

How to think politics with and through the body?

The invention of new modes of sensibility is vital to enriching and sustaining political engagements, labours and lives in the situated contexts of urban collectivity. The nanopolitics handbook investigates the neoliberal city and workplace, the politics of crisis and austerity, precarious lives and modes of collaboration – through bodies and their encounters. Starting from the exploration of what bodies can do – with curiosity, courage and care – nanopolitics is a proposal for producing new collective subjectivations.

Based on the experiments and experiences of the nanopolitics group, this book proposes exercises, concepts and ideas as little maps and machines for action. Drawing on social movements, grassroots organizing, dance, theatre and bodywork, the reflections and practices here present strategies for navigating and reconfiguring the playing field of 'nanopolitics', activating its entanglement with the major politics of our time.

Texts and exercises by: the nanopolitics group, esquizo-barcelona, David Vercauteren, Camila Mello and Fabiane Borges, Nelly Alfandari, Jorge Goia, Lottie Child, Carla Bottiglieri, Gabriella Alberti, Paolo Plotegher, Davyd Bodoun, Emma Dowling, Mara Ferreri, Manuela Zechner, Bue Rübner Hansen, Amitabh Rai, Anja Kanngieser, Lisa Burger and Irina Burger.

The nanopolitics group formed in London in early 2010, around a desire to think politics through and as embodied experience and practice. They have organized open movement, theatre and bodywork based workshops, as well as discussions and interventions in the context of social movements.

The inspiring Nanopolitics Handbook insists that a post-capitalist political movement will always be physical, affective, and will demand a sensual retraining in making transition happen. More than a polemic, it is a workbook for the future too LAUREN BERLANT, AUTHOR OF CRUEL OPTIMISM

In the face of extreme disavowals or affirmations of the body, and in a capitalist context that depletes our body's capacities to hold up, the Nanopolitics Handbook proposes new ways of relating and being together. It inspires us to reinvent a body that has the force to live up to its own fragility, be it individual or collective.

PETER PÁL PELBART, AUTHOR OF VIDA CAPITAL





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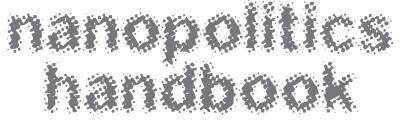
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the nanopolitics group

nanopolitics handbook

the nanopolitics group

Edited by Paolo Plotegher, Manuela Zechner and Bue Rübner Hansen

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Minor Compositions is a series of interventions & provocations drawing from autonomous politics, avant-garde aesthetics, and the revolutions of everyday life.

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Index

	page
Introduction	11
collective processes	
Un/making sense, moving together: on nanopolitical experiments in the neoliberal city	19
THE NANOPOLITICS GROUP	
To produce or not to produceIs that the question? ESQUIZO-BARCELONA	39
Micropolitics	57
EXERCISE: Meetings DAVID VERCAUTEREN	66
methods and methodology	
Technoshamanism	73
EXERCISE: Technoshamanist performance ritual CAMILA MELLO AND FABIANE BORGES	81
A rehearsal of change: Theatre of the Oppressed	87
EXERCISE: The machine of rhythms NELLY ALFANDARI	92
Soma: an anarchist experiment	95
EXERCISE: Testing limits, playing with gravity	104
JORGE GOIA	

Street training: experiences of co-creating public space	107
EXERCISE: Street training manuals London,	113
Venice and Rio	
LOTTIE CHILD	
Bodily semblances, temporary dwellings: somatic moulding of	119
spaces and subjectivities	
EXERCISE: Sensory explorations within the	141
text	
Carla Bottiglieri	
experiments and experiences	
Notes and reflections from some nanopolitics sessions	145
THE NANOPOLITICS GROUP	113
1112 1111101 0221100 010 01	
The body of a teacher	165
EXERCISE: Columbian hypnosis for groups	175
A nanobody	
Brain wide shut	177
EXERCISE: Body surfaces and boundaries	180
MARA FERRERI	100
reflections and theorizations	
A politics of network-families? Precarity, crisis and care	183
EXERCISE: Mapping your care network	196
MANUELA ZECHNER	
The bodies of proletarian reproduction	199
EXERCISE: An exercise in deproletarianisation	221
BUE RÜBNER HANSEN	221
No time for the sad passions	223
EXERCISE: A practice of walking	234
AMITABH RAI	

Towards a careful listening	235
EXERCISE: Listening and speaking warm up	248
ANJA KANNGIESER	
metabolisms and ecologies: some recipes	
Notes on how to grow tomatoes from a tomato	251
LISA BURGER	
Voku Pocu: making a people's kitchen IRINA BURGER	255
IKINA BURGER	255
Polenta cakes for friends and comrades	
A NANOBODY	261
- 1 1/4/14/1	
additional meterial	
resources	267
10004:1000	20,
biographies	277
image index	283

Introduction

This is a handbook that reflects on embodied experiences. It charts the journey from bodies to a book (ours) back to other bodies (yours and those that you take part in). To do this, the book presents and proposes the practice and political playing field we call nanopolitics. You can call it something else – whatever you call it; the body is political, traversed by social tensions, a site of struggles sometimes. The book in your hands maps out some of those, and offers a toolbox for grappling with them in your coltlectivities, relations and movements.

The nanopolitics group began in London in 2010. The problem posed might seem simple, but it's rich in consequences: how to think politics with and through the body? If major politics invest and organise our bodies, how do we activate our bodily potentialities in different more desirable and consistent ways, together?

We created a space of experimentation, the nanopolitics group. In this book you'll meet many voices speaking from, to and across that space. They will be sharing the tools, thoughts and questions that came out of our embodied experiments and beyond.

The texts here may be seen as maps of the dimension we call 'nanopolitical'. What we present here is tools, strategies and practices for navigating this as a playing field, and a terrain of struggle. We zoom in on the invention of new modes of sensitivity and relation, across the situated contexts of our political engagements, labours and lives. We use our bodies to investigate the neoliberal city and workplace, the politics of crisis and austerity, our precarious lives and modes of collaborating. Exploring and doing what bodies can do in relation to specific contexts and problems – with curiosity, courage and care – new collective subjectivations become possible.

A map of this book

This book has five sections, which can be read in any order.

1/ COLLECTIVE PROCESSES situates three instances of group practice – in London, Brussels and Barcelona – that deal with matters of micro- (and nano-) politics. This section presents an attempt at putting different experiences and practices in common. You might enter it through some of these questions:

What might it mean to pay attention to process within and across leftist-militant and neoliberal spaces of collaboration? How can we take care of ourselves and each other in our groups? What does it mean to move from the safe spaces of intimate collective work towards those of representation and contestation?

2/ METHODS AND METHODOLOGY presents some of the tools and methods we used in our workshops. The texts here – all written by session facilitators – reflect approaches and questions of that arise from within different methods. Whether by subverting the separation between traditional and modern technologies, challenging the 'cop in our heads', undoing the behavioural conventions of public spaces, or developing our most tactile sensitivities, these methods are in themselves critical practices. Nanopolitics has been a space of sharing knowledges and methods, as we looked for ways of using them in our everyday lives, workplaces and political contexts. Questions that arise here are:

What ethics and politics of 'use' may we come up with in working across grassroots and copyrighted methods? What forms of translation are needed between the different historical, geographical and social-political contexts that our methods emerge from? When participating in a guided workshop, how do we address facilitation and relate to the figure of the 'specialist' without giving up either trust or criticality? How can we develop methods and methodologies in common?

3/ EXPERIMENTS AND EXPERIENCES tells of moments that we lived as a group and as individuals. We collectively wrote a text to give account of some nanopolitics sessions, drawing on our notes and memories. This section speaks about the contingencies and specificities of embodied experiences – bumping into one another and the world, trying to make sense of our bodily and relational possibilities and limitations. Questions that may guide the reader here are:

How to grapple with the multiplicity of our experiences, how to speak (and write) across very different ways of living one and the same moment? What kind of resonances and disjunctions occur between our collective bodywork and everyday experience? How to evaluate the effects of our practice – can nanopolitics subvert certain pathologies of "affective" and "immaterial" work by breaking down logics of efficiency and productivity?

4/ REFLECTIONS AND THEORIZATIONS allow us to work towards different ways of organizing our bodies in relation to care, labour, passion and listening, within and beyond the current ways we reproduce ourselves (family and capitalism) and co-operate with others (work life, political spaces). Texts here go into broader political, social and historical contexts, opening onto more philosophical questions of becoming, belonging, power and subjectivity.

How can we think about the relation of nano- and micropolitics to macropolitics? What is autonomy in a context where we're all supposed to be entrepreneurs of the self? How might we listen and 'hear' power in the affective and political forces expressed through the voice? What ways of belonging and collective care/reproduction might we imagine in contexts of precarity and urban individualisation? If power today is less direct domination and more about putting bodies to work, how might we imagine a situation in which this compulsion is abolished?

5/ METABOLISMS AND ECOLOGIES finally presents some 'recipes' or exercises that open towards ways of reproducing and feeding our bodies. Tuning in with plants and their growth, setting up shared urban cooking and eating spaces, making cakes... there are infinitely many practices of caring, commoning and cultivating that relate to nanopolitics. We found ourselves desiring a 'door to the garden' through these years of collective work, much like some Italian feminists of the 1970s who developed their militancy in the direction of collective practices of mutual aid and nourishment. So this section points to possible ways to link reproduction and ecology with our political practices. This leads to new lines of sensitivity and questioning:

Beyond a politics of our own and other bodies, how to we relate to our environments and the multiple forms of life that surround us? What intelligent processes can we engage with across different domains of life? If the work described here mostly concerns how our bodies are together in space, what possible nanopolitics of space and environments may lead on from there?

From bodies to books

Trying to render this practice in a book is not a straightforward process of translation. From the twenty workshops we did between 2010 and 2012, we extract some bits of reflection: they're not necessarily the best ones, but they stuck and reappeared to us. There are about thirty hands involved in the making of this book, at least 15 pulsating brains and hearts, lots of nerve cells and fluids (caffeinated and non-caffeinated) transiting through tissues. Between three of us we shared the main organisational and editorial work. We tried to find new ways of being together while making this book, combining discussing and writing with cooking, eating and dancing.

Rather than a device that's mimetic or representative of a collective process, this book is a toolbox and surface of reflection. It's in your hands to see which parts may be useful to your current group, process and relationships. A handbook is a book which draws lines of passage from moved, desiring minds to moving bodies, but this book is also the product of the reverse movement, from moving bodies to moved minds. Readers: throw your bodies into the mix. We appeal to your mirror neurons as well as all your tissues and organs in this mix of narrations/reflections and instructions/games.

Learning new ways of being together

Above all, this book provides tools for finding other ways of being together: co-inhabiting spaces, relations and bodies. Our experiences in and beyond workshops were as unsettling as they were exciting and inspiring: bodies composing differently, surprisingly, finding new axes of joint movement, new voices to speak to each other, sometimes even new body parts and layers.

To take political collectivity as a matter of embodied assemblage, by experimenting with bodies and movements, is to reconsider the relations between the self and others, between bodies and environments, between words and actions, between desires and necessities, between strength and vulnerability. We explore what's im/possible, un/desirable and open/closed in collective action, in order to move beyond voluntarist and rigid modes of politics.

This practice is based on a wager that soulful and constructive politics are possible, as a way of relating that can build worlds of common resonance and sensitivity. What you have here is one attempt to develop such a politics. This book was born out of a desire to share and get a grip on 'nanopolitics'. German speakers put it well when they call a concept ein Begriff, literally a grasp, a handle. This hand-book, we can say, bares the traces of hands that

sense, touch and hold, of hearts that sigh, cry and laugh, and minds trying to conceptualise and render some of this for others to hold on to.

Meanwhile it's not just a book about holding hands, but also about other ways of grasping, affecting and feeling: you can travel quite a way through your body and relations to others, if you go through the texts and exercises here.

Try this one for a warm up, as a way of travelling through your senses: Feel that book in your hands and test its weight for a second, compare it to the weight of other objects (coffee cup, keys, etc). See how many different kinds of sounds you can make with this book – flicking pages, knocking on the cover, sliding it against surfaces, etc. Give it a smell. Perfume it, perhaps. Feel its surface with your tongue. Zoom your eyes from its pages into the distance, shift it into your blind spot, look at a page and let the letters blur.

Later on, you may want to read an exercise instruction to each other with some friends, bring an exercise proposal to your group, or put the book down on your kitchen counter and bake the polenta cake that gave us energy while working on the next text. If you're reading a pdf, play with the materiality of your computer a bit. And of course, always remember to breathe deeply...

nanopolitics.noblogs.org





Un/making sense, moving together: on nanopolitical experiments in the neoliberal city

— The nanopolitics group¹

What might nanopolitics be?

The impossibility of not being affected... learning to be affected necessarily passes through the body – it means working with the body... nanopolitics is about that... working with the body in this city, in our situations, together...²

Nanopolitics is the name of a practice that a group of us have been engaged in London. A practice of sensibilities, an experiment in *living politics from, with and through the body* – and vice versa. Since 2010, we have spent a few days a month together in different spaces, bringing our bodies and sensitivities to what we experience as urgent political matters, as a mode of collective reflection and action.

We share a feeling and notion that politics does not just reside in voting, making statements, protesting, or even in our everyday/everynight movements, but that politics can be a tangible experiment of feeling and acting that's based in our bodies and their ways of relating. One level of this involves working upon the everyday, the normalised and naturalised gestures and environments we often find ourselves stuck within: the ways in which we inhabit the city, the street, our workplaces, neighbourhoods and homes are no more 'natural' than the Olympic Park that's risen from the ground in London recently. How can we find other ways of moving and relating in and across those spaces? What happens when we contest the regimentation of certain modes of inhabitation, putting our bodies on the picket line, dancing on the roof of a bus stop, wrangling with a police cordon, finding that our voice trembles as we speak at an assembly...?



So a second level of our work concerns how we compose with political and conflictual situations in embodied ways. How can we tune into situations through our senses, touch, movement, voice... we learn from choreo-graphy (aswriting in chorus, with our bodies) and from experimenting with fixed boundaries and sensory habits: playing with our bodies as key compositional and sensitive devices. Thus coming together through 'nanopolitics' means to find new syntheses of movements, affects, interests, stories, struggles, refusals and fears.

Through the present text, some of us attempted to let these two levels of our experience-experiments come into words on screens and paper: writing together. Moving, thinking, speaking, touching, writing, marking, saying, arguing, protesting, gesticulating... they don't all easily match and compose. We are aware of this as we write about our experience as a group - a very bodily experience that entailed discussion and conversation, however this is the first time we sit down to write about it in more general terms, to contextualise it through raising questions. Thus this text should be read with the exercises and experiences of nanopolitics in mind, some of them present in this book.

Félix Guattari, who spent much time exploring problems of composition and affinity, dropped a few words on this matter as he exited the podium of a 'Schizo-Culture' conference in 1975 in New York:

I do not believe that anything can be changed by a transmission of information between speaker and listener. This is not [...] even a problem of ideological striving or of striving for truth, as one could have understood it here. It is simply this: either there will be other types of arrangement of enunciation in which the person will be a small element juxtaposed to something else [...], or there will be nothing. And worse than nothing.³

Working with bodies, their surroundings and prostheses, we sympathise and empathise with a Guattarian sensitivity to producing assemblages that make new things possible, rather than insisting on appeals to a pregiven rationality, an insistence that mostly comes down to little more than manipulating thought.

