfluity

of labor and the permanence of unemployment, a system that simultaneously captures and exploits the very "power" of non-labor-based communality and communication. "Since social cooperation precedes and exceeds the work process, post-Fordist labor is always, also, *hidden labor*," as Paolo Virno wrote in *A Grammar of the Multitude*.[15] Defining hidden labor as "non-remunerated life" in the very "production time" of post-Fordism that exceeds "labor time," Virno also provides an opportunity to discuss un-accounted for, unpaid labor—exploitable and valorized by capital as it is—as a realm of potential freedom and disobedience. Indeed, the politics of cooperation and communication (which include affective labor) operate at the heart of the post-operaist project, and the mingled and sometimes dirty practices of such cooperation between different factions of contemporary laborers are illustrated by one of the many examples of the hidden labor of artisanry in Richard Sennett's book *The Craftsman*. Reflecting on the debilitating split between head and hand that occurred when architects and designers began to use computer-aided design (CAD) programs, Sennett postulates the need "to think like craftsmen in making good use of technology," and to consider the "sharp social edge" of such thinking. Thinking like craftsmen could entail a certain kind of work that one executes after the designers have left the building. Particularly interested in the parking garages of Atlanta's Peachtree Center, Sennett noticed a specific, inconspicuous kind of post-factum cooperation between designers and artisans/craftsmen:

> A standardized bumper had been installed at the end of each car stall. It looked sleek, but the lower edge of each bumper was sharp metal,

> liable to scratch cars or calves. Some bumpers, though, had been turned back, on site, for safety. The irregularity of the turning showed that the job had been done manually, the steel smoothed and rounded wherever it might be unsafe to touch; the craftsman had thought for the architect.[16]

The labor of modifying and repairing the work of others is certainly not groundbreaking in terms of anti-capitalist struggle per se. However, the physical skills, the attitude of care and circumspection, the inscription of a hand that performs "responsible" gestures, and so forth, all engender a shared authorship—in this case a cooperation between the absent architect's and/or construction company's work and the subsequent, careful labor of detecting and correcting the building's design problems. This cooperation is neither contractually negotiated nor socially expected, but instead results from a specific situation in which a problem called for a solution. It is inseparable from local conditions and constraints, and should not be taken as a model for action. Yet, on other hand, it is intriguing, as it displays relationalities within material-social practices that usually remain unnoticed, and whose resourcefulness is thus overlooked.

In some respects Sennett's concept of "thinking like craftsmen" resembles a definition of "design" that Bruno Latour introduced the same year *The Craftsman* was published. Speaking at a conference held by the Design History Society in Cornwall, Latour differentiated "design" from the concepts of building or constructing. The process of designing, according to Latour, is marked by a certain semantic modesty—it is always a retroactive, never foundational, action, always re-design, and hence "post-Promethean." Furthermore, the

concept of design emphasizes the dimension of (manual, technical) abilities, of "skills," which suggests a more cautious and precautionary (not directly tied to making and producing) engagement with problems on an increasingly larger scale (as with climate change). Then, too, design as a practice that engenders meaning and calls for interpretation thus tends to transform objects into things—irreducible to their status as facts or matter, being instead inhabited by causes, issues, and, more generally, semiotic skills. And finally, following Latour, design is inconceivable without an ethical dimension, without the distinction between good design and bad design—which also always renders design negotiable and controvertible.[16] Here, at this site of dispute and negotiation, especially on an occasion in which the activity of design is "the whole fabric of our earthly existence," Latour finds "a completely new political territory" opening up.[17]

3. "Weak Theory"

Such a notion of politics, based on a specific, if slightly idiosyncratic idea of design as a modest and moderating practice that follows rather than leads, can now be linked to another project that envisions a "politics of (economic) possibility." J. K. Gibson-Graham, the pen-name of two feminist economists and geographers, whose elaborate argument draws on a pioneering spirit of "disclosing new worlds" rather than flocking to the same subject position, take an approach that may initially appear overly optimistic in its rhizomatricy, but that is well founded in fieldwork and action research in the Pioneer Village in Massachusetts, the Asian Migrant Centre in Hong Kong, and the Latrobe Valley in Australia. They obviously know what they are talking about when they refer to the "cultivation of

subjects" for these "community enterprises and initiatives" of post-capitalist "new commons," which are capable of affording an understanding and, even more, an enjoyment of difference, as well as "new ways of 'being together.'"

J. K. Gibson-Graham's books, *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It)* (1996) and *A Postcapitalist Politics* (2006), are organized around what they call "techniques of ontological reframing (to produce the ground of possibility), rereading (to uncover or excavate the possible), and creativity (to generate actual possibilities where none formerly existed)."[18] Gibson-Graham base their ideas, which are informed by, among other schools of thought, feminist poststructuralism and queer theory, on strong notions of *un-thinking* (avoiding notions such as economic determinism), *anti-essentialism* (avoiding any understanding of causality), *anti-universalism*, and *anti-structure*, all in order to conceptualize "contingent relationships" that replace "invariant logics." By way of this substitution, "the economy loses its character as an asocial body in lawful motion and instead becomes a space of recognition and negotiation."[19]

Gibson-Graham use words that denote a deliberate weakness, pliability, and openness, such as "underlaboring," and the two intensely advocate a tolerance of "not-knowing." Contingency, difference, and differentiation lie at the core of their thinking, as do the empiricism and materialism of actor-network theories and object-oriented ontologies that offer a means of describing and thinking through the unfolding logic within an object as a thing, but also as "a very concrete process of eventuation, path-dependent and nonlinear," thereby de-privileging global systems under the auspices of emergence and becoming.

As they put it, "With the aim of transforming 'impossible into possible objects,' reading for absences excavates what has been actively suppressed or excluded, calling into question the marginalization and 'non-credibility' of the nondominant."[20] Underscoring the "always political process of creating the new," Gibson-Graham consider politics to be "a process of transformation instituted by taking decisions on an ultimately undecideable terrain"—and their own thought process as "starting in the space of nonbeing that is the wellspring of becoming"; it is here that they discover the "space of politics" and its "shadowy denizens"—the "subject" and "place."[21] Gibson-Graham are not naïve, however, when it comes to theorizing the dynamics of subjection, the question of "how to understand the subject as both powerfully constituted and constrained by dominant discourses, yet also available to other possibilities of becoming."[22] But they call for an acknowledgment of the necessity to withdraw from a "traditional [leftist] paranoid style of theorizing" that also brings about changes in the effects that give rise to social transformation and communal becoming, a "wonder as awareness of and delight of otherness" combined with a "growing recognition that the other is what makes self possible."[23] This bewildering and enjoyable "recognition" drives Gibson-Graham's research, and their (pedagogical) vision of a post-capitalist politics is inseparable from a belief in the possibility of "cultivating subjects"—citizens for a different, community-based, cooperative economy. And in contradistinction to theorists such as Žižek or Badiou, Gibson-Graham actually speak of individual agency, of specific persons whose subjectivities have registered the experiences of community economies and their particular potentiality, embracing the

weakness and micrological scale of such fieldwork, also in terms of theory. Writing in the vein of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Gibson-Graham suggest that

> Weak theory can be strong politics—it opens up social options that would be inaccessible to a theorist intent on eliminating surprise (by exploring the unknown rather than extending and confirming the known). It widens the affective possibilities of politics (who knows what emotions will arise in an experimental, only partly mapped space?) and allows for the possibility of maximizing positive affect (something we all want to do, which means that participation in politics would not be limited to the stoical cadre of the already politicized).[24]

Although Gibson-Graham do not address the realm of culture and cultural production explicitly, their thinking remains relevant to the question of how design can be approached within the scope of a post-capitalist project. Even if aspects of their discourse appear familiar in the context of theories pertaining to art and to cultural production in general—and may therefore lack the scandalizing or provocative edge they purportedly have in the disciplines of economics and geography—even savvy readers trained in narratives of "becoming" should gain a sense of how politics can be framed differently with regard to predominant "progressive" discourses of radical-democratic or neo-Maoist persuasion. Moreover, Gibson-Graham's attention to contingency and agency, to singularity and a "place-based politics of subjectivation" can be enormously helpful in providing a framework for approaching cooperative cultural production in a different way—as a politics that boldly centers on the local and

the particular without falling victim to a retrograde romanticism of the homogenous community or the "neighborhood." As much as Gibson-Graham are critically aware of the governmentality of the cooperative found in the "third way" politics of 1990s neoliberalism (with their rhetoric of "trust," "mutual obligation," "reciprocity"), so should one be aware of the misuses of terms such as "participation" in urban government and design discourses.[25] However, the capacity for Gibson-Graham's path-dependent, de-disciplining, and place-specific methodology to be extended towards cultural (discursive and material) practices of doing—such as design and craftsmanship (conceived roughly along the lines of Sennett or Latour)—make them vital for articulating a means of going beyond the failure of grand designs, demonstrated so drastically by the current crisis of large-scale state and economic institutions. Given that everyone is affected—if to different degrees (but much too often disastrously)—by the neoliberal abolishment of everything, small-scale endeavors of solidarity, however networked, that intentionally neglect or dismiss the disciplining effects of capital (and of anti-capitalist politics as well), and that develop humble ways of altering and improving inherited designs, do not appear to be the worst option available at the moment.

4. Participation

What would be necessary to transform "design" into a discipline of un-disciplinary moves and motions, into a practice of possibility and an articulation of becoming? In "Design and Human Values," a legendary Aspen design conference that took place in 1957, the American designer Richard Latham interrogated the ideas that designers cater to and the kind of responsibility they should take:

> As designers, we may properly assume responsibility for goodness and badness in the work we create; we are called upon, and entitled, to make value decisions. We are also entitled to a pioneering spirit and a desire to see things change for the better; we need not assume that *what is* is always inevitable or for the best. I believe that change, even for its own sake, can be a good thing. But I contend that, before we dare assume this right to judge and shape other people's values, we had better first examine our own values and our own motives for wanting to exercise this control over the lives of others. . . . We designers . . . can begin to build a meaningful aesthetic culture if we are willing to prepare ourselves for a new learning experience, and we cannot learn unless we participate.[26]

Unless one simply dismisses these lines as old-school navel-gazing or as the exhortative sophistry of someone who made a good living from the value systems of the design trade, the statement conveys a surprising desire to open the profession to the uncertainties and challenges of a becoming. Terms such as "change" and "learning experience" can be read as a purposeful destabilization of the social and aesthetic contracts of the design profession. Latham's punch line, "we cannot learn unless we participate," certainly suggested, in 1957, a paradigmatic re-orientation of the role and position expected of the future designer. Interestingly, participation was not yet considered to be integral to a designer's or planner's role, but only a means of improving knowledge and experience: in order to learn, one has to take part. Yet the question remains: *Who* is invited to participate, and who is inviting them? The desire to participate must not

necessarily meet recognition by others. You may ask whether you are allowed, but the question can be refuted. An inherent right to participate cannot be taken for granted by the designer, much less the non-expert citizen. One may further ask whether a right to design should be declared and henceforth claimed, based on the fundamental role assignable to design, designing, and, particularly, the contemporary condition of a weak and hidden (post-) artisanal potentiality distributed throughout networks, whether global or local. Granted that these networks are subject to "seepage," as Raqs Media Collective call it—to "those acts that ooze through the pores of the outer surfaces of structures into available pores within the structure," resulting in a "weakening of the structure itself"—design may be conceived and enacted as a multiplicity of acts that persistently erode such structures while eliciting conversations between neighboring, shared, and communal practices.[27]

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2
Reading a syllabus such as the one penned by Richard Plunz, director of the "urban design" graduate program at Columbia University, New York, may give an idea of the nature of the semantic and discursive investments in play. "Urban Design is pursued as a critical re-assessment of conventional approaches relative to questions of site, program, infrastructure, and form-mass, as they have been defined by urban design practice during the past century. The Urban Design curriculum is pedagogically unique on the role of architecture in the formation of a discourse on urbanism at this moment of post-industrial development and indeed, of post-urban sensibility relative to traditional Euro-American settlement norms." (Urban Design, Open House for GSAPP Architecture Programs – MArch, MSAAD, MSAUD, Columbia University, November 4, 2009). The expression "post-urban sensibility" is intriguing, as it points to the possibility of thinking beyond the discipline which is advertising itself by using it. Although the term "post-urban" has developed a very specific meaning in the architectural and urbanist debate of late, imagining a "post" of the "urban" in historical and/or systematic terms could be considered in various ways, for instance, as looking for a different kind of conceptualization of what the "urban" is and should be; or, as a call to overcome a specific imagination and representation of the "urban" as well as overcoming the binarisms of public and private, corporatism and street-level resistance, revanchist fortification and insurgent survival strategies, all characterizing key features of the "urban" that have been rehearsed for such a long time.

3
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4
See Michael Hardt and Christopher Hight, "Designing Commonspaces: Riffing with Michael Hardt on the Multitude and Collective Intelligence," in *Architectural Design* 76, no. 5 (September/October 2006): 70–73.

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Adrian Lahoud, review of *Urban Politics Now: Reimagining Democracy in the Neoliberal City*, ed. BAVO (Gideon Boie and Matthias Pauwels) (Rotterdam: NAi, 2008), Post-Traumatic Urbanism.com, May 14, 2009, http://post-traumaticurbanism.com/?p=138.

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Carlo Vercellone, *Capitalismo cognitivo: conoscenza e finanza nell'epoca postfordista* (Rome: Manifestolibri, 2006).

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Ibid., 147.

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Chantal Mouffe, "Every Form of Art Has a Political Dimension," interview by Rosalyn Deutsche, Branden W. Joseph, and Thomas Keenan, *Grey Room*, no. 02, (Winter 2001): 118.

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Žižek, *First as Tragedy*, 155.

13
Raqs Media Collective, "Stubborn Structures and Insistent Seepage in a Networked World," in *Seepage* (New York/Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010).

See http://www.raqsmediacollective.net/texts1.html.

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Karl Marx, *Capital: The Process of Capitalist Production*, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, and ed. by Frederick Engels. Volume 1 of Capital: A Critique of Political Economy (London: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1921), 365–6.

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Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, trans. Isabella Bertoletti, James Cascaito, and Andrea Casson (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), 103.

16
Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 44.

17
See Bruno Latour, "A Cautious Prometheus? A Few Steps Toward a Philosophy of Design (with Special Attention to Peter Sloterdijk)," keynote lecture at the "Network of Design" meeting held by the Design History Society in Falmouth, Cornwall, September 3, 2008, text available at http://www.bruno-latour.fr/articles/article/112-DESIGN-CORNWALL.pdf. This paragraph is partly cited from Tom Holert, "Design and Nervousness," trans. Gerrit Jackson, *Texte zur Kunst* 72 (December 2008):108f.

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Ibid.

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J. K. Gibson-Graham, *A Post-capitalist Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xxix–xxx.

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Ibid., xxx.

21
Ibid., xxxii.

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Ibid., xxxii–xxxiii, xxxiii.

23
Ibid., xxxvi.

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Ibid., 5, 20.

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Ibid., 205.

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Ibid., 224.

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Richard Latham, "Communication of Values Through Design," in *The Aspen Papers: Twenty Years of Design Theory from the International Design Conference in Aspen*, ed. Reyner Banham (London: Pall Mall Press, 1974), 91.

28
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e-flux journal Are You Working Too Much? 134

Franco Berardi Bifo

Cognitarian Subjectivation

Recent years have witnessed a new techno-social framework of contemporary subjectivation. And I would like to ask whether a process of autonomous, collective self-definition is possible in the present age. The concept of "general intellect" associated with Italian post-operaist thought in the 1990s (Paolo Virno, Maurizio Lazzarato, Christian Marazzi) emphasizes the interaction between labor and language: social labor is the endless recombination of myriad fragments producing, elaborating, distributing, and decoding signs and informational units of all kinds. Every semiotic segment produced by the information worker must meet and match innumerable other semiotic segments in order to form the combinatory frame of the info-commodity, semiocapital.

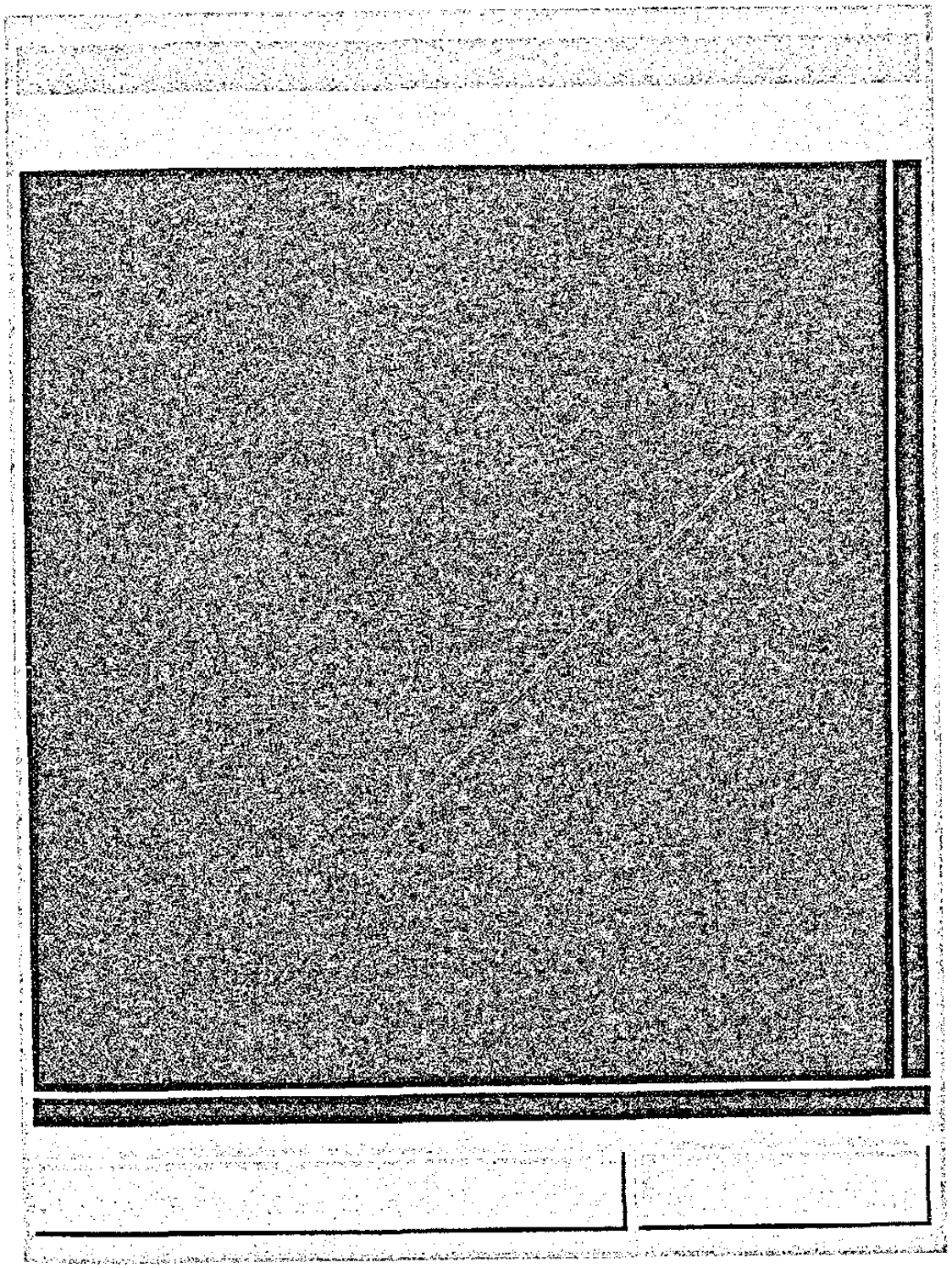
Semiocapital puts neuro-psychic energies to work, submitting them to mechanistic speed, compelling cognitive activity to follow the rhythm of networked productivity. As a result, the emotional sphere linked with cognition is stressed to its limit. Cyberspace overloads cybertime, because cyberspace is an unbounded sphere whose speed can accelerate without limits, while cybertime (the organic time of attention, memory, imagination) cannot be sped up beyond a certain point—or it cracks. And it actually is cracking, collapsing under the stress of hyper-productivity. An epidemic of panic and depression is now spreading throughout the circuits of the social brain. The current crisis in the global economy has much to do with this nervous breakdown. Marx spoke of overproduction, meaning the excess of available goods that could not be absorbed by the social market. But today it is the social brain that is assaulted by an overwhelming supply of attention-demanding goods. The social factory has become the factory of

unhappiness: the assembly line of networked production is directly exploiting the emotional energy of the cognitive class.

I wish to pinpoint the problem of organic limits, which is often eclipsed by an emphasis on the limitless potential of technology. We should speak of technology in context, and the present context of technology is culturally oriented towards economic competition. Info-producers are neuroworkers. Their nervous systems act as active receiving terminals. They are sensitive to semiotic activation throughout the entire day. What emotional, psychic, existential price does the constant cognitive stress of permanent cognitive electrocution exact? The acceleration of network technologies, the general condition of precariousness, and the dependence on cognitive labor all induce pathological effects in the social mind, saturating attention time, compressing the sphere of emotion and sensitivity, as is shown by psychiatrists who have observed a steep increase in manic depression and suicide in the last generation of workers.

The colonization of time has been a fundamental issue in the modern history of capitalist development: the anthropological mutation that capitalism produced in the human mind and in daily life has, above all, transformed the perception of time. But we are now leaping into the unknown—digital technologies have enabled absolute acceleration, and the short-circuiting of attention time. As info-workers are exposed to a growing mass of stimuli that cannot be dealt with according to the intensive modalities of pleasure and knowledge, acceleration leads to an impoverishment of experience. More information, less meaning. More information, less pleasure.

Sensibility is activated in time. Sensuality is slow. Deep, intense elaboration becomes impossible



Flavio De Marco, *Paesaggio (Landscape)*, 2001. Acrylic on Canvas, 140x100 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

when the stimulus is too fast. A process of desensitization is underway at the point where electronic cyberspace intersects with organic cybertime. The prospect of individual subjectivation, and of social subjectivation, has to be reframed in this context, and a series of radical questions arise: Is it still possible to envisage a process of collective subjectivation and social solidarity? Is it still possible to imagine a "movement" in the sense of a collective process of intellectual and political transformation of reality? Is it still possible to forge social autonomy from capitalist dominance in the psycho-economic framework of semiocapitalism?

Dismantling General Intellect

The refusal of work—which is better defined as a refusal of the alienation and exploitation of living time—has been the main engine of innovation, of technological development and knowledge. The organic composition of capital (as a relationship between dead labor and living labor) progressively changed throughout the twentieth century as the workers' resistance, their sabotage and insubordination, forced capitalists to hire engineers to replace human labor with machines. Similarly, the intellectualization of human activity is—from any perspective—a consequence of the workers' insubordination and resistance to exploitation. When the cost of labor increases (as happened in the 1960s and '70s), the capitalist replaces worker with machine, as the machine is less costly in the long run. Since the massive wave of industrial workers' resistance, information technology has helped to replace human toil with intelligent machines, and this has provoked the enhancement of the sphere of intellectual labor and cognitive activity linked to value production.

The '90s were a decade of alliances: cognitive labor and venture capital met and merged in the dot-com. Expectations were high, judging by the amount of investment, and creativity became an inherent feature of social labor. Then, after the dot-com bubble burst in spring of 2000, neoliberalism broke the alliance of cognitive labor and venture capital. Using technology itself, neoliberalism managed to subvert the social and political *rapport de force* between labor and capital. As far as we can see now, the result of neoliberal politics is a general reduction of labor cost and an impoverishment of the cognitarians. Both industrial labor, delocalized to the peripheral areas of the world, and cognitive labor, are devalued and underpaid, as precarization has fragmented and finally destroyed social solidarity. In this new context, defined by precarization of cognitive labor, we must rethink the question of subjectivation.

Just after the financial collapse of spring 2000, the dot-com crash and the crumbling of big corporations like Enron and WorldCom, the Swiss philosopher and economist Christian Marazzi, a sharp analyst of the social implications of financial crises, wrote an article on the danger of privatizing the general intellect, in which he predicted the trend that ten years later is in full swing: the reduction of research financing, the manipulation and militarization of state-financed research, and the impoverishment and precarization of cognitive labor.[1]

If we look at the politics of the European neoliberal ruling class, we see that they are doing exactly this: in some countries (such as Italy) they are reducing the financing for school and for research, privatizing public schools, and provoking a large-scale de-scholarization that has already begun showing signs of producing widespread

ignorance and fanaticism. In some countries (like France), they increasingly limit the public financing of research to that which can immediately translate into the politics of economic growth. Subjugating research to immediate economic interests reduces the role of research, rendering it a mere tool for governance, for the repetition of an existing framework of social activity. As cognitive workers are forced into precarity, they are also denied the possibility of deciding the scope of their own research. This obviously reduces the creativity invested by cognitarians in their work, as well as the pace of innovation and progress in technology.

In the long run, this trend obliterates the progressive features of capitalism. As the cost of labor becomes so low that exploiting the physical force of a worker costs less than looking for some technological replacement, the push toward innovation slows to a halt. The interest in immediate profit prevails over the long-term development of productive force. Notwithstanding the shortsighted opinions prevailing in the field of neoliberal economics, a decrease in labor cost suggest that the progressive impulse of capitalism is fading; capitalism becomes a factor of de-civilization, of intellectual and technological regression.

Cognitarians Searching for a Body

Cognitarians are those who embody the general intellect in its many forms: they process information in order to give birth to goods and services. As the cognitive function of society is inscribed in the process of capital valorization, the infinitely fragmented mosaic of cognitive activity becomes a fluid process within a universal telematic network, redefining the shape of labor and capital. Capital becomes the generalized semiotic flux that runs

through the veins of the global economy, while labor becomes the constant activation of the intelligence of countless semiotic agents linked to one another.

Cognitarians are the social body of the soul at work in the sphere of semiocapital, but this body is dimidiated in a sphere isolated from the other's body. The form of alienation that is spreading in the living sphere of the cognitarians is a form of psychic suffering that escapes the Freudian definition of neurosis. If Freud's definition of neurosis lingered on repression of desire, semiocapital is pushing demand for consumerist hyper-expression: just do it. Panic, depression, and a de-activation of empathy —it is here that we find the cognitariat's problem.

Precarious cognitive workers are forced to think in terms of competition. You can become friends with another person on Facebook, but genuine friendship is difficult under conditions of virtual isolation and intense economic competition. If we want to find the way towards autonomous collective subjectivation we have to generate cognitarian awareness with regard to an erotic, social body of the general intellect. The way to autonomous and collective subjectivation starts here: from the general intellect searching for a body.

Our main political task must be handled with the conceptual tools of psychotherapy, and the language of poetry—much more than the language of politics and the conceptual tools of modern political science. The political organizer of cognitarians must be able to do away with panic and depression, to speak in a way that sensibly enacts a paradigm shift, a resemiotization of the social field, a change in social expectations and self-perception. We are forced to acknowledge that we do have a body, a social and a physical body, a socioeconomic body.

Cyber-optimists were fashionable in the '90s, and they were able to interpret the spirit of an alliance between venture capitalists and artists or engineers. But the alliance was broken in the Bush years, when technology was submitted to the laws of war, and financial capitalism provoked a collapse that may still lead to the destruction of modern civilization. Today, cyber-optimism sounds fake, like advertising for a rotten product. In his recent book, *You Are Not a Gadget*, Jaron Lanier, the same person who engineered the tools of virtual reality, writes:

> true believers in the hive mind seem to think that no number of layers of abstraction in a financial system can dull the efficacy of the system. According to the new ideology, which is a blending of cyber-cloud and neo–Milton Friedman economics, the market will not only do its best, it will do better the less people understand it. I disagree. The financial crisis brought about by the U.S. mortgage meltdown of 2008 was a case of too many people believing in the cloud too much.[2]

Governance and Cognitive Subjugation

In the present, agonizing phase of neoliberalism (an agony that is more ferocious and destructive than the previous phases) European governments are staging an assault on the educational system—and particularly on scientific research—as a part of a war against cognitive labor, a war aimed at its subjugation. The university system across Europe is based on a huge amount of precarious, underpaid, or unpaid labor. Researchers and students have staged protests against this trend, attempting to return the educational system to its original vocation: a place of non-dogmatic knowledge, of the public sharing of culture. Research should not be

subjected to any restraining criterion of functionality, because its very function is to explore solutions that, although dysfunctional in the present paradigm, may reveal new paradigmatic landscapes. This is the role of scientific research, especially when we are facing conundrums that seem unresolvable within the capitalist paradigm.