The nano

If thought is that which operates at the limit of what we can imagine or grasp, that which emerges through stuttering, pains, itches, twitches, *déconneries*, jumps, dances, and takes us elsewhere then it's clear that nanopolitics is about

thinking. Thinking not by virtue of inspirational blessings of genius but rather precisely as a *following up* that we may not have been strong or many enough to effectuate without some attention to our bodies. Thinking is not a disembodied process, nor does it necessarily have its telos in language: it's a process of inventing new ways to move. And the same goes for politics. Similarly, if by action we mean that which changes relations and thus also implies a change in forces, we consider our experimental practice as one that's very active, very effective. This is where we start from.

What happens in the interactions of speakers, writers, neuro-receptors, skins, is irreducible to transfers of already-givens, to a supposedly all-positive 'communication', an 'always the same'. In order to grasp some of the subterranean processes that go on as we move through conversations, places and relations, we try to play with the stuff that circulates between us, both visibly and invisibly. To attempt shifts. Bang! New melody. New tune and tone. New dance. New chance.

This implies working on the sensitivities that hold our movements and exchanges together. Our preference for a ludic or aesthetic paradigm over a scientific one comes from our liking bodies in motion. To make sense with ones senses, not by disembodied deduction, not in finding objective truth or universal formulas, but through creative and dis-assembling collective processes. To find sense is also to find orientation perhaps, in socio-political moments of impasse and confusion. To come unstuck.

When we say nanopolitics concerns movement, we mean movement quite concretely, as the movement of individual and collective bodies, of our tissues and fluids, our skins, bones and so forth. Somewhat beyond positivism, we think that this is also the stuff that our so-called 'social' movements are made of. To understand resistance from the point of view of embodied, everyday life and relations, we need to cultivate an analysis of the kinds of compositions that underpin our sensitive and habitual worlds. What are we attentive to when we facilitate a political meeting, stand in a picket line, talk over tea, or work on the computer at night? What does it mean to be chronically ill, to be restricted in one's movement? What do we feel, perceive and sense when we exit our workplace, or go on a demonstration? How do we relate to each other across real and virtual spaces and platforms? How, on the basis of learning other attentional and sensing modalities, can we invent new ways of *taking care*?

The city

We developed or practice of nanopolitics in a city that sets up a number of powerful ways of inhabiting, perceiving and sensing. London as a space deter-

mines our lives, work and politics in multiple ways, shaping our spatial, emotional and material possibilities of relating. We come together to disassemble the bodies we become in the context of a neoliberal city, and to reassemble, through movement, play and theatre. We struggle with the neoliberal university, with precarity, and a political culture that tends to stress the 'correct line', a centralism which is democratic in the stalest of ways, and a political productivism that mirrors and tries to outperform capitalism itself. We struggle with high rents and long distances in the city, with expensive transport and a high degree of urban dispersion, not to mention with maintaining our ties to other places. We also struggle with the condition of being migrants in a city of quick transfers and individualised multi-cultural political correctness.

Some of these matters of relation and habitation have brought us together in a desire to recompose our bodies and collective processes, not just to better survive and resist but also to take more pleasure and breathing spaces, in our everyday lives as much as in political mobilization. Consequently, 'nanopolitics' has become a singular collective space built around our neighbourhoods, universities, workplaces and homes, wherein we practice different ways of relating. To resist the individualization that life in a busy metropolis implies – particularly for people without local families and stable work – we needed to produce a common, a shared space for experimenting, expressing and being in solidarity. There was no such given common yet: not much of a transversal connection between our lives and more intimate politics, between our desires for macropolitical change and our ways of caring and desiring. Our nanopolitics produces concrete alliances and compositions, some of which point us to such possibilities – we will speak of those further down.

Contexts

Tools, practices, politics

The distinction between molecular and molar, between micro and macro to some extent underpins our thinking about nano. In accordance with the micropolitical sensitivities we may find on the level of some groups and inter-relational practices, as well as with the intelligences we may find in some macropolitics of institutions, social movements and strategies of autonomous governance, we focus on the emergence of a third dimension of sensitivity and intelligence: that of embodied practice, affective and pathic relationality. This is a vital contribution to the political, work, and life spaces we share: we see it as a laboratory for developing other ways of being attentive and responding to each other.



As such, we are not concerned with the 'nano' of nanoscience but with the infinitely small operations that bring us together as bodies in movement, struggle, love, work and so forth. Nanopolitics encompasses developing and extending our common language, ways of speaking about the dimensions of body, sensation and affect, of inhabitation and relation, and it is above all based in shared movement.

Precarity, professionalization, migrancy, competition, individualization: we have perhaps already endlessly analysed these problematics in cognitive and communicational terms, but how can we grasp them in other ways,

through other experiences? And how can we organise around them otherwise, in taking them seriously as embodied conditions? Can we embrace the positive side of precarity - our vulnerabilities, our openness to change - in building strength and sensitivities that at the same time allow us to fight back more fiercely, with more pleasure even? We are fragile not just in our work, housing or migration statuses, but also within the processes most dear to us, such as politics, love and friendship. How to build strength, solidarity and empathy across those? What 'ways out' can we find to exit certain stuck experiences, blocked dynamics in our bodies, collective processes and social spaces? We do not seek recipes or definitive solutions, but we like that 'which works', and go with it. Each time we meet, we try another relational dispositif. Our approach to method is messy: we play with anarchist, communist, and anti-copyright techniques as well as trying copyrighted, professionalised and liberatory spiritual methods, we test and discuss what we come across, to undo what work, school and religion has made our bodies and subjectivities. Hence there is not a fixed methodology at the basis of nanopolitics, rather, emergent knowledges about body-playful-collective practices. Workshops, dinners, drifts, demonstrations, flashmobs, discussions; walking with eyes closed, sitting on each other's heads, singing; and so forth.

Norms, becomings, genealogies

We feel like we're dealing with some sort of nanopolitical manifesto when we read, in the edition of *Recherches* that Guattari edited in 1973 with the Front Homosexuel d'Action Révolutionnaire: 'The 'revolutionary consciousness' is a mystification if it is not situated within a 'revolutionary body', that is to say, within a body that produces its own liberation.'4

While many of us draw strength and inspiration from the French and Italian '68 and '77, it's also clear that what was 'liberating' then is not necessarily liberating now, the commercialisation of gay subcultures being but one example. The question of liberation being a more complex one, we might say with Foucault: 'It's not enough to liberate sexuality. [...]We have to liberate ourselves even from this notion of sexuality. 'Neoliberal capitalism wants us to liberate ourselves subculturally, to create niche markets and stable harmless 'scenes' or at least policeable ghettos. The way Novella Bassano Bonelli speaks of the pressures of liberation in the 1970s resonates with the way we feel about self-improvement today:

first of all you need to be virgin, to 'do' the mother and all these things... and it's not true that in 1976 they don't tell you these sorts of things

anymore; then you join the groups of the revolutionary left and they tell you that this is the revolution: you are a woman, you open your cunt and you fuck, otherwise you are repressed, inhibited, you are not revolutionary, you don't believe in class struggle, and on top of that you are also frigid.⁶

A discomfort lingers when speaking of liberation, and we may prefer the term revolutionary becoming to it, focusing attention on process, method and praxis. Whether then or now, it is clear to us that in as much as bodies can be liberated, they have to be vulnerable and desiring bodies, not perfectly functional machines or healthy organic wholes. In as far as 'liberation' is liberation from 'repression', it needs to be understood as a process of freeing ourselves from dominant ways of normalising our bodies, or better as the experimentation and construction of bodies that exit their normalisation. 'Liberation' is disentangling our bodies from their normalisation, and not from what the norm itself establishes as negative, sick, problematic, as against a supposed health.

'Liberation' also becomes experimentation with modes of dealing with our suffering, tensions, problems and conflicts, which can give strength and a common ground for our collective struggles to transform or abolish that which makes us suffer. In this context, nanopolitics needs sensitivities to care and listen more than ever. In a world ever more precarious and competitive, it becomes harder to find ways of caring and listening that don't merely conform us to existing norms.

And of course, in thinking of those days of liberation, our cortical cells and limbs also do all kinds of dances with feminism: we take much from the practices and politics of women's groups. We don't really do consciousness raising but we do try like witches to make things emerge. We also try to break spells, particularly the spell of professionalised individuality: nanopolitics has been - this is the first and perhaps most important thing we can say about it – a process of experimenting with ways of relating to one another beyond our specialised or personalised roles and habits, and through the body.

We touch on the limits of what we know, come close to magic sometimes, play with power. We understand 'the body' not as a given or primordial foundation – as that which delimits some sacred individuality, as a container of truth, as un-invested by power. We rather think it as something we are and take part of, in sharing movements and sensations, through which we meet in ways often forgotten, and can meet in ways unimagined, ways beyond what we already think we are and know. Nanopolitics isn't 'personal' or 'subjective' in the sense of being limited to the individual, nor 'objective' in the sense of social processes that simply happen to us. How to develop practices of self-

care (not just individual but collective) that evade the neoliberal capture of self-help and self-management as well as new ageist solipsism?

If it's a question of self-care, of resistant autopoeisis, it's also a question of reproduction that's at stake here: to find collective ways to pay attention to how bodies are constantly produced and reproduced, according to lines of power, force, affect and desire. What might we need to take into account in struggling for autonomous reproduction? We move between different registers of sensing, perception and articulation, we meet limits as well as openings we weren't aware of, we get to meet bodies we do not know, perhaps even bodies we did not know could be possible. We experiment different ways of embodying change to our micro-realities, our worlds, friendships, work, political organising and our being in space and time.

We care not just about the reproduction of bodies as bodies, but also of bodies of bodies, of aggregate bodies such as our flat shares, our groups, our families, our neighbourhoods, where no fixed functional differentiation is imposed... the point being that we insist on also *feeling* them. No abstract talk of social reproduction without that capacity to sense and move *as* the collective body without organs.⁷

Questions for any-becoming-body

When we began our collective experiments, we found ourselves bringing a whole host of questions to the process: a list that has only grown and expanded with time. Curious, doubtful and ambivalent questions – our challenge was to address them in embodied encounters, shared experiments in movement, touch, vibration and speech. These questions, these problems and concerns, are what *moves* us. They are the dynamic and unstable 'core' of nanopolitics. As we have moved through our encounters, we have asked:

How can we think a politics that starts from the movements of bodies?

Or rather: how do we live politics all the time, how do our bodies resist and propose different paths often without our conscious knowing? This includes a politico-corporeal investigation into the social and the economic from the point of view of what our bodies refuse or demand to do, from our fatigue, stress, depressions to our addictions, compulsions and guilty resistances, procrastination and snoozing to the affirmations of our pleasures, desires and energies. Too often we have found that our political activism mirrors the hyper-productive mode of our work, with its overwork, stress and guilt. How to politically investigate and reshape work and politics from the point of view of what our bodies can and cannot do?

How are our bodies interpellated, identified, subjected - made productive?

In a society dominated by the demands of capital accumulation, the body is posited primarily as labour power: the body and soul put to work as human resource. Childrearing and our own reproduction is first of all the reproduction of labour power. The demands put on the body in this context place it in a double bind, a contradictory injunction. On the one hand, the body is rendered passive-political in the imperative to become subjugated, its 'normal' structures formed as normalised effects of lost battles, subdued or temporarily inactive struggles. The body carries with it memories of what it wanted but failed to do, desires and possibilities that are of the body, but point beyond past and present. On the other hand, the body as affirmative of affects and traversed by enthusiasm. The body is active-political, it moves, pulls other bodies along, it is capable of affecting and being affected. Yet, this is equally a terrain of struggle as the body is rendered hyper-active. Neoliberal capitalism desperately needs 'liberated' bodies that are 'creative', flexible and productive - these are bodies that are ready to cope with the unforeseeable, with risk, stress, danger. How then, to reactivate, politicise and de-traumatise these struggles, and how to de-individualise the defeats and conformism our bodies have suffered? How to free the body from the repression of waged labour? How to open up our vulnerabilities to each other, in ways that can counter both the threats to the stability of our selves and the pressure of having to be and perform as (working) supermen and wonder-women?

How are our bodies engaged and produced in current struggles?

How, in our struggles, do we find ourselves being affected, changed, expanded and reprimanded? How can we talk about our political practices with our bodies in mind? How to grasp the ways in which race, class and gender play out through bodily experiences without reducing the body to a socially constructed object? Our politics against deeply embodied racisms, sexisms and elitisms will only ever be superficial and unconvincing if it does not alter the ways our bodies relate and move together.

Can an undoing and reshaping of our bodies have an impact on an undoing and reshaping of our subjectivities and of our institutions?

A practice of undoing our bodies does involve some sort of violence: the undoing of a body is the undoing of its traumas as well as the undoing of what our body has become comfortable with. Defensive reactions learned and absorbed to cope with those traumas, behaviours perceived as nor-

mal and natural that make life 'easier' for our bodies... This undoing may be therapeutic: not in the sense that necessarily makes us feel better, or cures us once and for all, but in the sense that it allows us to get over traumas and repressions. To undo the traumatic contractions, defensive patterns, imposed schemes of normality, some pharmacological knowledge is needed, and everything can be a drug: touch, words, silences, etc. Can we undo our subjectivities and institutions with this playful ethics of drugging?

How can we learn to support, sustain and take care of each other?

How can we bring the lightness and intensity generated through the exercises and games of nanopolitics sessions into our everyday life, into a taking care of each other that becomes light, into a becoming common of our lives, starting from their more basic aspects like eating, sleeping, drinking and breathing? Can we learn from nanopolitics how to practice a life together, a different life from the one we know, which is often so centred on our individual selves? How can we move from exercising a proximity of our bodies to exercising a proximity of ourselves, a getting close and implicated with each other which would differ from both the black holes of personal and exclusive commitments and the shallow utilitarianism of a networking modality? How to take seriously the ecologies of the social, environmental and psychic by investigating a fourth dimension, that of sensation, movement and experience?

Spaces of our lives, dimensions of nanopolitics

The practice of nanopolitics is always situated. To speak of how we concretely move our bodies in nanopolitics, to speak of our tools, techniques and experiences, we need to speak of where and when, in what spaces, social and physical, and at what times.

London, London

Many of us have come to live and work in London, from more or less far or near. London is a city with its particular intricacies and monstrosities, producing particular bodies, yet it seems depressingly like any other mega-city. Like the city itself, the London body is often fragmented, reactive, irritated, torn and restless. London spreads widely over physical space, with an unaffordable centre emptied out by corporations' headquarters and commercialised for tourism, a cold, blank and opaque 'City' dedicated to finance and

untouchable to the 'public', and impoverished 'zones' that sprawl both within and far out of the centre. We share ongoing experiences of crass gentrification across our homes and workplaces, moving along the margins of zone two, ever more pushed towards the suburbs because of rising rents and the everyday more unreachable possibility of ever owning a shelter to call home.