The European ruling class aims to reduce research to a method for the governance of complexity. The ideology of governance is based on the naturalization (hypostatization, I would say in Hegelian parlance) of economic reasoning. The economy has achieved the status of a universal language, of the ultimate standard of choice, whereas economics should be just a branch of knowledge among others. The normative role that the economy has acquired is unwarranted from an epistemological point of view, and devastating at the social level. If research is subjected to economic conceptualization, it is no longer research, but technical management. The so-called reform of the European educational system launched in 1999 (the year of the Bologna Charter) is aimed at the separation of applied research from the questioning of the very foundations and finalities of scientific knowledge, accompanied by the subjugation of research to standards set by economic evaluation.

The epistemic implications of this move are enormous: to submit research to the laws of economic growth obliterates the most important purpose of knowledge, what Thomas Kuhn calls its "paradigmatic" function. The ability to produce paradigm shifts in the field of knowledge and in the field of experimentation depends on the autonomy of research from established standards of evaluation. Only when research can work and discover and create concepts regardless of established

social interests can knowledge move beyond repetition, and open new prospects to imagination and technology.

"Governance" is the keyword for this process. Governance produces pure functionality without meaning, the automation of thought and of will. It embeds abstract connections in the relation between living organisms, technologically subjecting choices to logical concatenation. It recombines compatible (compatibilized) fragments of knowledge. Governance is the replacement of political will with a system of automatic technicalities forcing reality into a logical framework that cannot be questioned. Financial stability, competitiveness, labor cost reduction, increase of productivity: the systemic architecture of EU rule is based on such dogmatic foundations that cannot be challenged or discussed, because they are embedded in the technical function of managerial subsystems. No enunciation or action is operational if it does not comply with embedded rules of techno-linguistic *dispositifs* of daily exchange.

Governance is the management of a system that is too complex to be governed. The word "government" means the understanding (as a reduction to a rational model) of the social world, and the ability of the human will (despotic, democratic, and so forth) to control a flow of information sufficient for the control of a relevant part of the social whole. The possibility of government requires a low degree of complexity with regard to social information. Information complexity grew throughout the late modern age, and exploded in the age of the digital network. Therefore, the reduction of social information to comprehensive knowledge and political control becomes an impossible task: control becomes aleatory, uncertain, almost impossible,

and an increasing number of events escape the organized will.

At this point, capitalism shifts to the mode of governance. It employs abstract concatenation of technological functions in place of the conscious processing of a flow of information. It connects asignifying segments in place of dialogic elaboration. It automatically adapts in place of forming consensus, using technical language in place of shared meaning resulting from dialogue and conflict. In place of planning, it manages disruption. It assesses the compatibility of agents entering the social game in place of mediating conflicting political interests and projects. And it employs the rhetoric of systemic complexity in place of a rhetoric of historical dialectics.

Looking for Autonomy

As the governance model functions perfectly, in itself, it destroys the social body. Conceptualizing the field of cybernetics, Norbert Wiener argued that a system exhibiting positive feedback, in response to perturbation, increases the magnitude of perturbation. In contrast, a system that responds to a perturbation in a way that reduces its effect is said to exhibit negative feedback.

A logic of positive feedback is installed in the connection between digital technology and financial economy, because this connection tends to induce technological automatisms, and psycho-automatisms too, leading to the advancement of destructive tendencies. Look at the discourse of the European political class (almost without exception): If deregulation produced the systemic collapse with which the global economy is now confronted, we need more deregulation. If lower taxation on high incomes led to a fall in demand, let's lower

high-income taxation. If hyper-exploitation resulted in the overproduction of unsold and useless cars, let's intensify car production.

Are these people insane? I don't think so. I think they are incapable of thinking in terms of the future; they are panicking, terrorized by their own impotence; they are scared. The modern bourgeoisie was a strongly territorialized class, linked to material assets; it could not exist without a relationship to territory and community. The financial class that dominates the contemporary scene has no attachment to either territory or material production, because its power and wealth are founded on the perfect abstraction of a digitally multiplied finance.

And this digital-financial hyper-abstraction is liquidating the living body of the planet, and the social body. Only the social force of the general intellect can reset the machine and initiate a paradigm shift, but this presupposes the autonomy of the general intellect, the social solidarity of cognitarians. It presupposes a process of autonomous subjectivation of collective intelligence.

1 See Christian Marazzi, "The Privatization of the General Intellect," trans. Nicolas Guilhot, http://destructural.files.wordpress.com/2010/10/christian-marazzi-the-privatization-of-the-general-intellect.pdf.

2 Jaron Lanier, *You Are Not A Gadget* (New York: Random House, 2010), 97.

Antke Engel

Desire for/within Economic Transformation

With *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It)* (1996) J. K. Gibson-Graham won the hearts of many socialist, post-socialist, and queer-feminist readers.[1] The book's main argument is that new possibilities for economic transformation will arise once we no longer understand capitalism as a monolithic entity or as covering the whole range of existing economic practices. The argument is taken up again in the more recent book *A Postcapitalist Politics*: "As we begin to conceptualize contingent relationships where invariant logics once reigned, the economy loses its character as an asocial body in lawful motion and instead becomes a space of recognition and negotiation."[2] Gibson-Graham work systematically to establish the conditions for thinking through economy by other means, for developing *other* economies. In order to do so they combine a Foucauldian approach that focuses on self-technologies as a means of reproducing and/or transforming power relations and modes of governance, with "a counter-hegemonic project of constructing 'other' economies."[3]

Three elements are decisive for what they call "a politics of possibilities"; the three elements are thoroughly intertwined, and yet each may also become a point of entry for far-reaching, even global processes of transformation. First of all, they propose developing new forms of thinking, and, accordingly, a new economic language. They present this as working on the level of the political imaginary to invent a language of economic difference:

> A capitalocentric discourse condenses economic difference, fusing the variety of noncapitalist economic activities into a unity in which meaning is anchored to capitalist identity. Our language politics is aimed at fostering conditions under

> which images and enactments of economic diversity . . . might stop circulating around capitalism, stop being evaluated with respect to capitalism, and stop being seen as deviant or exotic or excentric—departures from the norm.[4]

Second, Gibson-Graham articulate "self-cultivation" as a means of encouraging forms of subjectivity that would be open to trying new economic practices: "If we want other worlds and other economies, how do we make ourselves a condition of possibility for their emergence?"[5] Consequently, the third element is "the collaborative pursuit of economic experimentation."[6]

This combination of anticipatory imagination, language politics, and everyday practices incites a means of imagining and enacting a postcapitalist politics. It constitutes space for a heterogeneity of economic practices, which do not take the logic of capital and maximizing profit for granted, and does not present them as inescapable. Collective practices, community economy, and the lately popular notion of the commons are central to Gibson-Graham's reflections on—and social experiences of—developing economic alternatives. Yet they conspicuously insist on aiming for socioeconomic and political practices that resist an ideal of sameness or homogeneity. Instead, they understand community as a form of Jean-Luc Nancy's "being-in-common":

> In constructing a discourse and practice of the community economy, what if we were to resist the pull of the *sameness* or *commonness* of economic being and instead focus on a notion of economic *being-in-common*? That is, rather than thinking in terms of the common properties of an ideal economic organization or an ideal

community economy, we might think of the being-in-common of economic subjects and of all possible and potential economic forms.[7]

Practices of being-in-common create space for difference, for a potentially conflictual heterogeneity defined by complex interdependencies. A notion of the social, which encounters freedom in relationality, is theoretically indebted to Louis Althusser's concept of overdetermination. Explaining the use of this concept in detail in *The End of Capitalism*, Gibson-Graham explain that building an understanding of society on the thesis of overdetermination means that everything is seen as effected and effecting—any cause must necessarily also be an effect at the same time. The authors underline that this leads to a complex dynamic in which power relations cannot be isolated from one another, with no all-encompassing "truth" with which to effectively distinguish them. Any image of society depends on the perspective one takes, and the perspective one takes influences what one sees. Thus, academic as well as political practice, research, socioeconomic experimentation, or cultural and artistic work gain from a historically contextualized analysis that does not pretend to discover a single truth or present a universal solution.[8]

Overdetermination is a tool for extending models of centralized power—whether an economistic view on capitalism or an androcentric view on patriarchy. Accordingly, for Gibson-Graham the project of diverse economies is always already and inherently intertwined with working, reworking, and transforming multiple relations of power and domination, including racist, sexist, and heteronormative regimes. Furthermore, they even insist that, "successful political innovation . . . requires an entirely new relation to power. It will need to escape

power, go beyond it, obliterate it, transform it."[9] Although they refer explicitly to Michel Foucault, they somehow undermine his all-encompassing notion of power by reactivating the notion of liberation. Via theories of hegemony, a Marxist heritage finds its way into their thinking. Here they refer to Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, who insist that power relations are not simply given, but only exist when being politically articulated and consensually agreed upon by a wide range of people.[10] Thus the unchallenged monopoly of capitalism only exists as long as people agree to take its supposedly inescapable power for granted. However, to counter the phantasmatic whole of capitalism does not necessarily mean to present a singular alternative, but to engage in ongoing struggles over recognition and resources, over truth defined by contingency:

> If politics is a process of transformation instituted by taking decisions on an ultimately undecidable terrain, a politics of possibility rests on an enlarged space of decision and a vision that the world is not governed by some abstract commanding force or global sovereignty. This does not preclude sedimentations of practice that have an aura of durability and the look of "structures," or routinized rhythms that have an appearance of reliability and the feel of "reproductive dynamics." It is, rather, to question the claims of truth and universality that accompany any ontological rigidity and to render these claims projects for empirical investigation and theoretical re-visioning. Our practice of thinking widens the scope of possibility by opening up each observed relationship to examination for its contingencies and each theoretical analysis for its inherent vulnerability and act of commitment.[11]

Alekos Hofstetter, *Slump*, Gouache on paper mounted on wood, 80 x 103 cm, 2002. Courtesy of the artist.

The Desire for Queering Capitalism

Giving up on notions of universality, truth, and rigid identities is sometimes referred to as a practice of "queering," connected to the notion of desire. However, queering and desire are never explicitly linked. Queer theory is presented as a politics of language and a technique of rereading rather than of taking part in the "process of 'resubjectivation'—the mobilization and transformation of desires, the cultivation of capacities, and the making of new identifications."[12] "Queering" comes up in the context of "reading for difference rather than dominance," a practice that Gibson-Graham present as a tool "to queer economy."[13] Desire, however, appears as a promising force in all three fields of practice previously mentioned: it enables imagining things otherwise, as well as "economic experimentation" and the engagement in "new technologies of the self."[14] Yet even though the concept of desire continuously escorts the reader through the text, and is central to Gibson-Graham's understanding of transformative processes, the concept remains surprisingly vague and under-theorized. Thus the question of how queering and desire converge remains an open one. Does desire automatically produce queerness or processes of queering? Should we consider some special kind of queer desire and, if so, would such a desire also then queer economy? Or would Gibson-Graham suggest that the queering of desire and the queering of economy are mutually constitutive and mutually dependent?

It is hard to argue that desire is queer in and of itself, that there is something ontologically queer in desire. Much critique has been developed from queer-feminist perspectives showing how phallocentric and heteronormative desires contribute to installing hierarchies and inequalities, even

grounding violent practices—a critique elaborated upon in detail by Gibson-Graham when they deconstruct the image of capitalist economy as an impenetrable body.[15] I would therefore insist that there is no queering of economy without a queering of desire. What I would like to explore in the following concerns whether some kind of queering of desire has already taken place or is at work implicitly in Gibson-Graham's approach. This will allow me to ask a second question: what is the role of desire in constituting new forms of community, society, and global social relations that function according to a logic of being-in-common rather than commonness per se?

I ask these questions against the backdrop of queer theory in general, and in particular of having co-organized a conference on economy and sexuality. Heteronormativity and desire are categories central to queer theory. The former provides an analytical tool used to explain how heterosexuality and the rigid binary distinction of gender become naturalized and reproduced as social norms. As such, they regulate subjectivities, social relationships, and institutions, and install hierarchies.[16] The latter, desire, provides for re-articulations of heteronormativity, opening up an anticipatory and transformative dimension. Feminist and queer approaches to desire not only challenge the heterosexual norm and the premise of binary gender difference, but also point to the sociopolitical productivity of desire.[17] Against this backdrop, "Desiring Just Economies / Just Economies of Desire," an international conference to be held in Berlin in June 2010, seeks to explore how desire not only sustains current economies, but also carries the potential for inciting new forms of understanding and "doing" economy.[18] The organizers propose to focus on the notion of desire

as a tool to explore the sexual dimension of economy as much as the economic dimension of sexuality. To what extent can the pursuit of economic and sexual justice be made to coincide when economy is queered by desire? J. K. Gibson-Graham are major sources and inspirations for this conference, which is, as is this article, an attempt to connect with their project of thinking against "the view that anything new would not work."[19]

For Gibson-Graham, the concept of desire is not sexualized. Although they analyze how sexual imagery and imagination organize economic discourse and practice, desire is invoked mainly with more general connotations of wishing, longing, or striving. It is sometimes associated with pleasure, libidinal investment, or seduction, but more often manifests as a desire for "noncapitalism" or a desire to be part of a community economy.[20] What particularly interests me about their concept of desire concerns its—paradoxical—presentation as a primarily conservative force that keeps people in their place and impedes the emergence of daring new forms of being or acting, while simultaneously also carrying the potential of inciting "an interest in unpredictability, contingency, experimentation, or even an attachment to the limit of understanding and the possibilities of escape."[21] This paradox—when played out as a productive tension—holds the promise of linking Foucault's insights into desire as a product of historical power/knowledge with a Deleuzoguattarian understanding of desire as movement and becoming.[22] As such, I would argue that desire allows the envisioning and enacting of a "politics of possibility" while acknowledging the normative or violent conditions of the present. However, this openness to paradox is sometimes countered by another tendency, of installing a

clear-cut distinction between repression and liberation, one that leads to a promise of liberating desire from being "stalemated in a fixation."[23] I find this rather problematic, however, because it suggests a space where neither power relations nor conflict nor violence need to be dealt with.