There are about 7.5 million people on 1583 square kilometres here, 12 million in the metropolitan area. What does this number mean to our bodies, our relationships, our politics? London is not just marginal to our shared concerns and experience, but constitutes a key part of them: the long distances we travel just to have a short meeting or coffee make us protective of our time, exhausted from constant movement, and the price of transport weighs us down, or keeps us home. On bicycles, we escape the time and money drain of London a bit, but our bodies feel the stress of traffic and the exhaustion of distances all the more: rain and wind often add to that. The metropolis is a bodily condition in so many ways: it's a noisy and speedy city before our eyes, ears and muscles – we go to sleep with tense jaws, tired legs and eyes.

Real estate speculation and neoliberal urban policies make the city a permanent construction site. Cranes devour familiar landscapes at vertiginous speed, familiar shops shut down and are replaced at regular intervals, sky-scrapers grow to the skies, shopping centres and Olympic sites rise from the ground, demolishing and displacing the 'old' city on their ascent to empty global urban iconicity. The city reloads itself constantly, in tune with capital. We tire of aggressive change, not least because it drives us out of our neighbourhoods, poor and trashy but beloved. We try to engage locally with our politics, and hold our meetings at easily reachable and friendly sites, since it easily takes an hour to get anywhere London, but this is difficult since we're all spread across vast distances north and south of the river. What does resistance mean in the face of these conditions of urban life?

In our journeys we often have to traverse the City of London: a block of glossy, impenetrable concrete and glass buildings with luxury shops in between, full of people with black suits and blackberries. This is one of the monstrous hearts of global finance, these are the people earning the public money that was used to save the banks: the Occupy movement bravely put itself right there, in the belly of this most hostile and disturbing part of London. We try to invade and inhabit this territory many times, in demonstrations and protests, but apart from fleeting moments, and the warmth of the company and free tea at the occupy camps, a feeling of chill and disempowerment remains every time. This feeling also persists in central London, and increasingly in our own areas, where public space and services shrink or disappear under increasing privatisation and 'austerity' measures, where benches and quiet



areas are erased by gated shopping facilities and big chain stores replace older shops. No space can be taken for granted in this city, and the desire for everyday commons is a constant struggle.

The ways in which we register London with our bodies are multiple. Exhaustion, burnout, depression, fatigue, hyperstimulation, nervousness, racing hearts, insomnia, tinnitus, allergies... These are not just individual problems, things we should sort out so we can get on with being productive, whether this means being revolutionary or an entrepreneur – these are the traces of our daily encounter with neoliberal urban dynamics. Nanopolitics is the name we give to a practice of transforming these dynamics, by transforming our relations across them and reclaiming other ways of inhabiting.

Political cultures, political context

Nanopolitics intersects with experiences and practices of organising and doing politics of many other groups, projects and collectives, and the wider movement.⁸ But nanopolitics as a collective practice is not set up to coordinate and cohere existing ways of doing politics, or to make us all do *more*. With stress, fatigue and burnouts such common experiences, and guilt such a common motivation, it is neither a question of doing more or of doing less, but of trying to do politics differently, to find ways of doing politics that are not at odds with life, with desire and the capacities of our bodies.

Clearly this is not easy, and it might be even harder than it sounds. The 'bad ways' of regular politics on the British left, the often poor micropolitics and marginal nanopolitical sensitivities, which become increasingly obvious as we develop our practice, are not just 'bad' – something that we can voluntaristically overcome by doing better. Rather the bad ways, they are effects of the conditions of the city, its modes of existence and death, its temporalities and spaces, and the traditions, institutions and defensive politics that have been passed over from the series of defeats that constitute the genealogy of the current socio-political predicament.

The intensity of London *worklife*, the ever-changing neighbourhoods, the dispersal of individuals... The non-coinciding temporalities, the distances, the lack of spaces (high rents, the brief lifespan of squats that only very rarely become social centres)... people coming, leaving, moving around... All this makes organising in London a constant struggle. When and where can we all meet? In two weeks? Three? And who will have energy at the meeting? And in the coming months? Who will be fully committed? We all have high workloads and too many political engagements – spread betting, trying to be everywhere, in order to be where something might develop (maybe that some-

thing which might just help us with our other work, with our careers)... If self-organising is difficult, it is multiply difficult to do so with coherence and continuity. Old organisations, formalised, institutionalised, professionalised seem to be the only ones with duration. It is no coincidence nor a result of bad will that the political parties and groups in London often mimic the worst aspects of organisations under neoliberal capitalism: entrepreneurialism (self-exploitation, opportunistic networking, careerism), HR management (self-managing teams under strong hierarchical supervision, prescribing the ethics of the 'firm' and of co-operation top down), volunteerism (unpaid labour and general self-sacrifice for a higher ideal), labourist trade unionism (professionalization of activists, slick and safe populist media-centred communication) and venture capitalism (purely self-interested cooperation, hostile takeovers). Hard-working, self-denying philanthropic class struggle to outdo NGOs in pure hearted charity, the military in cold hearted discipline, and capitalism itself in adrenalinic productivism.

Generally those who work more than part time, those who have kids, those who live far away where rents are affordable, disengage more and more as they grow older, while a precarious core of hyper-active activists in their 20s do a couple of years and leave, burned out, fed up. All this reinforces the idea that one cannot possibly do politics after 30, except as a union/party/NGO job (or a saintly sacrifice for the class struggle). Of the young activists few care about reproduction, while for the older professionals, finding a stable wage and secure housing increasingly become questions of committing to worklife rather than affecting socio-political change. In this way reproduction and care are almost systematically excluded from London politics in their structural mirroring of the London job market. In the prevalent political discourses of London, questions of life tend to become reduced to questions of living conditions, expressed in the most pecuniary terms – or as subcultures of alternative living for those who can afford it or who cannot afford to do otherwise.

Nanopolitics tries to exist in and work against this predicament, to create spaces and times to affirm the many ways we do and could rely and support on each other in reproducing our worlds. In these times and spaces (workshops, dinners, actions) we develop minor practices and sensibilities of care, love, living, initially and quite basically we find ourselves creating needs and desires in common, extending and deepening our capacities to struggle together. And this struggle has only become greater since the nanopolitics group formed, and while the material necessities are more and greater, so are our desires to extend and create spaces and times of care, of sharing and of doing together.

Work, professionalization and the production of knowledge

More, perhaps, than most neoliberal cities, London is characterised by an incitement to productivity, especially among those privileged enough to enjoy the cultural capital of intellectual, as opposed to manual labour. 9 If you stop you are lost, if you slow down you are likely to feel guilty, and if not, someone will unknowingly remind you that you ought to be... You are not supposed to waste your time: you have to insert everything you do, no matter how pleasurable, into a working or investment framework. While for most the incitement is that of the boss and his productivity measures, and of colleagues identifying with boss and measures, for more and more these pressures are deeply internalised, the measures constructed by ourselves. Everything has to be useful in some way, even the conversation with your friends in a pub: you can get to know about new conferences you could apply for, you might do some extra networking, you can practice your social skills, or you just take a break to be more productive once back at your computer. In the London of mass youth unemployment, precarity and intense competition, our careerist behaviour rarely results in a career, but it is rather the minimum expected by employers.

We are mostly under and struggling against this aspect of the regime of productivity, according to which we are something like an agent of capitalization, an investor in our own human capital, a channel that sucks all the inputs available around us in order to nourish our career, our job, the new project we are working on, the PhD dissertations we are writing. We learn how to turn everything, even what at first sight seems banal and irrelevant, into something useful – at least we are supposed to try. This logic spills over from work to life to politics, and easily adopts the language and adapts to the ethics of these respective spheres. You don't necessarily have to think everything in terms of career-building and competition: it might be a collaborative cultural project, it might be even activism, a cause that you fight for together with your comrades. We are always subjected to the pressure of turning everything we do into a working object or a working process, into something that complies with a working practice that we internalise, that is produced with and through a neoliberal subjectivity.

And so, activism becomes a second or third job, beside those we do already in order to survive: you end up trying to fight one kind of hyper-productivity with another kind of hyper-productivity, having to play both of them at the same time. You might end up burning yourself out. You write about Guattari in your dissertation and this becomes yet another commodity, you 'sell it' as a product for conferences and publications, whilst the impact of the encounter with Guattari in your life is decreasing, if it ever was more,

to zero. It could be Guattari or anything else: a necessary ingredient to brand yourself as a knowledge producer. You organise a cultural project with your colleagues, with the aspiration of changing something for the better in your neighbourhood, and despite the relative independence that you might gain from the council or whatever institution providing the (little) funding, you end up packaging a cultural product, and reproducing roles and social categories: the cultural organisers, the special guests, the participants, the public... You teach at the university as a 'postgraduate researcher with teaching duties', with little money and an annual contract that you never know until the summer if they are going to renew. You have to struggle with an institutional pressure of delivering knowledge to the students, knowledge as nicely wrapped up and ready to swallow, in an academia that resembles more and more a shop, where customers' satisfaction is what really counts.

Academic discussions have to comply with a reasonable protocol, everything has to be under control, the machine for the production of knowledge has to replicate itself. This is a machine that gets fed by the desires, aspirations and creativity of whoever takes part in it – as long as desire, aspirations and creativity can become useful, as long as they can be absorbed and neutralised. There's no limit to the voraciousness of the neoliberal institution, if the nourishment can be digested, accounted for, justified, turned into profit.

Work as competition shapes our individualised lives, often even when we collaborate together; culture as a specialised field producing commodities and perpetuating hierarchies shapes subjectivity; professionalization characterises our relations and stiffens our bodies. Life in its entirety becomes professionalised: you have to demonstrate that you are worth it, that you can make it, that you are bright, that you have good contacts and a good CV coming up when someone googles your name. In order to demonstrate who you are, you are required to constantly measure yourself and your performance against that of everybody else. You have to develop a hierarchical structure of judgement where you can negotiate your position in relation with the position of everyone else. Our bodies contract, shrink and stiffen according to this charts used to define individuals' relations. This is how competition works: even if you don't really feel it, your body does.

In this context, it's seductive to apply the same regulatory and specializing logics to our lives and politics. On the spur of the micro-fascisms that come as the backlash of a ceaselessly de – and re – territorialised neoliberal subjectivity, we easily become rigid about formal guidelines. New modes of measure come to apply to us all the time, and often leave us at a loss for ways of valuing and evaluating our experiences and projects: our stressed response may consist of reproducing the numb politics of measure. We insist

on guidelines and protocols: whether it is certain consensus decision-making tools, special organic foods or the technicalities of polyamory. Those are precious, but they depend on openness to make sense, and a phronetic sensitivity with regards to our desires and limits. Nanopolitics is also about relating to protocol in ways that allow us to come back to movement and imagine new ways of finding trust and stability. We struggle to match our desire for new tools and protocols with processes of opening, of questioning given truths and of softening professionalised narratives and bodies.

So perhaps nanopolitics is precisely about this becoming-useless in the face of an entrepreneurial subjectivity, creating effects that are immeasurable, operating transformations that we often find we can hardly capitalise on. Indeed, part of making our practice accessible in writing can be seen as allowing us to produce cultural capital despite the seemingly unproductive nature of what we do. But there's no point in a paranoia which claims that everything, from our love lives to our favourite foods, is captured by capital. We find this kind of position cynical, since indeed there is much more to our worlds than capitalist relations. There's no rules that can tell us how to navigate our ambivalent worlds in ways that avoid capture: we need our sensitivities to help us with that. Our discomfort is often intelligent: we can use each other to find out.

What is the rhythm of your night? Beyond therapy

We learn to take pleasure from each other's proximity, we learn not be scared of it, and we learn that it is not necessary to instrumentalise intimacy as an object of pleasure. We learn trust. So simple and yet the most basic tenet of embodying collectivity in open and passionate ways. Trust is a kind of listening practice: to listen is not to wait, to do nothing. It's to intensely sense, to find the right moment to slip off the see-saw, to hear and respect bright and dark rhythms, to make proposals. We find a different way of talking to each other, one that is not dominated by the tyranny of reason with its corollary of employability, but one that tunes, rhythms and rhymes in unforeseen ways. We get excited by talking with our colleagues in a different way: an affective commotion destabilises our selves, we learn to sense each other differently, to feel a pleasure that is not turning into any recognizable pattern of relationship.

All this does not necessarily imply 'feeling well' or feeling better: you might get uncomfortable, you might get even scared by what is happening to you and your body. You don't quite know what it is, you are not entirely in control. Your dark night with its own howling owls and chilly winds, and ticking of clocks. Your dances around the fire of your fears and passions, your tipping

over sticks, stones, shoes. Nanopolitics does not imply becoming smooth: all kinds of shit sticks to us, we remain clumsy, dirty, silent, overexcited, anxious, sweaty. A room with shoes strewn at the edges, our messy movements in silly, broken socks, skins slippery.

The schizoanalytic tenet of giving up the cure applies to our work: while collective transference may keep us hoping we'll get better sometimes, what we are doing is establishing a culture where stickiness is quite welcome, met with enjoyment and curiosity.

The ever recurring question of how to practice analysis without a cure, without the telos of a 'fin de la cure', then, also presents itself in doing nanopolitics. To reject the idea that our worlds can be changed by a transmission of information between speaker and listener implies replacing the paradigm of truth with a more aesthetic paradigm. Throughout our sessions, we repeatedly face the question of the potential therapeutic dimension of our work, an ambivalent matter with no definitive answer but only a tendency: nanopolitical devices of collective and embodied analysis, yes, but healing and treatment, maybe no thanks. Anne Sauvagnargues describes Guattari's chaosmosis and its aesthetic paradigm as 'producing new infinites in departing from the finitude of the sensible' — we like to experiment this through a process of collective becoming. A group should sense when to die, too: and so we know that in its finitude, nanopolitics will end when our capacities to move, to produce agencements, new assemblages and articulations, cease.

We produce a different knowledge, one that gets registered through our bodies. Contact improvisation, or any of the methods we experiment with, doesn't become part of our profession, nor is it just a practice that makes us feel better, less enclosed into a body that is restricted to the visible outline of our flesh. How does this differ from turning our bodies into something malleable, adaptable, productive and ready for (collaborative and perhaps even pleasurable) self-exploitation?

What produces differing and deviant bodies rather than better working bodies is the encounter between all the layers composing our lives and movements. A set of transversal conjunctions functioning as what Guattari would call an assemblage of collective enunciation: collective not in the sense that is produced by us, an 'us' always unstable and uncertain, but because it has an impact on a plurality of things, - bodily, cultural, social, political.... As interferences and resonances between our bodies and the city we live in, the jobs we do, the institutions we deal with, the friendships and relationships we build, the way we organise our political struggles, our reproduction, our resistance to individualisation.

Endnotes

- 1. This text was collectively written and edited by Paolo Plotegher, Bue Rübner Hansen, Emma Dowling, Manuela Zechner, Mara Ferreri and Amitabh Rai. Passages from this have been published in *Lateral Journal* (2011) Issue 1, Ed. Emma Dowling. lateral. culturalstudiesassociation.org/issue1/nanopolitics.html as well as in *Félix Guattari: los ecos del pensar* (2012). Ed Gabriela Berti. Spain: Hakabooks.
- **2.** Nanopolitics Collective notes, session on love and eroticism with Beth Pacheco: 'Tempete de l'amour'. August 2010, London.
- 3. Félix Guattari (2009) 'Desire is Power, Power is Desire', in *Chaosophy*, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), p. 290.
- **4.** Anonmymous et al. (1973) 'To have done with the Massacre of the Body', published as an introduction to the controversial/censored issue of Recherches journal *Trois milliards de pervers*, edited by the Front Homosexuel d'Action Révolutionnaire and Felix Guattari.
- **5.** Foucault, Michel and Bitoux, Jean (1978), 'The Gay Science', Interview. Translated by Nicolae Morar and Daniel W. Smith in: *Critical Inquiry*, Vol 37, No.3, Spring 2011, p. 403.
- **6.** Alberto Grifi (1976) *Il festival del proletariato giovanile al Parco Lambro*, documentary film. Excerpts online at youtube.com/watch?v=pJ5tR08e03I
- 7. Deleuze and Guattari's insistence on the perspective of bodies without organs requires a rethinking of the body beyond the classical biological image of a closed whole consisting of a differentiated and hierarchized set of functional elements. But Deleuze and Guattari's image is too easily read as the non-reproductive inversion or underside of the hyper-reproductive body of classical biology. We want to speak of reproduction in the sense of transversal ecologies.
- **8.** Some would not speak of what they do as 'politics' or 'political', due to the near identification of politics with the spectacle and corruption of capitalist parliamentarianism in Britain.
- **9.** Service sector and care work of course messes with this classical distinction, proper to Fordist and pre-Fordist capitalism.
- **10.** Anne Sauvagnargues mentioned this phrase in one of the seminars on Guattari's book *Chaosmose*, introducing the chapter on the 'Aesthetic Paradigm'. Paris, 17th February 2012.

To produce or not to produce... is that the question?

— esquizo-barcelona¹ traducción del español por Jean Byrne

There are territories in life that do not enjoy the privilege of centrality.

Extreme, distant zones, bordering with the Other, almost foreign.

Still, but barely their own.

Areas of uncertain identity, estranged from any neighbourhood.

The attraction of the alien, of the different, is intense there.

This call contaminates everything.

Weak belongings, scarce fidelity, faint nomadic holds.

Land of no one and everyone.

Place of permanent meetings, of frictions that electrify the air.

Combats, bonds: fertile impurities.

Traditions and pacts. Promiscuity.

High pressure life.

From the border zones the borders are not perceived.

Iose Sanchis Sinisterra

Produce? No thanks

For some time, and coming from experiences in different collective spaces, we found ourselves facing questions related to the constitution of shared territories of existence. We are moved by a question of how to live, how to weave affective networks, networks of care and for sharing and bringing together our common wealth(s). We search for how to generate alternative worlds in the face of the false inevitability of our fragile, precarious and individual lives, wandering through the 'cold of the capitalist city', as Bifo² has called it. It is not easy to find the 'true question'. We have realised that one rarely knows the origins of what drains her. It is in this way, with truly half-formed questions,

that we have been wandering these last years. Our questions are guided by ordinary issues which we consider urgent in order to shake off a certain anger and daring: What does it mean today to enjoy? What does it mean to live well? Where, and until what point are we given possibilities to join with others and to sediment the continuity of these bonds and encounters? In what spaces, practices and rituals today can our bodies touch, rub, connect, recognise and luxuriate with one another? When do we work and when do we rest? When do we produce and when do we share lavishly, in abundance? In what terms might we think and experience shared joy and wellbeing, in communality? 'When do the moments of commotion (common-motion), pleasure, intensity and affection – that make a life actually worth living and not merely the passing of productive time – take refuge and what are they made of?'

arriving from 'elsewhere'

To live in the borderlands means you

Are neither hispana india negra Española

Ni gabacha, eres mestiza, mulata, half-breed

Caught in the crossfire between camps,

while carrying all five races on your back

Not know which side to turn to, run from; [...]

Cuando vives en la frontera

People walk through you, wind steals your voice [...]

You are the battleground

Where enemies are kin to each other;

You are at home, a stranger [...]

To survive in the Borderlands

You must live sin fronteras

Be a crossroads.

Gloria Anzaldua, Borderlands/La Frontera

We began meeting in the autumn of 2009. In this first composition of the group, we began arriving from 'elsewhere'; other political, academic spaces or those linked to the field of immaterial work. The majority of us had experiences, both institutional and 'bastard', in the 'psy' field. These experiences traversed our educational and existential journeys and thus outlined a supposed and strange 'common'. These spaces had been opportunities for questioning and reflection in relation to institutional practices and forms of metropolitan life; open spaces, flat spaces, which like many other collective political processes, suffer fractures and crack, becoming tough and hard.

Some of us had arrived to Barcelona from other cities. To arrive to this new city and *to project*³ and envision ourselves here in the future traversed us. Those of us who had already been living 'en el extranjero' – both 'abroad' and 'in the foreign' - for some years, would constantly find ourselves facing the im-possibility of building liveable and shared lives, navigating through the constant flows of friends and affections, all the time leaving and sometimes returning, travelling and coming back, leaving apartments and searching again for a home and work, crossing the borders time and time again. These journeys and passages, the fragility of what could pass and happen, what might pass through us,⁴ of the project and projecting and envisioning our future have been constants that traverse and question the esquizo group: how do we inhabit the borders and passages? Anzaldúa, the *mestiza*, comes to us and whispers: what can be done about this 'intimate terrorism' that is life in the borderlands?⁵

Some of us came from political spaces that had ceased to exist. This had challenged us with questions relating to our political practices. Questions about what we put in place during shared projects, beyond what we understood rationally or ideologically as the horizon of the desirable. Others came from squatted or rented social centres where, embedded in precarity and the hustle and bustle of the city and its regulation of public space, our challenge was to generate spaces for the production of social rights, autonomous education and territories where to collectively think about our present. In these spaces, which blurred the boundaries between the social centre as 'our space' (where we got involved in activism, we learned, we worked and we enjoyed ourselves) and the social centre as 'public space', where we experienced the neighbourhood, the city, pleasures and affections in which we wanted to generate archipelagos of community. These spaces of political practice had at times been organised and shaped through activities where 'the project' had been the main format or apparatus around which we would assemble. Accompanying the wealth of these experiments, we simultaneously found ourselves exhausted in the midst of the dynamics of a city like Barcelona in which all aspects of life were constantly put to work. In which politics, reflection and knowledgeproduction processes, and even affective and leisure spaces, were constantly oriented towards creating and producing under the transcendental format of 'a project'. We were urgently confronted with the question of production, specifically in the face of a bewilderment which, although we had not fully grasped it yet, we sensed as a sort of imperative or inevitability. 'The projects' traversed us, life itself was the great project to be produced and managed.

This was our fertile territory: it was there that *us*, *him*, *her* and *others* encountered each other. At what point did we begin to become *a* group? When

does the common narrative of a group begin? What is the starting point of that collective narrative? Did we begin to 'produce' and to 'produce ourselves' from the first moment we met? At this starting point, we were challenged by some texts around which we gathered. With them we started to give account of a context of precaritisation of a broad spectrum of our lives. In this first schizo year, we hesitantly stated: 'we don't want to do anything concrete, we just want to encounter each other'.

Producing without noticing

weaving modes of encounter

In our first meetings we put a recurrent emphasis on the encounter *per se*, constituting our *raison d'être*. We wanted to inhabit and experience this *encountering* and let that mark the rhythm, textures and meanings of the group. In our first sessions, we were moved by the desire to meet and work collectively with readings linked to the schizoanalytical proposal developed by Deleuze and Guattari and other figures from the field of micropolitics. The approach to these texts and how to read them – in connection with our present – was at once de-constructive and constructive.

At first, we reproduced approaches in the traditional style of institutionalised education. It seemed necessary that those who knew more of that 'strange-expert-technical-language' would be those assigned the task of bringing it closer to the rest of the group. Our first step was to confront the form of the ONE, the expert, or sole voice, and accept that there was no teacher and no disciples; there was no protection under the erudite word. Given that we were not an 'undifferentiated mass' but singularities with different journeys, how could we deal with the risk of someone being excluded due to little familiarity with particular concepts, or with a potential isolation or marginality due to a supposed position of not knowing? This was a tension, unresolved and indeed not always explicitly formulated. Perhaps an option for us was to assume that 'not knowing' was as much supposed as 'knowing'. Not allowing the constitution or fixing of permanent figures of 'supposed knowing' allowed for the 'assumption of knowing' to be an *effect* of the encounter, a product of the discussions and not a personalised, invariable and permanent entity. It was necessary to make the gesture of a collective movement to modulate the intensity, the tone, which in fact did not happen as a premeditated and explicit strategy. It was more like a movement the body makes when, while sitting, it discovers some of its parts are ticklish because they have gone numb. We moved, shifting our weight and making ourselves more comfortable.



The violence of cutbacks in public spending, the repression and criminalisation of the social movements, the control and surveillance of the streets and the 'precaritisation' of work were multiplying and acquiring unexpected forms, in the face of which it was necessary for us to have a space for collective thinking. At the same time as inventing forms of 'doing with' reading, we generated a space of caring, of an erotic politics and a politics of friendship. It was through this that we became a group-machine for thinking, for the production of new assemblages, between ideas, experiences, concepts and questions.

registros⁶

Aware of our particular affection towards an 'oral tradition' and thinking about how to produce more enduring forms in our autonomous education and reading spaces, we began to ask ourselves how *to do*, so that what emerged from our meetings could be recovered in the future. These questions led us to reflect on the theme of the record and the register in our sessions: what should we do with those discoveries that surprised us? How could we make them last? How could we fix them? Did we want to *fix* them? For what reasons? For whom? And what would we do with them afterwards?

The question of the record led us to the idea of the dream: how does one fix a dream? A oneiric moment is a free production of ideas that form a partnership without any filter, a plan without fastenings. But what happens when we wake up? To fix a dream one must turn it into a narrative, a story. And how much experience and information is lost in that passage into a story! But even aware of that loss, it seems that we want to remember, because something interesting has happened there, in that dream. In our group something similar happened to us. The important issue was to stick with plans of free production, deterritorialised, in a sense dreamlike, seen as they are what have allowed us to experience and explore lines of flight when thinking about our context and our current situation. The *how* of recording them was then, crucial: 'how to record, how to make registers, in a way that could sediment and be flight at the same time?'

There was something desirable in this *making durable*. Could we think and create forms of recording that would be loyal to what was produced in our encounters? This discussion began to stir among us in an informal and intermittent way. As a response, some of us thought of writing to give steadfastness to agreements and especially to share what had been discussed with those who were absent. But yet, in that sense we would also question conferring an *a priori* higher status to the written format over the oral. From this we began to consider rather recording than writing, not only the voice, but

also audiovisual recordings. We would recognised the double dimension of the camera dispositif: on the one hand its link to daily practices of surveillance and control in the city, and on the other hand our own agency in the generation of testimonies and narratives alternative to the hegemonic media, subverting the logic of the monopoly of the record. Simultaneously, we questioned ourselves about the presence of this recording in a context in which the daily had turned into a spectacle and videos circulated in a profuse and infinite way through different media. Why produce more and more records? What were we to do with them afterwards? Record and discard? Record and post? Record and accumulate? A discussion about preservation and distribution also appeared: when, where, how, with what aim and for whom? We all came from academic and activist practices where many of the things we produced were recorded. We recognised its performative value, its strategic meaning as a materiality that travels and that in its itineraries creates bonds, complicities, strengths. But we were not clear on what the criteria should be to determine what things should be recorded and preserved, and what others should simply and powerfully be left to take place, to pass, to happen.

invisible productions

Something has been emerging from our encounters. This has lead us to certain questions: does what we do need an aim, an objective, a destiny? What is it that emerges? What happens when we meet? Even more importantly, what happens when we continue meeting? What is this continuation? Is it not also a process, the production of something?

What is produced in our encounters exceeds the written word and we do not know how to give steadfastness to the transformation of materials or bodies during the process-encounter. This is an issue which is still open and which does not only include the problem of recording but covers a broader field: that of production. How do we, in our relationships, assign value to what we produce when its apparent immateriality makes it inaccessible to recognition? The warmth, perhaps the pleasure of the encounter and the way in which the production took place, made both the labour behind it and the product invisible. Perhaps because we went against the historic burden assigned to productive work: aim, intention, some or a lot of displeasure in the effort of producing it, obtaining some kind of benefit. Our 'products' had a touch of 'nature', like the jungle that the natives transformed and reconfigured without altering its balance, and that in the eye of the conqueror is an 'appropriable nature'. But, as Haraway⁷ shows well, this 'nature' is a collective production, a heterogeneous artifactual body, full of connections. In

this way we began to produce thoughts and ideas, political spaces of care; immaterial objects with value.

It is important to us to emphasise that the 'without realising' aspect of this way of wandering had nothing to do with the optimism of spontaneity. We also want to distance ourselves from the idea of a primitive essence that spontaneously expresses its being. We consider that reducing this process to a mere expression has in fact contributed to our not seeing, at times, a whole labour of weaving behind and throughout the process. We say that we began to produce 'without realising', but recently it has been fundamental for us to face the question through the materiality and the flesh that have created this product: what it is made of, how it happens. We keep making, doing, we keep inventing, there is no clearly defined narrative about us, there is no pipedream that thinks us from above or from outside, there is no transcendence. We do not have a need for programmatic creation, but even so we have developed a consistent task of caring and maintenance of our spaces of encounter. It has been necessary to build, care for and maintain our fields of possibility. In this way, we have found ourselves constantly undertaking the task of the production and maintenance of our conditions of possibility.

Is this not what some have denominated the 'becoming-woman of labour'?⁸ Historically there exists a classic division between the production of goods (fundamentally attributed to men: while there may have been other subjects, we have always spoken in terms of male workers) and the reproduction of the work force (mainly under the charge of women in the tasks of caring, maternity, education, affection). As a consequence, this division has made invisible – also historically – the production of value and wealth which in fact emerges from these tasks. But the current displacement of the wealth-generation model of industrial capitalism by what has been called cognitive capitalism has shown the limitations of this dichotomy.

Breaking through the classic forms of production of waged labour and of that which is recognised only in terms of 'employment', we currently find ourselves facing a production of wealth which is born of communication, of affect, of sensitivity, of modes of subjectivisation and of the capacity to coordinate the moments and spaces of encounters. Today it is no longer possible to imagine the production of wealth and knowledge if it is not through the production of subjectivity, and thus the reproduction of the processes of life. Where did we position ourselves in relation to these categories? It has been difficult for us to distinguish the limits between the production – of concrete objects – and the reproduction, care and maintenance of our shared territories. We have inhabited an embodiment of production that comprehends (in the sense of both comprehending and apprehending) life.

How is it that the awareness and love of what is produced has been awoken? The visibilisation of this value has been emerging as an effect of confrontation with other places, spaces and situations both new and different from our encounters. It was through our progressive coming-into-the-world, 'coming out of the closet' of our encounters, that we came to the question of value and production.

'Coming out of the closet', and then what? Links with the outside and The Institution

Suddenly, the present. That is how 15M and the collective disruption and organisation of Spring 2011 introduced itself to us. Like many others, searching through that period of upheaval, we lived (in) the square for several months. We went there almost every day, alone or in the herd, to encounter each other, to dismantle, together with many others, the naturalisation of forms of government that traversed our lives, and to produce new rights. The square had become a central place, whose porosity made it legitimate all over the city and its nooks to question what we took for granted in our jobs, homes, loves, bodies and spaces.