It therefore seems most important to emphasize those moments in Gibson-Graham that underline the necessity of dealing with and socially organizing "negotiation, struggle, uncertainty, ambivalence, disappointment" rather than solely focusing on "friendliness, trust, conviviality, and companionable connection."[24] Even as I introduce this insistence on thinking of transformation as a power struggle—although a pleasurable one—I would still like to point out the promising potential of Gibson-Graham's proposal of understanding desire and economy as inherently intertwined and mutually constitutive. It is this conceptual move that connects the politics of language, the politics of the subject, and the politics of collective action, allowing for new political imaginaries to develop practical effects:

> A language of economic difference has the potential to offer new subject positions and prompt novel identifications, multiplying economic energies and desires. But the realization of this potential is by no means automatic. Capitalism is not just an economic signifier that can be displaced through deconstruction and the proliferation of signs. Rather, it is where the libidinal investment is.[25]

If capitalism is the place of libidinal investment, then it is obvious that political challenges to capitalism likewise need to work on libidinal investment

and search for new forms of identification and desire—and this is exactly what Gibson-Graham are doing when they call for resubjectivation, devoting a full chapter to "Cultivating subjects for a community economy."

Cultivating the Postcapitalist Self

With their project of cultivating a postcapitalist self ready to live togetherness as interdependency rather than commonality, while still acknowledging the ethics of connection, Gibson-Graham rely on a Lacanian version of psychoanalysis and its critique of the autonomous, rational subject. For Gibson-Graham the "Lacanian subject of lack" defined by the impossibility of identity guarantees an empty structural space that invites "a politics of becoming" or "the possibility of politics itself."[26] However, Lacan's (masculinized) subject of lack is nevertheless hopelessly caught in a longing for identity and a fantasy of coherence, therefore projecting an unfixed and incomplete identity onto femininity. Although for Gibson-Graham this inspires the powerful gesture of naming the subject of politics "she," they are unfortunately also limited by a Lacanian notion of desire, defined by its covering up of lack, and for that matter constituting complementary gender identifications. While Gibson-Graham do not reflect upon the latter, the former brings them to assign a significant role to that of the analyst:

> From a Lacanian perspective, the role of the analyst is to interpret the analysand's project of shoring up her fantasies, which lock her into fixed structures of desire and identity. An interruption by the analyst can provoke the analysand's curiosity and begin the exploration

that unravels fantasy and reveals it for what it is.[27]

While I am quite sympathetic to the idea of working with the potential of curiosity and explorative practices, I remain skeptical with regard to the authoritative or pedagogical power relation introduced through the figure of the analyst. Would we like to install this as the exemplary relationship for transforming subjectivity? Would we like to build our understanding of society on this kind of relationship? These are vital questions, since Gibson-Graham indeed see the role of the analyst in their own position in "action research processes" that aim at inciting communal economy building. What in the beginning of the book sounds like a refreshing means of doing politics becomes suspect when presented in the hierarchical context of a research setting in which social scientists activate the deprived inhabitants of a de-industrialized region and stimulate them to overcome their resistance to change: "Our repertory of tactics might include seducing, cajoling, enrolling, enticing, inviting."[28] As in advertising, desire is seen as an individual longing for phantasmatic fulfillment capable of seducing people into doing what one wishes.

Insofar as the process avoids suppression and rather encourages the individuals' curiosity, capacities, and activity, it can be understood as a form of late modern Foucauldian governmentality —a way of linking subjectivation and rule in such a way that people submit out of free will. The role Antonio Gramsci envisioned for the "organic intellectual" is similar, as educating the people to become active contributors to a counter-hegemonic struggle aiming for new hegemonic consensus. And this brings us to the crux of the matter:

does Gibson-Graham's project of diverse economies and non-normative subjectivities, while providing space for heterogeneity and contingency, legitimize "seducing" people into their well-being? Precisely what form of redistribution secures the joy of the "pastor" who finds the non-believers, the resistant ones, finally "enlightened" by submitting to the truth of communal being-in-common?[29]

I see two problems here in Gibson-Graham's attempts to cultivate subjects of communal economies. One is that they lose sight of their declared aim to think in terms of complex interdependencies, which would necessarily demand analyzing the politics of subjects as not only constitutive of new economic relations, but also of existing late modern, neoliberal discourses and power relations that promote self-responsibility, team-building, and independence from state support. The focus of attention falls on the development of a self that is engaged in community enterprises, is poor-but-happy, and functions as a self-activated, positive thinking being who forsakes global perspectives of social justice or the damnation of capitalism, but creates alternative economies posing no threat to profit-oriented structures. However, the absence of doubt with regard to whether this self fits all too well into the creation of a divided world of non-profit survival and capitalocentric rule, remains questionable.

The other problem that results from stabilizing established power relations lies in a delight over difference that neglects the difference of conflict, contradiction, competition, privilege, or antagonistic political views or interests. Energies for building community economies are understood to be fruitful when there is "no militant advocacy, no talk of struggle against a despised capitalism."[30] Furthermore, conflicts internal to being-in-common, but which

jeopardize togetherness, are presented as a result of the "psychic difficulties of relinquishing established economic identities," which can be overcome once a new perspective is achieved whereby one is open "to the humanity of others, to the possibility of being other than she was, to participating with those most different from herself (in her own antagonistic worldview) in constructing a community economy."[31]

Both problems, I would like to argue, are due to an unresolved and excessively harmonious relation between identification and desire. Here it would be interesting to turn to Judith Butler's latest consideration of desire. In *Undoing Gender* (2004), she presents a re-reading of Lacan in which she insists that desire is not "the desire of the Other"—as Lacan suggests to undermine the illusion of the self-contained subject—but rather constituting "the Other of the Other" that becomes relevant in desiring relation.[32] One has to take into account that the Other is shifting between the social or concrete Other, my fantasy of the Other, and the Other as an "ek-static self" who is not in control of her/himself, occupying all these positions simultaneously, yet never fully. Accordingly, identification finds multiple entrance points, and desire and identification may combine in various, even contradictory ways. This clearly subverts a heteronormative understanding that considers desire and identification to be mutually exclusive—I am not to desire who I identify with, and I am not to identify with who I desire. Whereas Butler's notion of desire thoroughly complicates processes of identification, which can no longer rely on clearly defined positions of subject and object, Gibson-Graham's process of cultivating a postcapitalist self in the end reconciles identification and desire. Even though they insist on the impossibility of fixing identity, their aim is to develop desires for community

economies embodied by subjects who identify as being connected to others. Interdependency is not always taken as granted, but is the result of an arduous process, which captures and contains the Other of the Other in the very act of providing space for it. For Gibson-Graham the point is not to incite a never-ending process of dynamic tensions between identification and desire, desires prompting or subverting identifications, identifications inciting or stabilizing desires; rather, there is only one of these directions present and valued: that is, desires effecting identifications with communal economies.

Gibson-Graham's argument carries a built-in opposition between the discursive constitution of the subject and its limits, namely its embodied affectivity, showing itself by the fact that "the body has a 'mind' of its own, that there might be resistance to new identities, attachments to old ones, unconscious refusals to change, fears of symbolization."[33] They present this as a distinction between the "emptiness of the subject" and the "fullness of embodiment." Yet why would the emptiness of the subject "that is the ultimate ground for our ability to change" stand in opposition to the "fullness beyond the level of conscious feeling and thought"? My impression is that the search for transformative potentials is too much directed towards the unconscious, habitual, sensational, embodied dimensions of a new postcapitalist self. Transformative perspectives are bound to the idea of emancipating the subject from the ego, rather than starting from a self that is "from the start, given over to the other" and the social relations developing from there.[34] Queer theory proposes to understand desire as not solely a category of subjectivity, of sexual practices or intimate relations, but as productive in and of the social—which includes macropolitical processes

and institutions.[35] It problematizes the understanding of desire as lack, because it produces the (phantasmatic) object that promises satisfaction as well as the subject longing to appropriate and control the object.[36] Instead of seeing desire as something inherent to a *subject* and directed towards an *object*, it is conceptualized as a process or movement, productive in the sense that it constitutes and designs social relationships and relations. In this sense Elspeth Probyn suggests to understand desire as moving through images on the surface of the social—drawing connections and forming assemblages, either according to well-known patterns of identity, difference, and their hierarchized power relations, or through images that confuse or disrupt established normalities and invoke surprising assemblages. Referring to Deleuze and Guattari's consideration of desire and power, she distinguishes between de-territorializing and re-territorializing processes. Yet, while she presents desire as a deterritorializing force, she also agrees with Foucault, who sees desire as constituted by sociohistorical power relations, and thus as potentially compliant with reterritorializations.[37]

Since Probyn acknowledges desire's inherent ambiguity, her notion of it seems to fit well with Gibson-Graham's double vision of desire as a conservative as well as a transformative force:

> At any point in the history-making process, an individual is caught up in two places, experiencing the dissatisfactions and disappointments of what they know and habitually desire and the satisfactions and surprises of what is new, but hard to fully recognize and want.[38]

Yet taking into account Probyn's proposal to understand desire as a social-surface energy also invites the question of how this ambiguity or paradoxical tension can structure socioeconomic or, for that matter, sociosexual surfaces, and which images function as "means of transportation" in these processes.[39] This would indeed go well alongside Gibson-Graham's language politics and search for a new political imaginary. Rather than being captured by the need to translate such ambiguity into a story of liberation and progress, Gibson-Graham would gain space for collective practices moving in images that disrupt harmonious linkages of identification and desire. According to Probyn, desire may provide me with belonging—yet not because it comes from somewhere, but because it is going somewhere. This is also what Teresa de Lauretis invokes when she speaks of desire taking place in fantasy scenarios, where each of the protagonists is simultaneously subject, object, and beholder of the scene. In De Lauretis' account, it is not only desire that turns social, but also fantasy. Far from being an individualized psychic capacity, fantasy is made up of historically shaped, publicly available, and biographically gained imagery—effecting identification as plausibly as repulsion, alienation, or self-alienation.[40]

Drawing on this corpus of queer-feminist theory, it is possible to extend Gibson-Graham's politics of the making and remaking of an imaginary in a way that also revises their Lacanian understanding of fantasy. In correlation with their notion of desire, they define fantasy as "the mode of integration of the subject into the symbolic order and the anchor of identification."[41] Here fantasy remains bound to "wholeness" and functions as a "conservative" force submitting the subject to the symbolic

order, and as such counteracts curiosity, experimentation, and desubjectivation. If we consider instead how Teresa de Lauretis and Judith Butler—who both refer to Laplanche and Pontalis' considerations of the simultaneous origin of fantasy and sexuality—deploy the subject, fantasy becomes a process of negotiation between public and personal imagery.[42] As such, it is thoroughly intertwine with sociohistorical power relations. Yet it's also a resource in social and often semi-private subcultural practices that allows us to imagine ourselves and others otherwise, not bound to the heteronormative ideals of coherence and complementarity but, maybe, involved in fantasy scenarios, where th desiring encounters of various Others of the Other take place. Fantasies, seen as images drawing connections on social surfaces, are not chimeras but means of collective transformation.

"All this adds up to a willingness to become communal subjects, to accept their incompleteness, interdependence, and connection across differences of age, race, sexuality, body type, financial need, and social status."[43] Gibson-Graham clearly mark this as a "fantasy," a fantasy of "becoming community," a fantasy built upon the promise that differences might no longer constitute conflict, competition, or violence, a fantasy of "a class relationship understood from the reparative perspective of potential and connection, rather than separateness, rip off, and alienation." Yet the question remains whether we might also need fantasies of togetherness and being-in-common defined by competition, conflict, and violence—fantasies of negotiating the precarious thresholds between power, abuse of power, and violence, and the complex overdetermination of structural and symbolic inequalities, and of transformative agency.

For Julie Graham, who left much too early.

1
J. K. Gibson-Graham, *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996).

2
J. K. Gibson-Graham, *A Postcapitalist Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xxx.

3
Ibid., 79.

4
Ibid., 56.

5
Ibid., 7.

6
Ibid., xxiii.

7
Ibid., 85, 86.

8
See Gibson-Graham, *The End of Capitalism*, 27ff.

9
Gibson-Graham, *A Postcapitalist Politics*, 6.

10
Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, trans. Winston Moore and Paul Cammack (London: Verso, 1985).

11
Gibson-Graham, *A Postcapitalist Politics*, xxxiii.

12
Ibid., xxxvi.

13
Ibid., xxxi, xxxii.

14
Ibid., xxi, xxviii.

15
See Gibson-Graham, *The End of Capitalism*, 120ff.

16
See Samuel Chambers and Terrell Carver, *Judith Butler and Political Theory: Troubling Politics* (London: Routledge, 2008).

17
See Antke Engel, "Traveling Images: Desire as Movement; Desire as Method," in *Out Here: Local and International Perspectives in Queer Studies*, ed. Tomasz Basiuk, Dominika Ferens, and Tomasz Sikora (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006), 13–24.

18
See http://www.desiring-just-economies.de/. The conference organizers are Nikita Dhawan, Antke Engel, Christoph Holzhey, and Volker Woltersdorff.

19
Gibson-Graham, *A Postcapitalist Politics*, 3.

20
Ibid., 20, xxxv, 6, xxxvi, 132.

21
Ibid., xxiii, 13, 129, 7.

22
Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon et al. (New York: Pantheon, 1980); Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia 1* [1972], trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (London and New York: Continuum, 2004).

23
Gibson-Graham, *A Postcapitalist Politics*, 13.

24
Ibid., 99 and 6.

25
Ibid., xxxv.

26
Ibid., xxxiii.

27
Ibid., 129.

28
Ibid., 6. For reflection on the action research process see 127ff.

29
Ibid., 154–155.

30
Ibid., 160.

31
Ibid., 138, 155.

32
See Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 131–151.

33
This and the following quotations: Gibson-Graham, *A Postcapitalist Politics*, 128.

34
Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2006), 31.