The square changed our daily group life, our temporary nature, rhythms, organisation of sessions and topics: making this our meeting space was unavoidable. Continuing with the modes of encounter that we had been living, and after going through a month of intense events in the square, questions about how to take care of ourselves in this revolutionary transformation also emerged in this space. From this desire-need we wanted to set up a workshop-machinery in order to think, from inside, about this new unrestrained centrality. We named the workshop 'Being the square, living the square, becoming the square' and it was accompanied by this invitation: 'A space for reflection and encounter for unique experiences in the square. It is not a commission. We do not need to decide anything or be in agreement. It is not group therapy. It is not a debate'. Once more, it seemed fundamental to us to have a space that did not depend on the production of specific objectives and specific agreements. The workshop in the square was a meeting place to think together with new acquaintances; where we could express the moments of euphoria and the change that we were living, like the uncertainties that also accompanied an event of such intensity. How could we make this continue to be a live process? How could we avoid identifying with, closing our selves to and being *only square?* What does *being in the square* imply? *Inside*: in the dynamics, distribution of spaces, commissions, circulation of words, exhaustions, intensities. Outside: going back home every day, in our jobs,

neighbourhoods and collectives, relationships, bodies. *In-between*: not being able to leave the space sometimes, bringing the square to our entire daily lives. It was important to be able to share the complexity of what it means for the body to be in constant movement. The square gave a lot, but it also required a lot of energy from us. It implied a constant process of questioning when you where in it, but also when due to everyday responsibilities, obligations, work, family or other situations you couldn't make it to be there. To be able to make these experiences common and to think out loud about these intensities and speeds, allowed us to experience in a lighter and shared way the possible contradictions that emerge when "making revolution".

doing things that allow you to do other things: projecting, envisioning the future

In September 2011, in the midst of taking to and inhabiting the streets, an invitation arrived to write an article about Francesc Tosquelles⁹ and, simultaneously, we applied for a public grant to undertake research for the article. In a short amount of time, and in a spontaneous and unexpected way, we entered into a new dynamic. Through the grant and its requirements, new relationships were opened up that created new rhythms and criteria, new meeting spaces and paths of communication, and a different classification of what was urgent and what was a priority. We began to administer money and make deadlines, to travel together, do interviews and get excited by the discovery of new topics and new complicities, to hand in reports and to write together over prolonged periods. It was a moment of intense creation, living intermittently between enthusiasm and joyful passions, and between deadline and deadline. We had to begin to reflect not only on the question of the contents of the research, but also the how and the why of our doing it.

In this new period of relations with institutional spaces and, particularly, having received a grant, we saw ourselves committed to some activities that probably would not have interested us originally, or at least not at that point. In order to receive the money from the grant we had to present the first results of the research. But we were not yet ready for presentations. We found ourselves in a moment of exploration where our desires and energies focused on realising some trips to meet people who had known Tosquelles. Even so, in order to finance the trips and access certain material we required money, and that money was conditioned by the realisation of concrete products, such as the presentation "Francesc Tosquelles: creative processes and clinical practices", and the creation of a website for the material gathered. What manifested itself at this point as process needed to demonstrate the obligatory capacity to

translate into product. As an a priori condition our activity required visible and outlined indices, spaces and times for presentations, which did not come from the organic continuity of our process but from a duty that came from an institution and that was introduced into the group.

We found ourselves facing the dilemma of whether to adopt or not, and in what way, ways of producing which we had tried to distance ourselves from in the beginning. Without realising it, we opened a facebook account, we gave ourselves a name, logo, website, deadlines, we made records of photos and videos and we developed a report of all that we produced. We searched for an opening, a connection to the outside, and along the way we created a set of paraphernalia that became tedious. It was from situations such as these that the dimension of the future began to appear in our activity: we began to project, to envision ourselves in the future. We found ourselves inhabiting the thought of the project and of the strategy: doing things that later would allow us to do other things. New questions arose: To where did we want to 'launch' ourselves? What was this entelechy of the future? Did we want to turn the process into A-Thing? Was every experience translatable into a project? What would appear as the recognised and guaranteed channels for sharing that knowledge and experience? What does one do when what is produced overflows, is boundless, when that production is not 'translatable' into a project?

In this re-organisation of the body passing through institutionally established circuits, we ourselves were becoming 'instituted' through its rhythms, lures, times, formats. In the face of this risk, and that of our name becoming crystallised, a wave of upset shook us. Was this the crack that would lead to dissolution?

All groups tend towards the death that all living beings face as their destiny. But it is also possible to face the deadly found within forms of crystallisation, of durability or of silence around the micro-fascisms that may emerge. That hateful way we did not want to be, but which we were being-doing, frightened us. We gave ourselves to the task of seeing how and what was pushing us towards a form of institutional relationship that appeared to be drawing straight lines through our many possible becomings. Thus we initiated a discursive and practical questioning process around the visibility of what is produced and legitimate ways of knowing.

Producing, a question of value and forms of composition¹¹

At some point during the process of thinking, conversing and writing this article between several of us, we imagined that this fourth section would be the place for conclusions. Later, throughout the journey we realised that we were

traversed by a preference for a 'pedagogy of the question'. We like to discover all that fits and all that is opened in the vast territory contained between two question marks. 13 We also consider that this caminar preguntando ('asking we walk' or 'walking and wording' zapatista) has allowed us to define what these writing hands have in common, as well as our peculiarities and differences. It was through the difficulty of 'agreeing' that the complexities of questions, sometimes forgotten or normalised by the speed in which we inhabit our collective processes, have been emerging. From the disagreements between our different ways of giving accounts of a common narrative, our first questions have seen themselves interrogated and transformed by new questions formed in flight. It is thus that this exercise of writing has become a process of searching and producing a culture of the antecedents that run through us. How do our bodies join together in collective processes? How do we want to continue journeying together? How do we think about and narrate our journeys? Continuing with these trails and cartographies of question marks, we would like to end here by sharing some of the ways in which we sense that our questions have been emerging and transforming along the way.

We consider that the questions we ask ourselves, as much in our group journeys as in the context of this article, do not find themselves in the 'inner' space of the group or in the 'individual' experiences of each of us, but in the very specific transversality of a city model that corresponds to a particular politico-economical context. This sentence from Franco Ingrassia comes to mind when giving an account of the complex peculiarity of this context:

contemporary markets can be thought of as war territories of all against all, as territories where the defence actions of a fictional 'internal' comfort are combined with a reverse general hostility towards everything that may be considered external.¹⁴

At the beginning of this text, in the section 'arriving from Another Place', we gave an account of those other spaces from which we arrived in order to congregate in the esquizo group, and of a certain sensation of overflow linked to those spaces. Excess and saturation of extremely interesting meetings and events to go to, things to learn, contacts to initiate and maintain, agendas to fill and carry out, spaces and people to meet. All of this leads us to the continued task of producing assemblages and dis-assemblages and situates us in the inevitability of thinking about how to traverse these modes of producing relations and territories and how to collectively reinvent them.

We see ourselves charged by and located in the centre of a hurricane called Barcelona in which the emergence of the 'new spirit' of capitalism¹⁵ is evident

and palpable to us on a daily basis. The apparatuses of accumulation have shifted from an industrial world (based on waged labour and in which professional activity found itself clearly separated from the private sphere) to a perhaps more troublesome reticular world in which social life is composed of a successive multiplication of temporary but recoverable encounters and connections with different groups. In this new dynamic of the city, it is the activity of persons and things that is used to measure their greatness. In the industrial city activity was con-fused with work and the active (subjects) par excellence were those who had a waged job which was stable and productive. On the contrary, activity in the contemporary city overcomes the oppositions between work and not-work, between the stable and the unstable, between waged and unwaged, between what is calculable in terms of productivity and that which, not being measurable, escapes all evaluation.

At the very centre of this maelstrom, in our collective spaces we found that this 'aimless' being another way allows us to create forms and fields of composition for the production of our common lives and the production of knowledges and territories that are, not only very dear to us, but fundamental on a political level. But at the same time, we realise that this production, denominated 'immaterial', is also a value producing machine which has confronted us with giving account of (dar cuenta) and counting (hacer las cuentas) the value produced. Thus questions arose around what to do with the diffuse and profuse things that we produce, about their forms of preservation and the contradictions of the different formats that legitimate, make visible and give more or less value to that immaterial production.

crédito-credibilidad-constancia16

This reflection in relation to devices of preservation, circulation and visibilisation of our productions, has also brought us to the question of those formats we choose – or reject – for sharing with others and making mobile our collective experiences and knowledges. About how to make them nomadic so that they can enjoy contagion, complicity, sampling and fusion with similar and known others, and those yet to be discovered and met. Our encounter with the Other-Institution has confronted us with a post-industrial logic of production and recognition, which imposes a specific direction through entry into the grammar of tangible projects. We face a choice which suggests that in order to maintain the contours it is essential to accept a single route for the becoming-project. The silhouette of a group-that-meets would seem to gain meaning only in terms of its interiority which is private, reproductive and in this sense quasi-domestic, invisible and lacking in significant impact.

While a group-that-presents or a group-that-writes-an-article would seem to situate itself in a public, open, visible and productive sphere inside the regimes of credit-credibility-proof that underpin immaterial production.

We have also thought that naming ourselves implies an act of marking ourselves, of producing a mark/brand for ourselves. In Spanish the double connotation of this term is peculiar: a 'marca' [a mark] is a sign, a trace, a track. Marking ourselves with a name is in this sense creating a common dwelling in this peculiar word which condenses our pathways. But 'marca' also refers to 'brand', as in a commercial brand. In what way can naming our collective spaces become both an acting of marking us but also a kind of performitivity of branding that not only marks us with the warmth of belonging but that simultaneously 'brands' us? With respect to this question we still find ourselves exploring issues around which, more than having positions or answers, we have concerns. A question with a quasi-naive tone appears before us: why do we see ourselves as destined to give a name to our collectives? And later, radically stretching this apparently banal question: what do we do with this 'copyright' of our encounters? What type of marks/brands do we perform in our collectives when it would seem that presenting oneself not only in terms of X, but as 'X of such-and-such' grants greater legitimacy, seriousness and privilege? What do we do with these names-marks-brands? What type of value does this distinction create?

cuentas¹⁷

The receipt of a public grant, mentioned above, inaugurated our relationship with money. Now, after some time, we begin to think about how this relationship has been; how it obliges us to situate ourselves before our production in economic terms. We think it is necessary in our collective spaces to build together an honest and open reflection on money, on those economic resources that circulate almost always in a precarious way and in dribs and drabs in our collective spaces, where experience reminds us that this tends to be a complex and thorny terrain. Through the grant, we came to have money which had to be organised and administered. It had to be from the Outside that we were reminded: 'hey, you have to give account of your accounts'. Having money turned into having more work: we had to administer it, justify it, guard it and declare it.

Our situation, on the small scale of a group, made us face broader questions: how do we count and how do we spend the value collectively produced? Who will be responsible for the accounts? What is paid with that money, in and outside the group? We consider the term 'accounts' to be suggestive, giv-

en its double meaning in Spanish. 'Las cuentas' refers to 'accounts' in terms of money, bills, etc. But 'contar' alludes to both 'to count' and 'to tell'. How do we count and tell the narratives of our collective wealth and our accounts? Thinking about 'las cuentas' (accounts, bills) raised the question of which activities and tasks in our process should be considered as waged work. When does a task count as work? What tasks in our collectives do we consider to be waged work? When is a job paid and when is it voluntary? How can this distinction be delineated?

These questions also led us to broader issues around the value that we produce together and that evidently cannot be reduced to an economic dimension, but that scatters itself diffusely all throughout our emotional and discursive productions, our networks of affinity and our relationships in common. The logic of the discourses and the practices that promote the constitution of the neoliberal city linked to forms of immaterial production, is based on the administration of the value that emerges through the collective production of symbols, ideas and products from the field of knowledge and innovation, and which highlights, in a specific way, peculiarities and affective relationships with others. In spite of this productive cooperation of the collective, we paradoxically find ourselves constantly questioned by a structure based on a hierarchy which works to make precariousness and forms of repression individualised through sophisticated forms of social control.

Stemming from some of these reflections we find ourselves traversed by certain questions: what do we do with the wealth(s) that we generate together? What counts as resource, wealth and value? How does one think collectively in and about a resource, how to mind, administer and distribute shared wealth? How should this community that nurtures and maintains it, arrange and modulate itself in compositional terms? And particularly, how do we compose in a context in which wealth and resources tend to be identified and structured in dichotomised apparatuses between the public and the individual-private?

componendas18

It is vital to us to distance ourselves from the production of individual tools to be able to continue being 'OK' and to 'better bear' The Outside. Without a political 'agenda' but pierced by present events, we organised ourselves to 'hack' the codes of encounter and of the production of hegemonic data, searching for spaces to invent other subjectivities. More than projects, we see it as necessary to venture into processes of invention and learning around our forms of assembling and making life shared: to fabricate ways of living, to be craftswomen and

craftsmen of the trade of *componendas*. The words 'componenda' (*agencement*) together with 'composition' evoke for us a question about the shapes, rhythms, materials and textures that constitute and give flesh to our articulations and assemblages. It's a question about the arrangements, the 'mends' and the 'jury-rigs' we invent and experiment with to make of life, a common territory. ¹⁹

It has been and is necessary for us to continue experimenting with further open codes of organisation, with no centre which establishes them and assigns an external durability to events: without a façade where we feel represented. Our challenge shifts to disarming what has been over-codified, encouraging the political dimension of the encounter, of its power to recompose, and of its generative strength, opening paths to possible becomings, to 'combinations-many', in which the dimension of the future is not pre-organised in the idea of *a project*, nor forced by it. And at the same time, in which the wealth produced, and in-production, might be assigned to a different kind of 'putting in common', in a counter-attack against established forms of recognition. Perhaps this is another of the fighting fronts that in late capitalism, in our collectives, we see necessary to work on, and to activate, to be able to build forms of articulation of our journeys, and of the wealth(s) produced in our encounters.

Those who write here are gregarious bodies that over the past three years have been wandering and joining together. Among these silhouettes with ever-diffuse contours and in constant change, we sense a figure, a space close to the animal-herd, but where the peculiar does not reveal itself in an automatically linear or unproblematic way within 'the common'. We are not sure what it means to say 'to make common', 'to make community', 'to make a group', but what is certain is that we know no other way to live. This fundamental instinct to sniff each other, to come closer to one another, to seek each other out, traverses us. This gregarious feeling is not a natural or instinctive question, nor is it automatic that one day a few bodies may become a herd (It takes more than being a beast to make The Herd!). In any case, more than instinct, we are characterised by clumsiness. We are those who gambol, those who, wanting to run, bump into each other, those who when they want to sing they howl, those who at times, without wanting to at all, when they want to caress their claws betray them and they scratch.

We want to produce complicities, common territories, forms and ways of life, little archipelagos of tentative certainties that catapult us towards what we do not yet sense as possible. But we do not want to produce work that only produces more and more work. Capitalism has made prevail a definition of wealth coming clearly from economics, that 'sad science': the accumulation of things, appropriation of financial value, purchasing power. We do not want a sad politics or a politics of lacking, but a politics of abundance and wealth.

Looking again at Bifo's text, it becomes essential for us to continue asking ourselves certain questions: How does one live well? How do we make ourselves open to pleasure? How do we enjoy and inhabit with others? And above all, what is wealth? It is precisely thanks to the production of lack and need that capital makes our time a slave, that it subordinates our rhythms. Thus it is necessary for us to have a profuse and overflowing experience of time, one not charged with the anguish of the hours that extinguish and throw into exclusion those who do not find themselves mobilised, connected, related, engaged in a flow of projects and envisioning. We do not want to accumulate, but to lavish (prodigar).²⁰ We do not want to calculate and count, but to share in abundance, to put in common that which is sufficient and necessary to articulate ourselves together with others in wellbeing. To lack, we oppose abundance; instead of accumulation, we go after lavishness. It is necessary for us to oppose calculation and lack with profusion. Far from the accounting and administering of time and production, what are constitutive and fundamental for us are the energies, affects, encounters, assemblages, words, questions, reflections, and desires that lavish upon.

Endnotes

- 1. This text has been told and written by Joel Audí, Nizaiá Cassián, Sandra Forcadell, Raquel García. Isabel River. Inés Santana. Lucía Serra. Miriam Sol i Torrelló.
- $\textbf{2.} Interview with Franco Berardi `Bifo` undertaken by Colectivo Situaciones, at nodo 50.org/colectivo situaciones/entrevistas_06.htm$
- **3.** In Spanish the verb 'to project' (*proyectar*) refers to 'make a projection on a plane surface' or 'display an emotion or quality in one's behaviour'. But it does also have a broader connotation highly related to the notion of *project* (this last one defined as 'an individual or collaborative enterprise that is carefully planned and designed to achieve a particular aim, a proposed or planned undertaking'). This second meaning will be very useful for some of the ideas that we would like to share here. In that sense, to project is also to throw or to direct *forward*; to estimate or to forecast, it is to think up, to conceive or to propose a plan and the means to implement it or achieve it, a 'cause to move forward'.
- **4.** In Spanish the word 'pasar' means both 'to happen', 'to pass' and 'to cross'. Aquello que nos pasaba, era también aquello que podía traspasarnos, o pasarnos dejándonos atrás (that which might *happen* to us, was also something that might go through us, run us through, or pass us, leaving us behind).
- **5.** Gloria Anzaldua, Chicano feminist, situates herself on the border as a place of writing. Her texts find themselves always between the intricacies of theory and literature, between one language and another that become a *spanglish* making the experience a piece of work which is impure, *mestizo*, queer and disobedient, a generator of knowledge. From her we take the expression 'Intimate terrorism: life in the borderlands' which appears in her text 'Rebel movements and cultures that betray' included in the edited book (Spanish version) *Inappropriable Others: feminisms from the borderlands* (2004) Madrid, Traficantes de Sueños, p.77. Available at traficantes.net
 - 6. Registros: records, to register.

- 7. Donna Haraway (1999) 'The promises of monsters: A regenerating politics for inappropriated/able othes' in *Politica y Sociedad, No.30, 1999, pp.121-163, Madrid.*
- **8.** We take this reflection mainly from Toni Negri's text, 'Labour' included in his book *Exile* (1998) Barcelona, El Viejo topo, pp.31-50.
- 9. Francesc Tosquelles (Reus, 1912 France, 1994). Borderlands thinker, political exile, psychiatrist, anarchist militant, writer, daring in the face of madness. He revolutionized the work in the psychiatric hospital of Saint-Albain during the war, he founded institutional psychotherapy, he included the patients in the real management of the hospital and incorporated artistic creation and mass meetings among all of the people that formed the institution. The influence of Toquelles for Guattari would be fundamental to the practices undertaken in the La Borde clinic.
- 10. Conference 'Francesc Tosquelles: Creative processes and clinical practices'. 22/12/11 in the Civic Centre of San Agustín, organised by the Schizoanalysis Group Barcelona with the participation of Suely Rolnik y Antoni Labad. esquizobarcelona.org/category/videos
- 11. This is a reference to 'componenda' as a translation proposed by J.L. Pardo for the term *agencement*. sindominio.net/laboratorio/documentos/milmesetas/debate_pardo.htm
 - 12. Freire, Paolo (1986) Toward a pedagogy of the question. Buenos Aires: Aura.
- 13. In Spanish questions are spelled with two question marks, one at the beginning and one at the end of the sentence, containing it, opening and closing it (¿?).
- **14.** Interview with Franco Ingrassia, by Amador Fernandez-Savater, 'Thinking (in) dispersion' in the Magazine Espai en Blanc n°9-10-11: *The impasse of the political.* Available at: espaienblanc.net/Pensar-en-la-dispersion.html
- **15.** In particular we take here some ideas developed by Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello (2002) *The new spirit of capitalism*. Madrid: Akal, p. 161-166.
 - 16. Credit-Credibility-Proof, Credit-Credibility-Evidence.
 - 17. Cuentas: accounts, bills, what you count, what you tell.
 - 18. Agencement.
- 19. 'Life is a good that the State does not manufacture. Outside one cannot live either unless one manufactures a way of living, that is what I refer to with *componendas* [...] When one can no longer live that is when a *componendas* must be made [...] that is the creation of a right to existence [...] The problem with *componendas* is: How can those of us who cannot live together live together? [...] How can we live with differences? Only by making *componendas*.' sindominio.net/laboratorio/documentos/milmesetas/debate_pardo.htm
- **20.** Both in Spanish and English seems like to lavish (*prodigar*) is a word not so commonly used, kind of old. To lavish is to give or share in abundance, to shower with, to cover something thickly ('to lavish care on someone') or to spend or give in profusion.

Micropolitics

— David Vercauteren¹ traduction du français de Manuela Zechner

One of the problems that collective practices come across is to do with the attention given to micropolitics. The questions that arise on this level focus around two axes.

The first axis concerns the different poisons that may circulate in the body of a group and weaken it, and points to averting the slippery slopes that lead a group into black holes. We may think of the phenomena of enclosure and bureaucratization here; as well as of all the small fears that come to insert themselves into the body of a group and produce forms of identitarian or 'self-referential' withdrawals; but also of the kinds of collective constructions that produce exclusive disjunctions, binary oppositions and psychologizing fixations within language, attitudes, positions or roles. In the end, micropolitical analysis concerns modalities of desiring arrangement [agencement] that take on phantom-like or ideological forms of power, leading ourselves and others towards the cultivation of a broad spectrum of sad passions (resentment, hatred, etc).

The second axis concerns components of passage ('composantes de passage', a schizoanalytic concept²) and entails two aspects. The first aspect relates to the actualisation of potentials and the experimentation with arrangements [agencements] that had hitherto been locked into forms or images. This first aspect also concerns the valorisation of forces that have been stuck within assigned roles, or the modification of certain elements and practices that organise the material or practical framework of the group. The second aspect is to do with attempts at grafting new components onto a collective project or process, elements that don't per se form part of its habits. This is about connecting to the outside, sniffing at what's going on left and right, and importing new uses, techniques, expressions, gestures and so forth. And it is, conversely,

also about making knowledges about those practices circulate, as cultures of precedents that can irrigate and nourish collective practices.

These two axes of micropolitics are linked, even if their specific tasks differ. One pays specific attention to the state of a body soaked in capitalist logics and to the ways in which we envisage our collective ways of healing and protection, while the other poses questions about the components of passage and transformation that we may activate.

We have chosen to focus on the first question here [that of the body], in order to unpack the problem that opens onto micropolitics in relation to a certain culture of the left and to capitalism.

To take into account

In Anti-Oedipus – a book to rediscover – Deleuze and Guattari pose the following problem: 'Why do so many of those who have or should have a revolutionary objective keep a preconscient investment of a reactionary sort? And less commonly, how do those with objectively reactionary interests manage to operate a preconscious investment of a revolutionary type? Do we have to invoke a thirst for justice on the one hand, a right ideological vision as good and just view; and a blindness stemming from treachery or an ideological mystification on the other? Revolutionaries often forget, or like to ignore, that people make revolutions happen out of desire and not out of duty.³ It's in fact far from being obvious that an interest held up within a certain group – around this or that ambition or claim - necessarily coincides with the desires that traverse the group. One may very well have a shared interest and objective to transform a power structure, whilst at the same time having a desire to maintain or even acquire this same power. The revolutions of the twentieth century taught us that the fact of changing state power doesn't as such transform the modalities in which this power is enacted, nor gets rid of the desire for such power.

The micropolitical point of view brings this fact to the fore: we don't invest in a project because of pure devotion, through mere reasoning of consciousness. We also bring our histories, cultures, languages, relations to powers and knowledges, our phantoms and desires to a group. Those aren't individual strictly speaking, in the sense of being private, but inscribe themselves across a multitude of geographical, social, economic and familial relations (to name but a few) which impregnate our bodies more or less strongly.

And yet it seems that the problem is often brushed aside within collective practices. Why? How come the micropolitical dimension is so foreign to our ways of constructing the common? These questions open onto a terrain that largely overwhelms us. Let's just say that – from the point of view we want

to pursue here, which is that of groups engaged in social, political and cultural struggles across the geographical zone called Europe – the history of the workers movements marks our current culture for better and for worse, and that it no doubt transports some of this forgetting of micropolitics, or distance from it. Let's briefly explore this hypothesis.

'That's secondary!'

Certain ways of seeing art, politics, life have been developed out of the culture of the workers' movement in the last century and a half. This culture was characterized by a majoritarian conception of class belonging that built on the roles that workers played within the production process. The synthesis that was produced around the working class has enabled for a certain number of disparate forces to be captured through the articulation of new social goals, new modes of organisation and new means of action. But this synthesis also had a set of paradoxical effects. Let's name two. One consists in the reduction of the movements' constitutive diversity around one central figure: the male factory worker. The other is to do with incorporating part of the political and economic programme of the bourgeoisie. Science, progress, universalism, and the position of truth were (and still are, at least when it comes to a large part of structures created during the period of this movement) shared references. These in turn produced a number of dichotomies that, at least partially, structured ways of thinking and organising: body/soul, reason/feeling, public/private, collective/individual, and so forth.

One of the effects of this cultural synthesis produced by and within the workers movement has been the creation of a habit, namely that of brushing micropolitics away with the back of the hand, and of cataloguing it as giving rise to subjectivist drifts. The problem lay 'elsewhere': on one side, in the objective position of the class, the evolution of relations of forces within the productive apparatus, the strategic challenges deriving from this; and on the other side, in the construction of the party, the consciousness-raising within the masses and the strategy for taking power. The rest was secondary. Even where this 'rest' (ecology, questions of gender, of affect, matters of desire, of forms of language...) was dealt with, it was still subordinate to the macropolitical dimension.⁴

This splitting apart of what is considered to pertain to important problems (macropolitics) from what is not seen as such, or only additionally so (micropolitics), has not only produced a blindness to the dimensions of ecology within practices, but has also given rise to a certain collective management of desires, feelings, moments of tiredness and so forth: what else can be done than just manage the messy 'political economy of desires', when we are not

allowed to learn from it?⁵ A management that proceeds via avoidance, displacement or exclusion, and discipline. There was (and still is?) the 'political break time' that groups gave to those taken by fatigue or 'losing it'. Up until the 60s, certain communist parties had an internal 'police' force that took care of these 'personal' dimensions. Thus, the sexuality of a party member was to be taboo ('We create new men'; 'Let's not give our enemy the chance to attack us on moral matters') in such a way that, if someone 'fooled around' too often or got caught, he had to explain himself to an entity of the party. Intimacies were to be killed off, except if they became too important; the same applied to feelings, given that aims came from elsewhere, based on more serious and 'objective' criteria (the party line), and that 'the party is always right'.⁶

This conception has changed its shapes and masks today, no doubt, but its ethos continues to propagate itself. That's expressed on the one hand by a discourse and reflection that deals with the aspects considered essential to the project (cultural programming, public declaration or 'branding', political action...) - and on the other hand, 'when we have the time', when we've done 'the serious tasks', the questions to do with 'the rest' appear. Questions that are generally speaking relegated to this big moment of dumping called 'evaluation' (or more regularly under the 'any other business' category of the agenda). But even if 'the rest' is finally considered in this perspective, it is through broadly predefined lines: did we meet our objectives? What have been the dysfunctions and errors of our analyses and how can we fix them?

If we follow this hypothesis, it seems that micropolitics doesn't find very a fertile ground within workerist culture. But it also seems that the very act of raising this question has been complicated by those who have won their struggles in looking towards what's possible and thinkable for 'this world'.

Capturing affect

Let's unpack a new aspect of this problem of micropolitics in its relation to capitalism. In 1986, Félix Guattari wrote in his book on the 'winter years' that the micropolitical dimension took a new articulation vis a vis the modifications of 'integrated world capitalism':

A certain type of subjectivity, which I would call capitalist, is in the process of invading the entire planet. Subjectivity of equivalences, of the standardised phantasm, of the mass consumption of infantilising assurances. [...] It doesn't just engage conscious ideological formations but also collective,

unconscious affects.7

So what are the stakes concerning the micropolitics of groups today, after thirty years of capitalist restoration or 'conservative revolution'?

Let's quickly outline a few traits of those stakes in beginning with a 'detour'. In 1957, the ethnologist and filmmaker Jean Rouch was invited by a Ghanian community, the Haouka, to film their rituals and dances of possession. The Haouka adapted their traditional culture to new modern gods (the locomotive, the doctor, the governor...) that produced disorders, notably mental ones. At the end of each week, the community gathered in the village in order to treat the different violences and humiliations inflicted by the British colonial regime upon people at work or in the street. The psychic disorders were treated through collective rituals, through dances and techniques of trance. In that moment, everyone could embody the figure of the oppressor, of the one they had been hurt by: one became the governor, the other the foreman or the priest, etc. The film 'Les maitres fous' thus exposes the ways in which the Haouka community takes up the challenge of healing itself from the poisons injected by colonial power.