35
See Teresa de Lauretis, *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), and Elspeth Probyn, *Outside Belongings* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

36
See Elizabeth Grosz, "Refiguring Lesbian Desire," in *The Lesbian Postmodern*, ed. Laura Doan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 67–84.

37
See notes 35 and 17.

38
See Gibson-Graham, *A Postcapitalist Politics*, 162.

39
I undertook such a project in Antke Engel, Bilder von Sexualität und Ökonomie (Bielefeld: transcript, 2009), where I read artistic and media imagery of gender ambiguities and dissident sexualities, examining how queer and neoliberal cultural politics intersect.

40
See Teresa de Lauretis, *The Practice of Love*, xix.

41
Gibson-Graham, *A Postcapitalist Politics*, 129.

42
Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, "Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality," in *Formations of Fantasy*, ed. Victor Burgin, James Donald, and Cora Kaplan (London: Methuen, 1986), 5–34.

43
This quote and the following: Gibson-Graham, *A Postcapitalist Politics*, 16.

Precarious Workers Brigade

Fragments Toward an Understanding of a Week that Changed Everything...

The week of November 10, characterized now by the dramatic occupation of Millbank and described as "the event of the generation of debt, precarity, and unemployment," brought 50,000 people into the streets of London.[1] Entering the halls of Britain's Conservative Party headquarters, many of us found ourselves overwhelmed by a movement we did not know existed. Formerly tucked in the folds of student unions, further education colleges, local councils, trade unions, and classrooms, a mobilization that seemed almost unthinkable only the week before materialized before our eyes. At once beautiful and perplexing for many of us involved in the formerly benign feeling of London's cultural scene, was to see how quickly so many of us—artists, lecturers, students of fashion, design, music, and theatre—shed years of a neoliberal lockdown on the arts to re-conjugate ourselves as active political agents.

What can only be described as an ideological attack on the poor, on arts and humanities—on critical thought and production and on what little remains of the British welfare state—threw Britain into a state of crisis. In response, we demanded free education for all, for cultural assets to be managed through democratic processes, for decisions about the future of culture and education to stay out of the hands of non-elected "advisors" (such as Lord Browne, former Chief Executive of British Petroleum and current Chair of Trustees of the Tate Gallery). We also shouted that our resistance to the current cuts is *not* a call for the restoration of New Labour's public-private confusion, but something else: the articulation of a cultural and political commons. Finally, we demanded an end to police violence and showed solidarity with those who have been arrested, and against those who have suspended our right to be in the streets.

In the frenzied chronicling of this autumn of discontent, and of a movement with no end in sight, it is impossible to analyze from outside, to make reviews or predictions about "them"—the students, artists, or activists. With the force of life that has moved us from art school to art school, from campus to campus, from meeting to meeting, those regimes of spectatorship, observation, and aesthetic judgment (in all their contemporary pseudo-critical wrappings) that felt so impenetrable before, suddenly seem anachronistic in the context here and now.

We therefore write our recount in fragments, moments, and movements from the multiplicity and power of these recent events that we do not yet know how to name. Names will surely come, but there is also tremendous happiness in the semioclasm of the early days and nights of a movement at its beginning.

National Day of Action, November 10, 2010, London UK. Photo: NC-SA. ®.

I. New Occupations...or Rehearsals for the Re-enchantment of Consequence

In the years preceding this moment, the common frustration of London's critical art agents had been directed towards the total *inefficacy* of sophisticated so-called "radical" debates and projects staged inside cultural and education institutions. Always remaining confined within a space of critique without *consequence*, we had watched and even participated in the instrumentalization of our work. We had observed those capacities of art we hold dear being converted to models of cultural dissociation, imported and exported to and from an international art arena.

Working in the context of such deeply problematic institutions, and being so deeply inscribed within them, without a movement, our struggles were often isolated, disjointed, and unheard. Our individual (and often inaudible) protests of non-participation, attempts at critical occupancy, telephone rants, and negative reviews often seemed as alienated as the subjects of our critiques.

These divisions performed themselves in early September when members of the political art collective *Chto Delat?* came to London as part of the ICA's "Season of Dissent." They invited artists and activists to spend forty-eight hours in residence, working on a learning play about the very subject of how to intervene in the landscape of instrumentalized political art. Some members of London's critical arts community refused to attend in protest against the ICA's mass layoffs, mismanagement, and interpellation of critical artists into seemingly disingenuous (and uncompensated) attempts at institutional rebuilding in recent years.

For those who did take part, the play and process asked us to perform this division, to place ourselves on the side of "Art" or "Activism." Though many felt this to be a reductive polarity, it was prescient in retrospect, as it demanded that we choose which political subject we imagined ourselves to be, what we were willing to risk, and what we desired. This made it a dress rehearsal for what was about to come: moments in which we would have to choose between going to work or going to the demonstration, between getting good grades or learning to collaborate, between supporting student demonstrators in the face of police attack or succumbing to vilifying media campaigns and university administrators who threatened punitive actions.

However, this rehearsal was small in comparison to the wave of art school and gallery occupations that took place in the weeks that followed, a few of which are outlined below in diary form.

November 24, 2010
University College London, Occupation of Jeremy Bentham Room.

At the heart of many of the London occupations, the daily performances, outdoor life drawing classes, and banners that draped the UCL courtyard formed a meeting place in London for students, artists, and teachers. A timeline of the mobilizations in the central hall charted the work that had been done to date. In the main room tables were assembled with the titles "media," "food," and "legal." Here, skills in dealing with legal issues, consensus decision-making, large-scale organization, and media liaising could be acquired. At a microphone in the front of the room, visitors from various social movements and student organizations announced themselves, expressed solidarity, and planned future actions.

December 2, 2010
Slade Student Occupation

Inspired by the success of UCL (just across the street), students at the Slade occupied a central room in the art college. After having anticipated a longer timeframe for participation, students were told that security on campus was to be increased, and quickly occupied a main building of the school.

December 6, 2010
Occupation Camberwell College of Art and Teach In: Turner Prize, Tate Britain

Students took the upper main room at Camberwell's Wilson St. building, staying throughout the Christmas holidays. Arts groups such as London's Radical Education Forum and Ultra-red presented workshops at Camberwell as part of an open program. Food and support were brought by local groups in solidarity.

Over two-hundred students and lecturers from Goldsmiths, the Slade, St Martin's, Camberwell, and other art and fashion colleges occupied Tate Britain during the live, televised presentations of the Turner Prize in a sit-in organized by the Arts Against Cuts Campaign. Corralled out of sight, away from official guests—the best and brightest of London's art world—the students and artists protested: "We are not just here to fight fees! We are here to fight philistinism!" The chanting could be heard on the live television broadcast, drowning out the presenters' words. Support was expressed by Turner Prize winners and some guests, with others treating the students' protest as a performance for their own edification, describing the disruption as "naïve."[2]

December 7, 2010
Goldsmiths Occupation and Royal College of Art Occupation

A coalition of students and lecturers occupied the university library at Goldsmiths in opposition to the cuts and subsequent increase in university fees. Opened as a center for organization, "available 24 hours a day to students and all those on the receiving end of the government's assault in the local South London Lewisham community," it was here that students made demands to the management at Goldsmiths, such as making a statement to oppose fees and refuse further cuts or staff redundancies at the university, and demanding that management defend all those from Goldsmiths arrested in protests and retract their threat to charge the Student Union £15,000 in response to the occupation of Deptford Town Hall.[3] The occupation flared many tensions between staff and student participants, between generations and styles of activism, and between political agents from different movements, but it was also an important site for planning and for bringing students together in collective action.

In the name of education for all, support for student demonstrators, and a statement demanding an end to the cuts, students at The Royal College of Art occupied parts of the College, including its gallery, along with thirty-seven other colleges and universities in the country. Their letter of demands also addressed the teaching and learning conditions at the college. They requested access to the gallery, which rents for £4,500 per day, higher teacher-student ratios, and financial aid.

December 9, 2010
Teach-in at the National Gallery

On the day of the parliamentary vote to increase student fees, many student protesters found themselves kettled for hours. Meanwhile, arts students and lecturers staged a teach-in at Room 43 of London's National Gallery. Their aim was to produce a manifesto for their portion of the education movement (read as a "nomadic hive") that promoted tactics of swarming, avoiding kettles, and coming together for strategic actions. Staying beyond the closing hour, and holding the space until the task was completed, over two hundred artists and cultural workers contributed to the manifesto. In preparation, teachers using names from the history of art, such as Frida Kahlo, gave performative lectures about works of art on display nearby, including Manet's *Execution of Emperor Maximilian of Mexico* (1868). While the manifesto was largely poetic, the task of coming together taught the group to make decisions, to better understand the potential of artists and the arts in a broader movement, and how to be in an institution on our own terms.

II. Reflection and Action: Long Weekends

Catalyzed by the excitement and organizing buzz of art departments and college occupations, two long weekends were arranged as opportunities for reflection, making, and planning. The first, December 5 and 6, 2010, was initiated by students at the Slade and hosted by the newly-formed Arts Against Cuts at Goldsmiths College. Its stated aim was to be "a furnace of creativity, a place to re-imagine resistance against the cuts [to] reclaim the public, critical space that universities and art schools should be." This weekend also sought to

> transform the buildings into a living laboratory, an art school for the future, which brings together art students, artists, cultural workers, and those fighting the cuts from across the UK to share in defiance against the relentless marketization of our education and our lives .... It's not important what art is but what it does, and right now it has the potential to turn the crisis of cuts into an opportunity for change.[4]

The two weekends, the December Long Weekend at Goldsmiths and, more recently, the Direct Weekend at Camberwell College of Art, were first and foremost forums that made use of spaces in universities and art colleges. They built upon and developed the proliferation of groups, discussions, and affinities generated across departments, in museums and galleries, along all levels in the school system. Actions such as the Book Block and the gallery occupations came directly out of the discussions during the first Long Weekend. Importantly, so did the beginnings of a shared analytic framework. Primary topics of discussion included questions of composition—class, education, skill—and the constant challenge of keeping a movement open and connected to different struggles. The language of movement—how to express opposition to the cuts without producing a nostalgic glorification of what existed before—was an ongoing debate. How could students support teachers in their protest for better wages while supporting each other in challenging the ways schools are run? We debated unions, how to defend a public sector from the multiple positions of cultural practitioners and educators, artists and freelancers, students and teachers—all of whom are precarious, part-time, and disaffiliated from institutions of public culture and education.

Beyond the slightly declamatory language of art manifestos, what emerged was a search for a collective time-space in which the critique of existing cultural and educational institutions could be articulated, but could also form the basis for learning and organizing towards concrete alternatives. Stemming from a shared sensitivity to practices of collective production and thought, experiments settled into the discomfort of finding forms that do not replicate the art world with its authorial and spectatorial regimes: the lecturers lecturing and the students studying; the artists making art while the rest of the world observes; the poster and the performance quickly crystallizing into an authored commodity.

The recognition of these often unspoken issues and tensions within critical cultural production around authority prompted a rapid process of self-education. Together students, teachers, and artists learned strategies of horizontal decision-making and facilitation—bearing the fruits of years of experiments and discussions around anti-authorial and autonomous forms of artistic action in the art world—we patiently nibbled away at habitual polarizations between art and politics.

Tensions and new skills were developed between different forms of organization—consensus versus voting, lectures versus group work—but also between the voices of teachers and students, between those with a lot of organizing experience and those with none at all. Teachers and students together found ways to move away from authoritative forms to act with hundreds of people, made plenaries, opened spaces, and learned to move from idea to action. These lessons were perhaps the most formative. Different from the spaces of the main student assemblies, these were zones of micropolitical learning.

III. Docile Bodies and Police Violence: The Pedagogy of the Kettle

We continued learning the organizational forms of a movement, albeit much more rapidly in the days of the protests and demonstrations. Beyond the ambiguous messages of the spectacularization of occupations and street demos—"making good TV"—the Millbank event marked for many of us the beginning of an embodied crash course in contemporary biopolitics. If critical cultural workers and art students had bathed for more than a decade in Foucauldian analysis and terminologies, now was the moment to wear the theory in practice, to feel it on the collective body of the movement, and on the individual bodies of its participants. The first kettle was unexpected for most, except for the few of us who had experienced the G8 demonstrations around the world in the early 2000s. Critical teachers had brought their students, freelance practitioners had invited friends and collaborators, and all found themselves immersed in a joyful swarm of fifteen- and sixteen-year-olds walking out in rage against the fee increases. At one point in the day, we were suddenly blocked, surrounded, and violently held for ten hours in freezing temperatures, with no explanation given, no dialogue possible, no water, no food, and no toilets. Agamben's state of exception suddenly translated from some seminar room debate to the here and now, in the shadow of the so-called democratic Houses of Parliament in central London.

The body in these moments became the meeting place for abstract notions of state violence, for various knowledges of performance art, agitprop, and situationism: gesture and voice surfaced and combined to bring about new levels of

awareness and understanding that was far more than skin-deep. "There is knowledge," as one demonstrator said, "and there is *knowledge*." We came to know differently in the kettle that the police exist to protect private property, and no matter how harmless and docile we are, they will contain us and shout at us, shove us around, and hold us still in uncomfortable positions. Our initial bewilderment and liberal rationalizations—"they'll let us free once they realize there's been a mistake"—became passive resignation and quickly grew into a pensive anger, whose embers are kept alive in recounting the stories to our bewildered and unsympathetic friends alike.

In all its painful and futile violence, the event of the kettle became, out of necessity, a space of political self-education for those among us who had inhabited a more detached version of cultural politics, of gentle dissent and civilized debate. These experiences contradicted the inculcated belief—certainly the by-product of the education we are so proud of—that state instruments of repression are only used against those who misbehave. Those of us who thought we had a "right" to peaceful protest were spectacularly reminded that this right had been bestowed upon us by a high authority that can withdraw it at will and with the least credible excuses, if any excuses were even to be bothered with at all. At the same time, we also relearned the performative dimensions of these rights and remembered that the making of a space of dissent is a composition of gestures, not a procedurally granted abstraction.