In the same period, the Algerian medic Frantz Fanon wrote:

Colonialism forces the dominated people to constantly ask itself: who am I in reality? The defensive positions born of this violent confrontation between the colonised and the colonial system constitute a structure that reveals the colonised personality. In order to understand this 'sensibility' we need only to study and appreciate the scope and depth of wounds inflicted on the colonized during a single day under a colonial regime. We must remember in any case that a colonised people is not just a dominated people.⁹

Is this process of colonisation 'limited' to the 'barbarian' peoples that live beyond the Mediterranean? Wasn't it also necessary to civilise the European populations? In the context of parliamentary debates seeking the institutionalisation of the republican school in 1885, Jules Ferry already said that 'the superior races have a right over the inferior races.' A right but also a duty: 'They have the duty to civilise the inferior races.' Francis Imbert, who quotes these words in his book called *For a Pedagogical Praxis*, ¹⁰ notes that the positions of the 'superior' and 'inferior', or of the civilised and the savage, are transposed from one field into another, from the colony to the school and back. This transfer constitutes a process of legitimisation: it's just as legitimate to submit the territory of childhood to a project of colonisation as it is to subject civilisations that have been decreed as inferior. And this process of 'internal colonisation' doesn't just concern childhood but the entirety of

life-turned-into-population, via the management of health, hygiene, nutrition, sexuality, etc. A treaty written in 1898 about breastfeeding illustrates this idea: 'In popular contexts, the care that a child is surrounded with is still that which has been taught by the grandparents. Poor mothers chose to go to the herbalist at the corner rather than going to the medic in the charity office. It's a veritable war we are obliged to fight against old wife's prejudices and remedies.'¹¹

Michel Foucault sees a new regime of power in this 'modern' turn. He uses the term 'biopolitics' in order to show the way in which power tends to transform at the end of the 18th century. A moment where a regime of 'disciplinary' power forms, which on the one hand has the objective of restricting and habituating 'individuals' to new types of production (big industry), and on the other hand is to interfere with life itself – with affects, desires, sexuality, in short with the whole body. That is to say, to get productivity and 'performance' out of populations by modulating and integrating the body, its gestures and rhythms into the industrial machine. Such government of individuals is completed by a population control that proceeds via a series of 'bio-powers' that administer life in a global way (hygiene, demographics...), in order to allow for the reproduction of value to be maximised. In other words, life henceforth comes to be a part of power.¹²

In the course of the last thirty years, this mode of power has taken on a new speed and has focussed ever more on the production of subjectivity. The new audiovisual and advertising techniques, amongst others, try to make us integrate modes of signification in relation to highly differentiated systems of production. They are somehow the new matrixes that model the imaginary, inject us with personalities, scenarios, attitudes; in brief, they impose a whole micropolitics of relations on our worlds. Besides (or adjacent to) this system of sign production, a new doctrine emerges within businesses:

If a business in any way took personal elements into account in their judgement of a worker, this was a priori considered as risking to encroach upon private life. It's clear that this kind of schema [...] has become totally obsolete today. The elaboration of a business's future vision, its conception of strategy, the organization of working teams and the creation of a network of relations draw upon qualities that go well beyond mere technical competence and mobilise the entire personality.¹³

Yet this mode of power relation, having life and its conduct as object, doesn't quite reduce life to a single mode of relation.

In order for a power relation to be enacted, there always needs to be some kind of freedom on both sides of the relation. Even if a power relation is completely unbalanced, when we can really say that one has the power over another, power can only act upon someone as long as they have the possibility of killing themselves, of jumping out the window or killing the other. That's to say that within power relations, there is inevitably the possibility of resistance, since if there were no such possibility – of violent resistance, flight, trickery, strategies to turn a situation around – there would be no power relation at all. 14

In that latter case, what there would be is a state of domination.

Creating a culture of the self

Taking into account that we do not stand outside of power relations (such as state structures for instance) but that those relations are immanent to our practices, we confront the following question: what are the processes and uses that a group makes and invents in order to appropriate or re-appropriate a culture of self? In other words, our problem isn't just about having active and intelligent groups dealing with the capitalist system and world: groups also need to be capable of thinking and building their own collective arrangements and activations [agencements]. These modes of thinking and using mostly happen to be modelled upon the very systems that the same groups denounce.

Micropolitics tries to tackle this problem. It's not about supplying distressed groups with a little more 'soul'. Rather, when active, micropolitics invests the same objects as macropolitics, however at different levels and in different forms. Sex, money and the aesthetic of the self, for instance, operate on a macro level (eg. through monetary circulation, through the televised image of woman) as much as on a micro level, albeit through different forms. The two bounce off each other and connect, not in the mode of subordination or of contradiction, but as an inclusive disjunction that 'affirms disjunctive terms, affirms them across all their distances, without limiting or excluding one in relation to the other, [and it's here] that we maybe find the most advanced paradox.'15 'Maybe this and maybe that' instead of 'either this, or that'. Inclusion of one within the other: the terms differ from one another, are distinct and distinguishable, but at the same time they are partially included within one another, they interact and exist (partially) for each other.

What brings us here then is thinking this 'maybe' of micropolitics in its singularity, within the context of the configuration of powers, as well as the liberating practices a group is taken by. On that level, the question is not

about freeing us from an oppressive state or from the control of capital by revindicating individual rights or collective conventions, since it's the state that is the matrix of individualisation:

The main objective today for sure isn't about discovering what we are, but about refusing that which we are. We need to imagine and construct what we could be in order to rid ourselves of the political 'double bind' of simultaneous individualisation and totalisation, as proper to modern power structures. The political, ethical, social and philosophical problem that we encounter today is not about trying to liberate the individual from the state and its institutions, but to liberate ourselves from the state and the modes of individualisation that come with it. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity. ¹⁶

And those aren't built via good will or intentions (yet another form of modern power relation), but via an art of doing things, of artifices that oblige us to take into account the immanent character of the ways in which power plays out, the ways in which power relations shape our bodies and form of thoughts, and that at the same time push us to look for new ways of relating to ourselves and of acting together.

Today, the question seems to be: what collective techniques and knowledges do we need in order to heal and ward off these imprints on our bodies, which affect our capacities to act and think and tend to disempower us?

Endnotes

1. This text combines the entries 'Micropolitiques' and 'Réunion' of the book *Micropolitique des Groupes*, written by David Vercauteren in collaboration with Thierry Mueller and Olivier "Mouss" Crabbé, published with HB Editions (France) in 2007.

2. In a generative schizoanalysis, "the role of the components of passage will be here limited to putting into play only weak interactions between the assemblages, with the goal of loosening, untangling if possible, their alienating mechanisms, their stratifications and their oppressive redundancies, their black hole-effects, indeed, even of averting or deferring the threats of catastrophe which hang over them". From: *The Guattari Reader*, Gary Genosko ed., p.22

3. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1972) *L'Anti-Oedipe, capitalisme et schizophrénie*, Paris: Editions de Minuit. p.412

4. Using the theoretical support of the distinction between infrastructure (economical) and superstructure (ideological, cultural, aesthetic...)

5. See, for example, the film of Romain Goupil: "Mourir à trente ans", 1982.

6. It's also possible that this culture of ideological struggles, which has so strongly marked the history of revolutionary and reformist movements, is a way of translating micropolitical relations into a language socially accepted by the group or party.

- 7. Félix Guattari (1986), Les années d'hiver, Paris: Barrault, Paris. p.229
- 8. Jean Rouch (2004) DVD set, Paris: Montparnasse.
- 9. Frantz Fanon (1963), The wretched of the earth, New York: Grove Press. p.124
- 10. Jean-Francois Imbert (1985) Pour une praxis pédagogique, Vigneux: Ed. Matrice, p.165
- **11.** Quoted in: Luc Boltanski (1977), *Prime éducation et morale de classe*; Paris: Ed. de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, p.34; see also: Revue Recherches (1977) 'Disciplines à domicile, l'édification de la famille', n°28, Paris: Recherches.
- **12.** See Michel Foucault (1997) *Il faut défendre la société*. Paris: Gallimard. And also Judith Revel (2002) *Le Vocabulaire de Foucault*, Paris: Ellipse.
- 13. Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello (1999) *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme*. Paris: Gallmard. p. 132
 - 14. Michel Foucault (1994) Dits et Ecrits IV, Paris: Gallimard, p. 720
- **15.** Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1972) *L'Anti-oedipe, Capitalisme et Schizophrénie*, Paris: Minuit, Paris, p.90
 - 16. Michel Foucault (1994) Dits et Ecrits IV, Paris: Gallimard, p.232



EXERCISE Meeting

In our understanding, meetings are occasions to cultivate the common and also to produce collective intelligence. This intelligence is to do both with the ways we come to relate to a situation (unemployment, the city...) and with the ways in which form a group. The criteria for fruitful meetings concern the potentials, powers [puissance] and joys that emerge from them.

Far from being a serial summary of '1' + '1', the 'us' of a group has its own consistency and needs to be constructed and cultivated. In order to be a group, it's not enough to get together as well-meaning people and to try express ourselves. To construct and to cultivate in fact implies two things: 1. the creation of a dispositif that allows for encounters in which present forces can actualise and develop themselves; 2. the development of a particular attention to the effects that this dispositif produces.

The following text-instruction will present a certain way of envisaging meetings as well as the elements that seem efficient and useful towards the production of collective intelligence.

PASSAGES AND POINTS OF REFERENCE

PREPARATION

A meeting is something that requires preparation. We can think of this preparation as a construction or renovation site, where we need to figure out: what are our objectives? How are we going to approach them? What's the state

of our terrain? What do we need (competences, tools, infos...)? To prepare means to ask oneself a series of questions, organising a terrain and also learning to prepare.

PROGRESSION: where are we and where are we going? A meeting is part of a process. It punctuates its course and allows for the collective shaping of a future.

OBJECTIVES: What are the objectives of the upcoming meeting? Clarifying the objectives helps us to signpost the terrain. Those objectives have a manifold character. They point as much to the content (to arrive at a decision about something, for instance) and to the process (how will we get to it?) as to that which will be learned (what are the effects of our ways of doing things?).

ARTICULATIONS: what are the articulations we need in order to allow for a plurality of objectives to exist? This question marks a moment of vigilance: we know how the majoritarian way of cultivating meetings proceeds via an almost exclusive attention to 'contents'. This point is there to remind us that if we push too much for one thing, we kill off the other. 'Content', 'process' and 'learning' are three different aspects that traverse meetings at the same time. Each requires their specific rhythm in order to compose with the others.

TIMINGS: how much time do we have (for the meeting and for all the discussion points)? What are we capable of getting done in that time? Taking these questions into account will influence the outcome of the meeting. For example, if we overload the agenda this may cause tension in group members and black out a number of issues that seem, in one way or another, to slow down the 'efficient working' of the group.

PROCEDURE: how are we going to do it? This is about anticipating the different paths that each of the discussed 'points' will open up, and about imagining the articulations amongst those. The important thing here is to propose a way of exploring this/those situation(s). That's to say, to envisage the multiplicity of possible approaches and then choose the one that seems most appropriate and interesting. No certainty at all, just the affirmation of a hypothesis, a tentative to test it and to learn.

NEEDS: what do we need? At the level of content: do we have the necessary information? Do we need any particular inputs before or during the meeting (people, resources, texts...)? At the level of process: what do we need in order to support ourselves (roles, artifices, wallpaper...)? At the level of atmosphere: how do we tune in and prepare the space? The lighting? What will happen before and after the meeting?

To prepare is to touch upon these different considerations in one way or another. This exercise may be taken up in the very course of a meeting and/or be taken on by a subgroup. The point of the latter option is that those who take care of it can also learn to prepare, to try and propose new ways of doing things, to risk themselves and finally also to fabricate knowledge based on this experience.

EXERCISE

FACILITATION: a person within the subgroup is picked as the facilitator for this particular meeting. Facilitation is a difficult function. It requires training (it needs repetition), particularly for those who haven't yet been exposed to it, as well as requiring putting oneself at risk (to force oneself to take on new habits) and a climate that can accommodate and protect this attempt. For some, this function is about opening/closing down discussions, encouraging exchange and being attentive to the unfolding process as well as to roles (and how they can be activated). For others, it's as much about helping the group to think. That's to say that this function also reaches deep down into a group process, through syntheses and attempts at articulating problems.

So we've got two lines of force. One is more focussed on form, profiling itself with respect to the deeper layers: for instance, when the facilitating person wants to say something about contents, s/he can pass on her role or temporarily suspend her function (this is without doubt best when first learning to inhabit facilitation). The other line operates on both levels at the same time – and one level isn't better than the other, it's a question of style. Taking on this role is maybe about learning and cultivating a certain style.

THE BEGINNING OF THE MEETING: this is an in-between moment. To take the time to accommodate this passage is to offer oneself the possibility of creating a favourable climate. This first period allows for the articulation of four tasks:

- 1. Reading and/or approving of the last meeting's minutes. This small technical point has the advantage of allowing for a smooth entry into work, to remember where one comes from and to revisit a point or two if necessary.
- 2. Second, the facilitator shares her proposal for the meeting procedure with the group, as elaborated during preparation. The discussion here will focus on understanding the proposal and not on criticizing it. Critique will come after testing it.
- 3. Third, the 'weather' point. A moment when the members of a group give account of their physical or affective state (joy, tranquillity, being an-

noyed, fatigue...) in 2-3 words. The fact of being able to voice this feeling often allows for a certain discharge and alleviation in relation to the meeting. The weather also offers the possibility of choosing roles according to what's said: for example, a 'nervous' person can take on the role of ambiance sensor.

4. Fourth, the moment of choosing roles and artifices. This point combines two levels. Firstly, the roles required for the meeting: the timekeeper, the ambiance sensor and the minute taker. Secondly, the roles or artifices that the group may construct in relation to its own difficulties [the ancestor ...]. As concerns artifices, they can take on the form of a linguistic prescription (prohibition of arguing back-and-forth) or be constructed around objects (the use of a little statue, for instance, in the case of detours). In either case, artifices tend to oblige the group to pay attention to a certain aspect of its collective life that will be poisonous if left in its 'natural' state. After this setting up of conditions, taking some short 20 minutes, we get to the core of subjects, with the help of the proposed working process and of the roles and artifices.

THE MIDDLE PART OF THE MEETING: This period attempts, with each repetition, to open onto a process of experimentation around one or several objects. Here as elsewhere, nothing is guaranteed, we help ourselves with different means and cultivate the possibility of thinking collectively, but we can't predict what will come out of this. It may for example be that the working proposal leads the group into an impasse. In that case it's better to take the time to stop discussing, to suspend the prepared proceedings and organize a 'step-aside'. The step-aside is a dispositif we can draw upon at any given point in a meeting when it's useful to speak directly about collective process. It signals a careful attention towards 'how we're doing things right now. It acts as a kind of impromptu evaluation. In this sense, a step-aside may be proposed in the course of a meeting, in order to turn it around and away from what was planned, if the effects of this plan seem to lead the group astray. It's about intervening before everyone gets too stuck, with view to explore other and more promising paths within the process.

THE END OF THE MEETING: Two elements characterize the last moments of a meeting:

1. The first one consists in summing up decisions taken (with the help of the minute-taker) and in setting up the next steps of the collective work. Setting up here means imagining one or the other pathway for working on the next meeting from now, maybe anticipating the ones following after that. It's also about listening to what the preparation group can tell of its experience, and about evaluating the proposal it brings to the process.

2. The second one is the step-aside¹. As already pointed out, its function is to address the process. It's not about re-opening debates but about pointing to one or the other element regarding the group's ways of doing things, and to draw some knowledge or questions from this. This is also the right moment for questioning the roles and artifices that have been used, and to point out their effects. As opposed to the 'weather' point, this isn't a go-round. We depart from knowledges picked up, give consistency to that which works and to our experiments with other ways of doing things when there is a blockage. It can be useful to record these knowledges in a hypomnemata² [diary or blog or document...] that retraces the inventions, successes and problems through which the group passes – as a support for the group as well as for new members.

^{1.} The 'step-aside' is a kind of 'talvera'. In the Occitan language, the 'talvera' is the non-cultivated space at the margin of the field, which allows for the horse and its cartage to manoeuvre in order to [then] open up a new line [or row], and offers an occasion for the farmer to take a look at the work done. A space and moment of non-production, without which the tour de la terre, the working of the land and its fertilisation, aren't possible.