In being there, being kettled and breaking out of it, our bodies understood the dynamic relationship between *power over* and *power to*, the latter found in our actions together inside this space, in

our collective memory of physical oppression, the sharing of stories and reflections. In affinity groups, we rediscovered the importance of our critical and artistic education in giving us the tools to deconstruct and de-legitimize supposedly "legitimate" use of "reasonable force": to realize, narrate, and understand collectively that violence is structural and had always been there, and that violence has now simply revealed itself to a larger swathe of society who found themselves suddenly and quite unexpectedly on the frontline of a conflict for a right as basic as public education. Avoiding and breaking out of the kettle, we learned the value of free movement—that space is created through action, and that swarming the city in small groups of joyful spontaneous running is one with shouting "Whose streets? Our streets!" Situationism was no longer an art historical movement or a feeble attempt at re-enactment but a necessary practice.

As students and educators we also used the kettle to reflect on questions of politics and responsibility. And after the kettle we learned again. We learned about the images within and the images outside: the way the helicopter light shined down on us in the dark without really illuminating anything, the absurdity of police choreography, the hours of waiting in line to get out, of warming our hands by the fires fueled with burning placards—all of which were reduced to one image in the mainstream press. This reminded us of the power of spectacle, a practical training in media literacy that we will not forget.

IV. Some Questions to Take Forward

At the end of these intense weeks, we are left with affects and questions, with a fundamental intensification of collective ties, and a deep interrogation of

our existing, conflictual positions within and beyond the institutions we inhabit. We assess now how far we are willing to go.

Our sense of belonging is shifting and growing at the same time as our institutions are becoming increasingly hard to work within. How can collectivity be strengthened in the coming weeks and months? How can it not be overcome by legal and administrative controls in the reduced versions of the places where we work and go to school?

How can these recent events inform the micro-practices of groups, as a more sustainable mode of struggle that goes beyond the state of emergency status of these weeks? With these experiences in hand, how do we begin to set up the world we want to be in?

How do we maintain the momentum of event-togetherness-excitement in all of our practices? How do we make this the reality in which we live in at a more elongated pace?

How do we engage with the media? What are the other ways of increasing our numbers and moving public opinion into direct forms of action?

Regardless of how these questions are to be resolved, we are noticing how nice our bodies feel after these weeks, having been away from our routines and the computer, from the mute sites of our work. It becomes even clearer that this "work"—whether that of the teacher, student, or artist—is not all there is to fight for. The world we create will make that alienating rhetoric of "work" void, it will stop work from dividing us. Instead, our self-organization shows what pleasures lie in messing with the divisions of labor and life in the context of struggle. Occupations and demonstrations have been laboratories of such un-division, of joyful collaboration, of a conviviality that has something more

in mind than a career, the next job, a house, and a car. Up and down stairs, off to meetings in unfamiliar places, carrying cookies and teabags, exploring our vocal range, gazing at strangers, designing last-minute placards, turning lecture halls into spaces where life and learning finally overlap again, learning to perform in protest. A collective becoming is never based on a fixed identity, on a set plan, or on a few steps—it happens because our potentials resonate with our givens, because we enjoy and grow. We work to keep this resonant, growing, spreading, building, fun; that's the "work" we like. We'll stay with it: moving, sensing, fighting, dancing.

1
See http://www.edu-factory.org/wp/the-british-university-as-a-mill-bank-riot/.

2
See http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/laurie-penny/2010/12/turner-prize-art-young-future.

3
See http://goldsmithsinoccupation.wordpress.com/2010/12/07/goldsmiths-occupied/.

4
See http://artsagainstcuts.wordpress.com/2010/12/02/arts-against-cuts-the-long-weekend/.

Irit Rogoff

FREE

—Who wants to know?
—I want to know.

—What do you want to know?
—I don't know!

At some point last year I proposed within my institution, Goldsmiths, University of London, that we develop a free academy adjacent to our institution and call it "Goldsmiths Free." The reactions to this proposal, when not amused smirks at the apparently adolescent nature of the proposal, were largely either puzzled—"What would we get out of it? Why would we want to do it?"—or horrified—"How would it finance itself?" No one asked what might be taught or discussed within it and how that might differ from the intellectual work that is done within our conventional fee-charging, degree-giving, research-driven institution. And that of course was the point, that it would be different, not just in terms of redefining the point of entry into the structure (free of fees and previous qualifications) or the modus operandi of the work (not degree-based, unexamined, not subject to the state's mechanisms of monitoring and assessment), but also that the actual knowledge would be differently situated within it. And that is what I want to think about here, about the difference in the knowledge itself, its nature, its status, and its affect.

The kind of knowledge that interested me in this proposal to the university was one that was not framed by disciplinary and thematic orders, a knowledge that would instead be presented in relation to an urgent issue, and not an issue as defined by knowledge conventions, but by the pressures and struggles of contemporaneity. When knowledge is unframed, it is less grounded genealogically and

can navigate forwards rather than backwards. This kind of "unframed" knowledge obviously had a great deal to do with what I had acquired during my experiences in the art world, largely a set of permissions with regard to knowledge and a recognition of its performative faculties—that knowledge *does* rather than *is*. But the permissions I encountered in the art world came with their own set of limitations, a tendency to reduce the complex operations of speculation to either illustration or to a genre that would visually exemplify "study" or "research." Could there be, I wondered, another mode in which knowledge might be set free without having to perform such generic mannerisms, without becoming an aesthetic trope in the hands of curators hungry for the latest "turn"?

Heads will surely be shaken! The notion of "free" is currently so degraded in terms of the free market, the dubious proposals of the new "free" economy of the Internet, and the historically false promises of individual freedom, that it may be difficult to see what it might have to offer beyond all these hollow slogans. Nevertheless, the possibility of producing some interrogative proximity between "knowledge" and "free" seems both unavoidable and irresistible, particularly in view of the present struggles over the structures of education in Europe. The actual drive towards knowledge and therefore towards some form of expansion and transformation seems far more important than simply a discussion of the categories it operates within. In order to attempt such a transition I need to think about several relevant questions:

1. First and foremost, what is knowledge when it is "free"?

2. Whether there are sites, such as the spaces of art, in which knowledge might be more "free" than in others?

3. What are the institutional implications of housing knowledge that is "free"?

4. What are the economies of "free" that might prove an alternative to the market- and outcome-based and comparison-driven economies of institutionally structured knowledge at present?

Evidently, en route I need to think about the struggles over education, its alternative sitings, the types of emergent economies that might have some purchase on its rethinking, and, finally, how "education" might be perceived as an alternative organizational mode, not of information, of formal knowledges and their concomitant marketing, but as other forms of coming together not predetermined by outcomes but by directions. Here I have in mind some process of "knowledge singularization," which I will discuss further below.

Obviously it is not the romance of liberation that I have in mind here in relation to "free." Knowledge cannot be "liberated," it is endlessly embedded in long lines of transformations that link in inexplicable ways to produce new conjunctions. Nor do I have in mind the romance of "avant-garde" knowledge, with its oppositional modes of "innovation" as departure and breach. Nor am I particularly interested in what has been termed "interdisciplinarity," which, with its intimations of movement and "sharing" between disciplines, de facto leaves intact those membranes of division and logics of separation and containment. Nor, finally, and I say

this with some qualification, is my main aim here to undo the disciplinary and professional categories that have divided and isolated bodies of knowledge from one another in order to promote a heterogeneous field populated by "bodies" of knowledge akin to the marketing strategies that ensure choice and multiplicity and dignify the practices of epistemological segregation by producing endless new subcategories for inherited bodies of named and contained knowledge.

There is a vexed relation between freedom, individuality, and sovereignty that has a particular relevance for the arena being discussed here, as knowledge and education have a foothold both in processes of individuation and in processes of socialization. Hannah Arendt expressed this succinctly when she warned that

> Politically, this identification of freedom with sovereignty is perhaps the most pernicious and dangerous consequence of the philosophical equation of freedom and free will. For it leads either to a denial of human freedom—namely, if it is realized that whatever men may be, they are never sovereign—or to the insight that the freedom of one man, or a group, or a body politic, can only be purchased at the price of the freedom, i.e. the sovereignty, of all others. Within the conceptual framework of traditional philosophy, it is indeed very difficult to understand how freedom and non-sovereignty can exist together or, to put it another way, how freedom could have been given to men under the conditions of non-sovereignty.[1]

And in the final analysis it is my interest to get around both concepts, freedom and sovereignty, through the operations of "singularization." Perhaps

it is knowledge de-individuated, de-radicalized in the conventional sense of the radical as breach, and yet operating within the circuits of singularity—of "the new relational mode of the subject"—that is preoccupying me in this instance.

And so, the task at hand seems to me to be not one of liberation from confinement, but rather one of *undoing the very possibilities of containment*.

While an unbounded circulation of capital, goods, information, hegemonic alliances, populist fears, newly globalized uniform standards of excellence, and so forth, are some of the hallmarks of the late neoliberal phase of capitalism, we nevertheless can not simply equate every form of the unbounded and judge them all as equally insidious. "Free" in relation to knowledge, it seems to me, has its power less in its expansion than in an ultimately centripetal movement, less in a process of penetrating and colonizing everywhere and everything in the relentless mode of capital, than in reaching unexpected entities and then drawing them back, mapping them onto the field of perception.

STRUGGLES

In spring and autumn of 2009 a series of prolonged strikes erupted across Austria and Germany, the two European countries whose indigenous education systems have been hardest hit by the reorganization of the Bologna Accord; smaller strikes also took place in France, Italy, and Belgium.[2] At the center of the students' protests were the massive cuts in education budgets across the board and the revision of state budgets within the current economic climate, which made youth and the working class bear the burden of support for failing financial institutions.

The strikes were unified by common stands on three issues:

1. against fees for higher education

2. against the increasing limitation of access to selection in higher education

3. for re-democratization of the universities and re-inclusion of students in decision-making processes

Not only were these the largest and most organized strikes to have been held by school and university students since the 1980s, but they also included teachers, whose pay had been reduced and whose working hours had been extended, which, after considerable pressure from below, eventually moved the trade unions to take a position.

The concerns here were largely structural and procedural, and considering all that is at stake in these reorganizations of the education system, it is difficult to know what to privilege in our concern: the reformulation of institutions into regimented factories for packaged knowledge that can easily be placed within the marketplace; the processes of knowledge acquisition that are reduced to the management of formulaic outcomes that are comparable across cultures and contexts; "training" replacing "speculating"; the dictation of such shifts from above and without any substantive consultation or debate. All of these are significant steps away from criticality in spaces of education and towards the goal that all knowledge have immediate, transparent, predictable, and pragmatic application.

The long, substantive lines that connect these struggles to their predecessors over the past forty

years or so, and which constitute "education" as both an ongoing political platform and the heart of many radical artistic practices, are extremely well articulated in a conversation between Marion von Osten and Eva Egermann, in which von Osten says of her projects such as "reformpause":

> Firstly, I tried to create a space to pause, to hold on for a moment, to take a breath and to think—to think about what kinds of change might be possible; about how and what we might wish to learn; and why that which we wished to learn might be needed. I guess, in this way, both Manoa Free University and "reformpause" shared similar goals—not simply to critique the ongoing educational reforms and thereby legitimize established structures, but rather to actively engage in thinking about alternate concepts and possible change.
>
> Secondly, there is a long history of student struggles and the question arises as to whether or not these are still relevant today and, if they are, how and why? The recent student struggles did not simply originate with the Bologna Declaration. The genealogy of various school and university protests and struggles over the past forty years demonstrates that we live in an era of educational reforms which, since the 1960s, have led to the construction of a new political subjectivity, the "knowledge worker." This is not just a phenomenon of the new millennium; furthermore, many artistic practices from the 1960s and 1970s relate to this re-ordering of knowledge within Western societies. This is one of the many reasons why we so readily relate to these practices, as exemplified by conceptualism and the various ways in which conceptual artists engaged with

contemporary changes in the concepts of information and communication.[3]

All of this identifies hugely problematic and very urgent issues, but we cannot lose sight of the status of actual knowledge formations within these. When knowledge is not geared towards "production," it has the possibility of posing questions that combine the known and the imagined, the analytical and the experiential, and which keep stretching the terrain of knowledge so that it is always just beyond the border of what can be conceptualized.

These are questions in which the conditions of knowledge are always internal to the concepts it is entertaining, not as a context but as a limit to be tested. The entire critical epistemology developed by Foucault and by Derrida rested on questions that always contain a perception of their own impossibility, a consciousness of thinking as a process of unthinking something that is fully aware of its own status. The structural, the techniques, and the apparatuses, could never be separated from the critical interrogation of concepts. As Giorgio Agamben says of Foucault's concept of the apparatus:

> The proximity of this term to the theological *dispositio*, as well as to Foucault's apparatuses, is evident. What is common to all these terms is that they refer back to this *oikonomia*, that is, to a set of practices, bodies of knowledge, measures, and institutions that aim to manage, govern, control, and orient—in a way that purports to be useful—the behaviors, gestures, and thoughts of human beings.[4]

So the struggle facing education is precisely that of separating thought from its structures, a struggle

constantly informed by tensions between thought management and subjectification—the frictions by which we turn ourselves into subjects. As Foucault argued, this is the difference between the production of subjects in "power/knowledge" and those processes of self-formation in which the person is active. It would seem then that the struggle in education arises from tensions between conscious inscription into processes of self-formation and what Foucault, speaking of his concerns with scientific classification, articulated as the subsequent and necessary "insurrection of subjugated knowledges," in which constant new voices appear claiming themselves not as "identities," but as *events* within knowledge.[5] The argument that Isabelle Stengers makes about her own political formation has convinced me that this is a productive direction to follow in trying to map out knowledge as struggle:

> My own intellectual and political life has been marked by what I learned from the appearance of drugs users' groups claiming that they were "citizens like everyone else," and fighting against laws that were officially meant to "protect" them. The efficacy of this new collective voice, relegating to the past what had been the authorized, consensual expertise legitimating the "war on drugs," convinced me that such events were "political events" par excellence, producing—as, I discovered afterwards, Dewey had already emphasized—both new political struggle and new important knowledge. I even proposed that what we call democracy could be evaluated by its relation to those disrupting collective productions. A "true" democracy would demand the acceptance of the ongoing challenge of such

disruptions—would not only accept them but also acknowledge those events as something it depended upon.[6]

Knowledge as disruption, knowledge as counter-subjugation, knowledge as constant exhortation to its own, often uncomfortable implications, are at the heart of "struggle." The battle over education as we are experiencing it now does not find its origin in the desire to suppress these but rather in efforts to regulate them so that they work in tandem with the economies of cognitive capitalism.

ECONOMIES

The economies of the world of knowledge have shifted quite dramatically over the past ten to fifteen years. What had been a fairly simple subsidy model, with states covering the basic expenses of teaching, subsidizing home schooling on a per capita basis (along with private entities incorporated in "not -for-profit" structures); research councils and foundations covering the support of research in the humanities and pure sciences; and industry supporting applied research, has changed quite dramatically, as have the traditional outlets for such knowledge: scholarly journals and books, exhibitions, science-based industry, the military, and public services such as agriculture and food production. Knowledge, at present, is not only enjoined to be "transferable" (to move easily between paradigms so that its potential impact will be transparent from the outset) and to invent new and ever expanding outlets for itself, it must also contend with the prevalent belief that it should be obliged not only to seek out alternative sources of funding but actually to produce these. By producing the need for a particular type of knowledge one is also setting up

the means of its excavation or invention—this is therefore a "need-based" culture of knowledge that produces the support and the market through itself.

So, when I speak of a "free" academy, the question has to be posed: if it is to meet all the above requirements, namely, that it not be fee-charging, not produce applied research, not function within given fields of expertise, and not consider itself in terms of applied "outcomes," how *would* it be funded?

In terms of the Internet, the economic model of "free" that has emerged over the past decade initially seemed to be an intensification or a contemporary perpetuation of what had been called by economists, the "cross-subsidy" model: you'd get one thing free if you bought another, or you'd get a product free only if you paid for a service. This primary model was then expanded by the possibilities of ever increasing access to the Internet, married to constantly lowered costs in the realm of digital technologies.

A second trend is simply that anything that touches digital networks quickly feels the effect of falling costs. And so it goes, too, for everything from banking to gambling. The moment a company's primary expenses become things based in silicon, free becomes not just an option but also the inevitable destination.[7] The cost of actually circulating something within these economies becomes lower and lower, until cost is no longer the primary index of its value.

A third aspect of this emergent economic model is perhaps the one most relevant to this discussion of education. Here the emphasis is on a shift from an exclusive focus on buyers and sellers, producers and consumers, to a tripartite model, in which the third element that enters does so based on its interest in the exchange taking place between

the first two elements—an interest to which it contributes financially. In the traditional media model, a publisher provides a product free (or nearly free) to consumers, and advertisers pay to ride along. Radio is "free to air," and so is much of television. Likewise, newspaper and magazine publishers don't charge readers anything close to the actual cost of creating, printing, and distributing their products. They're not selling papers and magazines to readers, they're selling readers to advertisers. It's a three-way market.

In a sense, what the Web represents is the extension of the media business model to industries of all sorts. This is not simply the notion that advertising will pay for everything. There are dozens of ways that media companies make money around free content, from selling information about consumers to brand licensing, "value-added" subscriptions, and direct e-commerce. Now an entire ecosystem of Web companies is growing up around the same set of models.[8]

The question is whether this model of a "free" economy is relevant to my proposal for a free "academy," given that in an economic model the actual thing in circulation is not subject to much attention except as it appeals to a large public and their ostensible needs. *Does* this model have any potential for criticality or for an exchange that goes beyond consumption? Novelist, activist, and technology commentator Cory Doctorow claims that

> there's a pretty strong case to be made that "free" has some inherent antipathy to capitalism. That is, information that can be freely reproduced at no marginal cost may not want, need or benefit from markets as a way of organizing them. . . . Indeed, there's something eerily Marxist in this

> phenomenon, in that it mirrors Marx's prediction of capitalism's ability to create a surplus of capacity that can subsequently be freely shared without market forces' brutality.[9]

The appealing part of the economy of "free" for debates about education is its unpredictability in throwing up new spheres of interest and new congregations around them. It has some small potential for shifting the present fixation on the direct relation between fees, training, applied research, organization-as-management, predictable outputs and outcomes, and the immediate consumption of knowledge. This however seems a very narrow notion of criticality as it is limited to the production of a surplus within knowledge and fails to take on the problems of subjectification. And it is the agency of subjectification and its contradictory multiplicity that is at the heart of a preoccupation with knowledge in education, giving it its traction as it were, what Foucault called "the lived multiplicity of positionings." The Internet-based model of "free" does break the direct relation between buyers and sellers, which in the current climate of debates about education, in the context of what Nick Dyer-Witheford has called "Academia Inc.," is certainly welcome. But it does not expand the trajectory of participation substantively, merely reducing the act of taking part in this economy of use and exchange. The need to think of a "market" for the disruption of paradigms emerges as an exercise in futility and as politically debilitating. To think again with Agamben:

> Contemporary societies therefore present themselves as inert bodies going through massive processes of desubjectification without acknowledging any real subjectification. Hence

> the eclipse of politics, which used to presuppose the existence of subjects and real identities (the workers' movement, the bourgeoisie, etc.), and the triumph of the oikonomia, that is to say, of a pure activity of government that aims at nothing other than its own replication.[10]

What then would be the sites of conscious subjectification within this amalgam of education and creative practices?

SITES

Over the past two decades we have seen a proliferation of self-organized structures that take the form, with regard to both their investigations and effects, of sites of learning.[11] These have, more than any other initiative, collapsed the divisions between sites of formal academic education and those of creative practice, display, performance, and activism. In these spaces the previously clear boundaries between universities, academies, museums, galleries, performance spaces, NGOs, and political organizations, lost much of their visibility and efficaciousness. Of course, virtually every European city still has at least one if not several vast "entertainment machine" institutions, traditional museums that see their task as one of inviting the populace to partake of "art" in the most conventional sense and perceive "research" to be largely about themselves (to consist, that is, in the seemingly endless conferences that are held each year on "the changing role of the museum"). These institutions however no longer define the parameters of the field and serve more as indices of consumption, market proximities, and scholastic inertia.

What does knowledge do when it circulates in other sites such as the art world?

Free International University event program for documenta 7, June 1982. Pressebüro der documenta GmbH Klaus Becker. Photo by Dietmar Walberg, Bild-GFDL. ©.

As Eva Egermann says:

> Of course, the art field was seen as a place in which things could happen, a field of potential, a space of exchange between different models and concepts and, in the sense of learning and unlearning, a field of agency and transfer between different social and political fields and between different positions and subjectivities. In a way, the exhibition functioned as a pretext, a defined place for communication and action that would perhaps establish impulses for further transformations. So, the project functioned as an expanded field of practice from which to organize and network between many different groups, but also to question and experiment with methods of representation and distribution for collective artistic research. We wanted to disseminate our research for collective usage through various means, such as the study circle itself, a wiki, publications and readers and through the model of a free university.[12]

More than any other sphere, the spaces of contemporary art that open themselves to this kind of alternative activity of learning and knowledge production, and see in it not an occasional indulgence but their actual daily business, have become the sites of some of the most important redefinitions of knowledge that circulate today.

As sites, they have marked the shift from "Ivory Towers" of knowledge to spaces of *interlocution*, with in between a short phase as "laboratories." As a dialogical practice based on questioning, on agitating the edges of paradigms and on raising external points of view, interlocution takes knowledge back to a Socratic method but invests its

operations with acknowledged stakes and interests, rather than being a set of formal proceedings. It gives a performative dimension to the belief argued earlier through the work of Foucault and Derrida, that knowledge always has at its edges the active process of its own limits and its own invalidation. In setting up knowledge production within the spaces and sites of art, one also takes up a set of *permissions* that are on offer. Recognizing who is posing questions, where they are speaking from, and from where they know what they know, becomes central rather than, as is typical, marginal qualifications often relegated to footnotes. Permission is equally granted to start in the middle without having to rehearse the *telos* of an argument; to start from "right here and right now" and embed issues in a variety of contexts, expanding their urgency; to bring to these arguments a host of validations, interventions, asides, and exemplifications that are not recognized as directly related or as sustaining provable knowledge. And, perhaps most importantly, "the curatorial," not as a profession but as an organizing and assembling impulse, opens up a set of possibilities, mediations perhaps, to *formulate subjects* that may not be part of an agreed-upon canon of "subjects" worthy of investigation. So knowledge in the art world, through a set of permissions that do not recognize the academic conventions for how one arrives at a subject, can serve both the purposes of reframing and producing subjects in the world.

Finally, I would argue that knowledge in the art world has allowed us to come to terms with *partiality*—with the fact that our field of knowing is always partially comprehensible, the problems that populate it are partially visible, and our arguments are only partially inhabiting a recognizable logic. Under no illusions as to its comprehensiveness,

knowledge as it is built up within the spaces of art makes relatively modest claims for plotting out the entirety of a problematic, accepting instead that it is entering in the middle and illuminating some limited aspects, all the while making clear its drives in doing so.[13]

And it is here, in these spaces, that one can ground the earlier argument that the task at hand in thinking through "free" is *not one of liberation from confinement*, but rather one of undoing the very possibilities of *containment*. It is necessary to understand that containment is not censure but rather half acknowledges acts of framing and territorializing.

VECTORS

In conjunction with the sites described above it is also direction and circulation that help in opening up "knowledge" to new perceptions of its mobility.

How can we think of "education" as circulations of knowledge and not as the top-down or down-up dynamics in which there is always a given, dominant direction for the movement of knowledge? The direction of the knowledge determines its mode of dissemination: if it is highly elevated and canonized then it is structured in a particular, hierarchical way, involving original texts and commentaries on them; if it is experiential then it takes the form of narrative and description in a more lateral form; and if it is empirical then the production of data categories, vertical and horizontal, would dominate its argument structures even when it is speculating on the very experience of excavating and structuring that knowledge.[14]

While thinking about this essay I happened to hear a segment of a radio program called *The*

Bottom Line, a weekly BBC program about business entrepreneurs I had never encountered before. In it a businessman was talking about his training; Geoff Quinn the chief executive of clothing manufacturer T. M. Lewin said he had not had much education and went into clothing retailing at the age of sixteen, "but then I discovered the stock room—putting things in boxes, making lists, ordering the totality of the operation."[15] He spoke of the stockroom, with a certain sense of wonder, as the site in which everything came together, where the bits connected and made sense, less a repository than a launch pad for a sartorial world of possibilities. The idea that the "stockroom" could be an epiphany, could be someone's education, was intriguing and I tried to think it out a bit . . . part Foucauldian notion of scientific classification and part Simondon's pragmatic transductive thought about operations rather than meanings—the "stockroom" is clearly a perspective, an early recognition of the systemic and the interconnected, and a place from which to see the "big picture." While the "stockroom" may be a rich and pleasing metaphor, it is also a vector, along which a huge range of manufacturing technologies, marketing strategies, and advertising campaigns meet up with labor histories and those of raw materials, with print technologies and Internet disseminations, with the fantasmatic investments in clothes and their potential to renew us.

Therefore what if "education"—the complex means by which knowledges are disseminated and shared—could be thought of as a vector, as a quantity (force or velocity, for example), made up of both direction and magnitude? A powerful horizontality that looks at the sites of education as convergences of drives to knowledge that are in themselves knowledge? Not in the sense of formally

inherited, archived, and transmitted knowledges but in the sense that ambition "knows" and curiosity "knows" and poverty "knows"—they are modes of knowing the world and their inclusion or their recognition as events of knowledge within the sites of education make up not the context of what goes on in the classroom or in the space of cultural gathering, but the content.

Keller Easterling in her exceptionally interesting book *Enduring Innocence* builds on Arjun Appadurai's notion of "imagined worlds" as "the multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe . . . these mixtures create variegated scapes described as "mediascapes and "ethnoscapes." Which, says Easterling, by "naturalizing the migration and negotiation of traveling cultural forms allows these thinkers [such as Appadurai] to avoid impossible constructs about an authentic locality."[16] From Easterling's work I have learned to understand such sites as located forms of "intelligence"—both information and stealth formation. To recognize the operations of "the network" in relation to structures of knowledge in which no linearity could exist and the direct relation between who is in the spaces of learning, the places to which they are connected, the technologies that close the gaps in those distances, the unexpected and unpredictable points of entry that they might have, the fantasy projections that might have brought them there—all agglomerate as sites of knowledge.

We might be able to look at these sites and spaces of education as ones in which long lines of mobility, curiosity, epistemic hegemony, colonial heritages, urban fantasies, projections of phantom professionalization, new technologies of both formal access and less formal communication, a

mutual sharing of information, and modes of knowledge organization, all come together in a heady mix—*that* is the field of knowledge and from it we would need to go outwards to combine all of these as actual sites of knowledge and produce a vector.

Having tried to deconstruct as many discursive aspects of what "free" might mean in relation to knowledge, in relation to my hoped-for-academy, I think that what has come about is the understanding of "free" in a non-liberationist vein, away from the binaries of confinement and liberty, rather as the force and velocity by which knowledge and our imbrication in it, move along. That its comings-together are our comings-together and not points in a curriculum, rather along the lines of the operations of "singularity" that enact the relation of "the human to a specifiable horizon" through which meaning is derived, as Jean-Luc Nancy says.[17] Singularity provides us with another model of thinking relationality, not as external but as loyal to a logic of its own self-organization. Self-organization links outwardly not as identity, interest, or affiliation, but as a mode of coexistence in space. To think "knowledge" as the working of singularity is actually to decouple it from the operational demands put on it, to open it up to processes of multiplication and of links to alternate and unexpected entities, to animate it through something other than critique or defiance—perhaps as "free."

1
Hannah Arendt, "What is Freedom?" Chapter VI "Revolution and Preservation," in *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, ed. Peter R. Baehr (Penguin, London:, Penguin, 2000), 455.

2
See Dietrich Lemke's "Mourning Bologna" in this issue, http://e-flux.com/journal/view/123.

3
Marion von Osten and Eva Egermann, "Twist and Shout," in *Curating and the Educational Turn: 2*, eds. Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (London: Open Editions; Amsterdam: de Appel, forthcoming).

4
Giorgio Agamben, "What is an Apparatus?" in *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays*, eds. and trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 12.

5
Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (London: Harvester, 1980), 81.

6
Isabelle Stengers, "Experimenting with Refrains: Subjectivity and the Challenge of Escaping Modern Dualism," in *Subjectivity* 22 (2008): 38–59.

7
This is Chris Anderson's argument in *Free: The Future of a Radical Price* (New York: Random House, 2009).

8
See http://www.wired.com/techbiz/it/magazine/16-03/ff_free.

9
See Cory Doctorow, "Chris Anderson's Free adds much to The Long Tail, but falls short," *Guardian* (July 28, 2009), http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/blog/2009/jul/28/cory-doctorow-free-chris-anderson.

10
Agamben, "What is an Apparatus?" 22.

11
See for example:
Copenhagen Free University, http://www.copenhagenfreeuniversity.dk/freeutv.html.

Universidad Nómada, http://www.sindominio.net/unomada/.

Facoltà di Fuga, http://www.rekombinant.org/fuga/index.php.

The Independent Art School, http://www.independent-art-school.org.uk/.

Informal University in Foundation, http://www.jackie-inhalt.net/.

Mobilized Investigation, http://manifestor.org/mi.

Minciu Sodas, http://www.ms.lt/, including http://www.cyfranogi.com/, http://groups.yahoo.com/group/backtotheroot/, http://www.onevillage.biz/.

Pirate University, http://www.pirate-university.org/.

Autonomous University of Lancaster, http://www.knowledgelab.org.uk/wiki/AUL/Main_Page.

Das Solidarische Netzwerk für offene Bildung (s.n.o.b.), Marburg (Germany), http://www.snob-marburg.org/.

The Free/Slow University of Warsaw, http://www.wuw2009.pl/.

The University of Openness, http://uo.twenteenthcentury.com/.

Manoa Free University, http://www.manoafreeuniversity.org/.

L'université Tangente, http://utangente.free.fr/.

12
Von Osten and Egermann, "Twist and Shout."

13
See Irit Rogoff, "Smuggling – An Embodied Criticality," available on the website of the European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies, http://eipcp.net/dlfiles/rogoff-smuggling.

14
See Lisa Adkins and Celia Lury, "What is the Empirical?" *European Journal of Social Theory* 12, no. 1 (February 2009): 5–20.

15
Geoff Quinn, interview by Evan Davis, *The Bottom Line*, BBC, February 18, 2010, available online at http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00qps85#synopsis.

16
Keller Easterling, *Enduring Innocence: Global Architecture and its Masquerades* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005), 3.

17
Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), xi.

Notes

Diedrich Diederichsen's "People of Intensity, People of Power: The Nietzsche Economy" was translated from the German by Gerrit Jackson. An earlier version of the essay appeared in German in *Kapitalistischer Realismus: Von der Kunstaktion zur Gesellschaftskritik*, ed. Sighard Neckel (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2010).

Marion von Osten's "Irene ist Viele! Or What We Call 'Productive' Forces" was translated from the German by Jennifer Cameron.

Liam Gillick's essay "The Good of Work" was first presented as a response to the question "What is the Good of Work?" posed by Maria Lind and Simon Critchley within the framework of a series of talks by the same name hosted by the Goethe Institut New York.

Lars Bang Larsen's "Zombies of Immaterial Labor: The Modern Monster and the Death of Death" was originally presented in the Masquerade lecture series, organized by the curatorial platform If I Can't Dance I Don't Want To Be Part Of Your Revolution, at the Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam, on January 25, 2010.

Keti Chukhrov's "Towards the Space of the General: On Labor Beyond Materiality and Immateriality" was translated from Russian by Ainsley Morse.

Tom Holert's "Hidden Labor and the Delight of Otherness: Design and Post-Capitalist Politics" originally appeared in a special issue guest-edited by Marion von Osten with the title "In Search of the Postcapitalist Self," *e-flux journal* no. 17 (June 2010). Some parts of the essay were written for the conference Design for the Post-Neoliberal City, organized by Jesko Fezer and Matthias Görlich for Civic City/ Design2Context, ZHdK, Zurich, March 12–13, 2010.

Antke Engel's "Desire for/within Economic Transformation" originally appeared in a special issue guest-edited by Marion von Osten with the title "In Search of the Postcapitalist Self," *e-flux journal* no. 17 (June 2010).

Precarious Workers Brigade's "Fragments Toward an Understanding of a Week that Changed Everything..." is the original English version of a text commissioned for a special issue of *Paletten*, guest-edited by Maria Lind. Precarious Workers Brigade have a policy of including information on the context in which their work appears. Written March–April 2011; by 9 people of PWB; published in *e-flux journal* and *Are You Working Too Much? Post-Fordism, Precarity, and the Labor of Art*, published by Sternberg Press; text online available for free, book costs €12; writer fee total $750; fee spent by PWB on collective investment; *e-flux journal* employed two interns in 2010; two interns collaborated in preparing this text for publication; they are paid at $0 per hour.

Irit Rogoff's "FREE" originally appeared in a special issue guest-edited by Rogoff with the title "Education Actualized," *e-flux journal* no. 14 (March 2010).

Biographies

Diedrich Diederichsen
was editor of two music magazines in the 1980s (*Sounds*, Hamburg; *Spex*, Cologne) and taught at several academies in the 1990s in Germany, Austria, and the U.S. in the fields of art history, musicology, theater studies, and cultural studies. He was Professor for Cultural Theory at Merz Academy, Stuttgart from 1998 to 2006, and is currently Professor of Theory, Practice, and Communication of Contemporary Art at the Academy of Fine Art in Vienna. Recent Publications include *Utopia of Sound*, Vienna 2010 (co-edited with Constanze Ruhm); *Rock, Paper, Scissor—Pop-Music/Fine Arts*, Graz 2009 (co-edited with Peter Pakesch); *On Surplus Value (of Art)*, Rotterdam/New York 2008; *Eigenblutdoping*, Cologne 2008; *Kritik des Auges*, Hamburg 2008; *Argument Son*, Dijon 2007; *Personas en loop*, Buenos Aires 2006; *Musikzimmer*, Cologne 2005.

Hito Steyerl
is a filmmaker and writer. She teaches New Media Art at University of Arts Berlin and has recently participated in documenta 12, Shanghai Biennial, and Rotterdam Film Festival.

Marion von Osten
works with curatorial, artistic and theoretical approaches that converge through the medium of exhibitions, installations, video and text productions, lecture performances, conferences, and film programs. Her main research interests concern the working conditions of cultural production in postcolonial societies, technologies of the self, and the governance of mobility. She is a founding member of Labor k3000, kpD - kleines post-fordistisches Drama, and the Center for Postcolonial Knowledge and Culture, Berlin. She has held a professorship at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna since 2006. From 1999 to 2006, she was Professor and a researcher at the Institute for the Theory of Art and Design & Institute for Cultural and Gender Studies, HGK, Zürich. She has lectured at the Critical Studies Program, Malmö Art Academy. From 1996 to 1998, she was curator at Shedhalle Zürich. She lives in Berlin and Vienna.

Liam Gillick
is an artist based in London and New York. His solo exhibitions include "The Wood Way," Whitechapel Gallery, London, 2002; "A short text on the possibility of creating an economy of equivalence," Palais de Tokyo, 2005; and the retrospective project "Three perspectives and a short scenario," Witte de With, Rotterdam, Kunsthalle Zürich, and MCA Chicago, 2008–2010. In 2006 he was part of the free art school project unitednationsplaza in Berlin. Gillick has published a number of texts that function in parallel to his artwork. *Proxemics: Selected Writing, 1988–2006* (JRP|Ringier, 2007) was published in 2007, and the monograph *Factories in the Snow*, by Lilian Haberer (JRP|Ringier, 2007), will soon be joined by an extensive retrospective publication and critical reader. He has in addition contributed to many art magazines and journals, including *Parkett*, *Frieze*, *Art Monthly*, *October*, and *Artforum*. Gillick was the artist presented at the German Pavilion during the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009.

Lars Bang Larsen
is an art historian and curator based in Barcelona and Copenhagen. He has co-curated group exhibitions such as *Pyramids of Mars* (Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, 2000, a.o.), *The Echo Show* (Tramway, Glasgow 2003), *Populism* (Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam 2005, a.o.), *La insurrección invisible de un millón de mentes* (Sala rekalde, Bilbao 2005), and *A History of Irritated Material* (Raven Row, London 2010). His books include *Sture Johannesson* (NIFCA / Lukas & Sternberg, 2002), and a monograph about Palle Nielsen's utopian adventure playground at Moderna Museet in Stockholm, *The Model. A Model for a Qualitative Society, 1968* (MACBA 2010). The series of pamphlets *Kunst er Norm*, *Organisationsformer* and *Spredt væren* ('Art is Norm,' 'Forms of Organisation,' and 'Dissipated being,' published by the Art Academy of Jutland), discusses the experience economy as a mutation in art's DNA towards a new normativisation

of art. Lars Bang Larsen's research is supported by the PhD program at the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies at Copenhagen University.

Keti Chukhrov
is an art theorist and philosopher. She holds a PhD in Comparative Literature and works as an editor and translator for Logos-Altera Publishers. She also writes for *Moscow Art Magazine* and has authored numerous publications on art theory, culture, politics, and philosophy in various Russian and foreign magazines, such as *New Literary Review*, *Logos*, *Critical Mass*, and others. Her monograph *Pound &£* (Logos, 1999) was the first in Russian dedicated to Ezra Pound's works, investigating the interrelation between poetics and politics; in 2004 she published *War of Quantities-A Book of Dramatic Poems* (Borey-art).

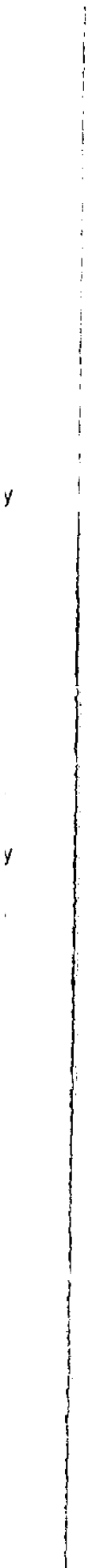
Tom Holert
is an art historian and cultural critic. A former editor of *Texte zur Kunst* and co-publisher of *Spex* magazine, Holert currently lives in Berlin and teaches and conducts research in the Institute of Art Theory and Cultural Studies at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. He contributes to journals and newspapers such as *Artforum*, *Texte zur Kunst*, *Camera Austria*, *Jungle World*, and *Der Standard*. Among his recent publications are a book on migration and tourism (*Fliehkraft: Gesellschaft in Bewegung—von Migranten und Touristen*, with Mark Terkessidis), a monograph on Marc Camille Chaimowicz' 1972 installation "Celebration? Realife" (2007), and a collection of chapters on visual culture and politics (*Regieren im Bildraum*, 2008).

Franco Berardi
"Bifo," founder of the famous "Radio Alice" in Bologna and an important figure of the Italian Autonomia Movement, is a writer, media theorist, and media activist. He currently teaches Social History of the Media at the Accademia di Brera, Milan.

Antke Engel
is director of the Institute for queer theory situated in Hamburg and Berlin (www.queer-institut.de). She received her PhD in Philosophy at Potsdam University in 2001 and held a visiting professorship for Queer Theory at Hamburg University between 2003 and 2005. Her work focuses on feminist and poststructuralist theory, on conceptualizations of sexuality and desire, and on the critique of representation. From 2007–2009 she was research fellow at the Institute for Cultural Inquiry (ICI-Berlin).

Precarious Workers Brigade
is a growing group of precarious workers in culture and education in London. Formed in response to the recent cuts, the Brigade links artists, cultural workers, art students, and lecturers working closely with campaigns such as Arts Against Cuts, Making A Living, Paid Not Played, and the Carrotworkers Collective (with whom Precarious Workers Brigade is affiliated). The group works in solidarity with all those struggling to make a living in the current climate of instability and enforced austerity, coming together not to defend what was, but to demand, create, and reclaim. See http://precariousworkersbrigade.tumblr.com. Join us to learn, create, and struggle together!

Irit Rogoff
is a theorist, curator, and organizer who writes at the intersections of the critical, the political, and contemporary arts practices. Rogoff is a professor at Goldsmiths College, London University in the department of Visual Cultures, which she founded in 2002.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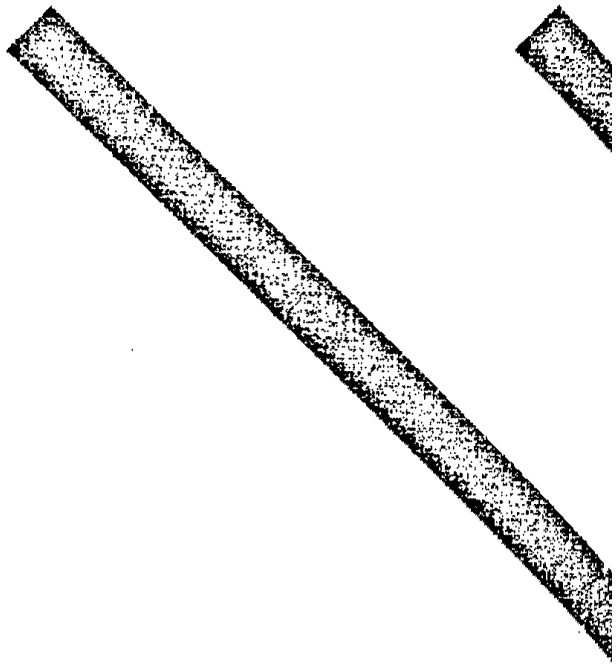
Let's be clear about something: it is infuriating that most interesting artists are perfectly capable of functioning in at least two or three professions that are, unlike art, respected by society in terms of compensation and general usefulness. When the flexibility, certainty, and freedom promised by being part of a critical outside are revealed as extensions of recent advances in economic exploitation, does the field of art become the uncritical, complicit inside of something far more interesting?



With essays by Franco Berardi Bifo, Keti Chukhrov, Diedrich Diederichsen, Antke Engel, Liam Gillick, Tom Holert, Lars Bang Larsen, Marion von Osten, Precarious Workers Brigade, Irit Rogoff, and Hito Steyerl

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