^{2.} Greek term that refers to memory aids. For the ancient Greeks, the Stoics of the 1st and 2nd century, the hypomnemata is a kind of booklet where someone notes down the knowledges that are important to them and that may be of help to another. Its function is the cultivation of knowledges picked up in the course of experiences, from what one hears or is inevitably confronted with through an event. See also Michel Foucault (2001 [1982]) L'hermeneutique du sujet, Paris: Gallimard, p.343-344, as well as Annex 1, called 'petit lexique'.

methods and methodologies





Technoshamanism

— **Fabiane Borges** and **Camila Mello** tradução du portugês por **Luciana Dumphreys**

Shamanism and technology would be practically the same thing if it were not for a split imposed onto them. There is an idiosyncrasy of a part of humanity in the piercing way it systematizes knowledge, causing real trauma and separation. We are referring not only to the History of Science or the demarcation of land in Africa (which colonizing criteria could cut the earth at its joints?) but also to all abrupt ruptures between acquired knowledge and a supposed truth. Shamanism and technology are constantly split up by force, even if there is interest and sympathy in their reunion.

During our stay in Europe holding workshops on technoshamanism, we were met with many prejudices ingrained in the average culture, adorned with ironic, diplomatic, savage and above all, authoritarian racism! This judgemental gaze is also cast by these same white eyes on indigenous knowledge in the South American Amazon and other regions, where the unequal distribution of land almost always favours monocultures and divides the forests in their integrity. If in some places forests still exist, we at least must wonder why. Who are the peoples who preserve them? What knowledge do they hold? If, matter and nature in general is enslaved, exploited and overused in the name of white technological development, what should be thought of the technological development of the indigenous? The shaman? The forest people? If one side is losing shamefully (the indigenous) it is because white developmental methodology is taking over the world. What will remain at the end of this forced, although exposed, antagonism?

Would it be possible to affirm that the difference between technology and shamanism is a question of methodology? Does electronic/digital technology yearn to achieve the powers of shamanic technology? Is there some equivalence between the technician and the shaman in the exercise of their







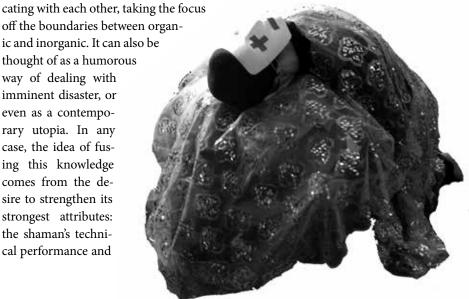


activities? Are the quests of a shaman and a scientist so different? Questions like these arise whenever the term technoshamanism is called upon. After all, why use this name? Why turn to shamanism to produce immersive experiences? What is the sense of invoking magic, witchcraft, shamanism in schizoanalytic practices using electronic equipment?

Some consider the term shamanism a fruit of a deep exoticism, others criticize the term accusing it of misappropriation of traditional cultures. Some question the lack of "spiritual power" of such procedures, but others, those that concern us, see the connection between the two forms of knowledge as evidence of a new ethics, an ecological ethics, or even as an ethics that transforms, that conceives technology not as a project of development, but as a living organism, interdependent with its environment, and just like planet Earth itself, capable of self-regulation.3 Technoshamanism is an attempt to combine two forms of knowledge that are constantly separated. The witch and the scientist. The healer and the doctor. The sorcerer and the robot. The convergence between technique and shamanism is an investment to repair past mistakes of misallocation of knowledge and deterministic hasty judgements about its forms. Technoshamanism appeals to animism, the religion of nature, to more traditional or even ancestral worldviews, to draw out their synchronicities, make them interpenetrate each other. On the other hand it invests in a more balanced future where the project to overdevelop machines does not end up creating an irreparable rift between humans and machines, manufacturing enslaved robots, hacked of all expression, desubjectivated. The use of the term can be seen as an activism of matter, an investment in the subjectivity of matter. the crossing of different natures communi-

ic and inorganic. It can also be thought of as a humorous way of dealing with imminent disaster, or even as a contemporary utopia. In any case, the idea of fusing this knowledge comes from the desire to strengthen its

strongest attributes: the shaman's technical performance and



the machine's magic. We do not yet know what kind of ethics shall emerge from this transfusion, our delight is in investigating processes.

Many efforts have been made to create other possible relations between traditional and technological knowledge, practices that disregard operational hierarchies and safety procedures, the standardized procedures of manufacturing technical objects and other indicators of civilization. These relationships are however always marked by a lack of financial investment, a lack of resources, or even illegality. These efforts are gradually being embraced in some dens in the art, technology, and university worlds, and taken up as independent projects, most often taking place as sundry experiments according to their access to materials and equipment.

Experimenting with technoshamanism

The technoshamanism workshops that we create suffer from all this insecurity, lack of resources and spaces for experimentation. This does not mean that they are not worthy of being replicated. The goal is to create profound subjective experiences from the use of electronic tools and a suitcase full of costumes. The workshop aims to put three productions into operation: a production of subjectivity, of knowledge, and of aesthetics. It is a micropolitical operation that sees the creation of the conditions for the invention of new ways of life in experimental practices, or even for enhancing ecosophy.

We generally invent a ritual to create a conducive environment for the experience. It can be prepared from material and signic elements brought from different religious, artistic, therapeutic and political platforms. All the elements that communicate and interfere with the ritual are like symbolic conductors capable of generating the most diverse reactions. The choice of elements is fundamental to the immersive process, which requires the concentration and surrendering of those involved. Surrendering can be the first and last stage of an experiment. Many participants never give themselves up to the experiment and this is very common, they are the refractory types, those who cannot or do not wish be hypnotized, as we know from hypnosis. Even if the workshop is not conducted with a hypnotic intention, there may be cases of self-induction by some participants, since it is a sensitive and immersive environment.

Ritual is able to reinforce the focus of people's attention, increase their sensitivity and extend their connection to the world. It is believed that in a ritual state the ways of knowing something intensify. While in the daily life of cities and universities knowledge is perceived as seizing a piece of the world, of critique, of history, creating dominance over the known, in the ritual space the paradigm is another: matter, objects, signic elements become alive, more







present, and the relationship is more direct, less crystallized. Perhaps it is a more hallucinated way of seeing reality.⁷ Despite our insistence on the use of signs, action does not submit itself to the sacred, nor is it only secular. Rather, we understand

action to be a platform for other creations. A ritual can be a game, a play, a celebration. The setting indicates the characteristics of the rite.

Endnotes

- 1. We call 'white' the widespread evolutionary technical vision, not necessarily that of the Europeans and their descendants, but rather of the destroyers of nature in the name of the evolution of the species, of control over other ethnic groups, and of religious domination.
- **2.** Indigenous people in general, meaning all the peoples not geared by development who, as a consequence, see nature as a living being, to whom one must relate in a positive and non-destructive manner.
- 3. The Gaia hypothesis, also known as biogeochemical hypothesis is a controversial hypothesis in deep ecology that proposes that the biosphere and the physical components of Earth (atmosphere, cryosphere, hydrosphere and lithosphere) are deeply integrated so as to form a complex interacting system that maintains climatic and biogeochemical conditions preferably in homeostasis. Originally proposed by British researcher James E. Lovelock as a hypothesized response of Earth, it was renamed, as suggested by his colleague, the 'Gaia hypothesis', in reference to the Greek supreme goddess of Earth Gaia. Reference: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaia_hypothesis. Further references made be found in the book of James Lovelock (2006) *The Revenge of Gaia*. Brazil: Basic Books.
- **4.** We held several technoshamanism workshops in Europe, but here we refer to the workshop organized by the nanopolitics group and held at Goldsmiths University of London in May 2011. Video: vimeo.com/25274823.

Photos:picasaweb.google.com/108094216176169619701/ecnoxamanismoBrancoFotonovela

- 5. For enhancing abstract thinking and processes of the cosmos in convergence. For more information see Félix Guattari (2005) *The Three Ecologies*. Althlone Contemporary European Thinkers, Continuum International Publishing Group. And Arne Naess (1972) *Shallow and the Deep*. Oslo: Inquiry.
- **6.** To learn more about ritual we recommend the reading of Richard Schechner (2006) *Performance Studies: An Introduction.* New York: Routledge. pp. 52-88
- 7. To understand hallucination as a form of knowledge see Jeremy Narby, *The Cosmic Serpent*: indybay.org/uploads/2011/04/17/cosmicserp.pdf. Basically he talks about two forms of knowledge, white and indigenous. While the former opts for a forceful seizure of material and cognitive elements, the second finds in hallucinogenic herbs such as ayahuasca its most reliable source of knowledge in the world. It values hallucination as a form of inter-relationship, and tries to depathologize its white interpretation.



EXERCISE Technoshamanist

DURATION:

performance ritual

6-8 hours (ideal)

ELEMENTS:

THE SUITCASE: cloth, paper, paints, brushes, pens, wires, ropes, tablecloths, plaster masks, plastic, rubber bands, scissors, clippers, rubbish bags, threads, needles, safety pins, glue, tapes, candles, musical instruments, aluminium foil, batteries, LEDs, electricity cables, plastic pipes, perfumes, chains, wires, ropes. The content and characteristics of the suitcase are the option of the coordinators.

MULTIMEDIA: Video cameras, multimedia projectors, speakers, microphones, guitar pedals, sound mixer, laptop. The more access to multimedia equipment, the better for the creation of the space.

NATURAL ELEMENTS: Earth, water, fire (candles), air. AREA: Large room with space to lie on the floor.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT:

Space produced from images, sound, candles, projection, darkness. The room is dark, the elements from the case are laid out on a table. The elements brought by the participants placed on the next table.

FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION OF THE WORKSHOP:

What does ritual mean to us?

SUMMARY OF THE ACTION:

Creating an immersive and inventive ritual, intervened into through the autobiographical rituals of each participant.

MOVEMENTS:

PART I: IMMERSIVE RITUAL

- 1. BLINDNESS: All participants put blindfolds on for two hours straight.
- 2. NOISECRACY: Ask each person to start making a sound with the first letter of their name. Capture with a microphone, attached to pedals, the noise emitted by the voices, returning the modified sound to the environment.
- 3. AUTOBIOGRAPHY: Make the participants walk about in the space telling autobiographical stories using various nuances of sound; ask them to slowly form a circle and to find a sentence that reflects the feeling that their stories invoke. Participants repeat each other's sentences several times until they get exhausted and gradually grow silent, coming to rest on the floor.
- 4. SHARING: All the collectively produced sound is recorded by an itinerant portable microphone, passing from mouth to mouth as blindfolded participants are uttering, and then played back to the still blindfolded group for about 30 minutes. Calmly people take the blindfold from their eyes, stretch and stand up.

PART II: TRANSVESTISM AND PHOTONOVEL

- 6. MASK AND COSTUME: The participants are invited to draw close to the elements from the suitcase and those that were brought from home, both laid out on tables. They then move on to transvestism, the staging and creation of characters.
- 7. PHOTONOVEL: All dressed up, the group heads to the centre of the room to make images from the phrases previously produced by each of the participants. Those images and movements are now photographed to produce a photonovel.

PART III: OFFERING AND RITUAL

8. ACTION/INTERVENTION: The disguised group moves out into the street, with musical instruments and offerings. The group chooses a place to perform the ritual and does so by offering small gifts to the street and passersby.

PART IV: CELEBRATION

9. RETURN TO THE SITE OF THE WORKSHOP: eating, drinking and sharing images and sounds of the collective work done.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ELEMENTS:

BLINDNESS

A simple way of changing the pathways of perception. Vision is one of the senses people usually rely on the most, to the extent that if it is obstructed, the body feels vulnerable and responds by sharpening the other senses. A simple blindfold across the eyes changes the modes of interaction between people and the environment. Bodies generate new meanings in relation to external stimuli, and register new forms of perception. With no vision of physical space, nor of the physiognomic representation of the other, the participants undergo a kind of bodily and subjective suspension. The mode of reality is changed, and this could lead the participants to a change of frequency, that is, a change in her or his state of concentration.

NOISECRACY

This moment is crucial for the creation of an immersive scene. It is the moment when participants start making noises, change their voice, produce a soundscape with varying timbre and different degrees of intensity and intentionality. This is reinforced by the use of microphones and guitar pedals that, connected to a computer, instantly return the sounds to the environment. The recorded sound is altered by the pedal's features: reverberation, amplification, distortion, delay, tuning, repetition, etc. All this is preferably emitted with a constant base sound, which can be recorded prior to the meeting or during the meeting itself. The idea is that noise is made at this point of the process, generating an unintelligible environment.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

To talk about yourself in a noisecratic environment changes the sense of selfreference. A confusion is produced between your own voice and the voice of another, and this confusion also alters your state of presence. People are asked to talk about themselves with the environment and not with an interlocutor, and this significantly changes the choice of words, tone and feeling. This shift operates with two major structural implications to the scene: the first is that the subject is one of the creators of its environment, the second is that its creation is exposed to constant interferences from others, leading to a persistent displacement between its own speech and the speech of others, between listening to itself and the environment. At the end of this stage, participants individually choose phrases that summarize their autobiographical utterances. Everyone listens to each other's phrases and repeats them: this will be the motto for the photonovel's scenes.

SHARING

Listening to the soundscape produced by all the participants provides a sense of accomplishment of a collective work. People begin to take notice of the environment created and reduce the importance of their own individual participation: their participation is captured by the microphone in a fragmented, random way, the discourse is distorted by the guitar pedals, and loose phrases are released into the environment without necessarily a demand to produce meaning. The result is a kind of environmental noise, a small sound society. It is one of the moments when people realize that the specific object of each person is less important than the overall process. Therefore at this time we must listen to the collective work.1

MASK AND TRANSVESTISM

Putting on a mask is to hide but also to reveal yourself. As you produce a mask, you chose how you want to be seen, it is a way of transforming yourself into something else. Mask and transvestism are essential for certain types of rituals, as they facilitate behavioural change towards the world and create a rupture in the usual ways of reacting to social schemes. Masked and disguised, the subject gains one dimension more than a mere human being, turning into an updated mechanism of others' becomings. In relation to this, other people change their behaviour, because they see the disguised person with new eyes, trying to recognize the emission of signs while exploring new paths of communication. To put on a mask and "transvest" is to become another, it is to be a variant of yourself.

You can find the soundscape of the workshop here:
 soundcloud.com/fabiborges/parte-workshop-tecnoxamanismo

PHOTONOVEL

It is the search for a first aesthetic result for the workshop which introduces other technical elements such as video, sound, text, etc. In the case of the photonovel, participants begin to act based on the sentences produced during the noisecratic and autobiographical immersive process. This is a space for the purification of the meanings of the sentences. If at first the autobiography is expressed in an environment cluttered with noise, this time each participant is asked to choose a single sentence. This phrase, initially personal and nontransferable, will be repeated by all participants not through words but with performative gestures, and therefore resignified, modified in its tone and expression. It is the body dressed up and masked that manifests the impulses generated by the phrases. The sentences can be spoken into the microphone by the conductor or the participants, using sound effects.

OFFERING / RITUAL

The offering is a time to offer something, a way to please, exercise generosity. The ritual is inspired by numerous religious practices; each gives a different meaning to the offering, and interprets its need in a different manner. Roughly, it means offering something to an entity (God, Orisha) to achieve protection or give thanks for a blessing received, among other things. In the case of this technoshamanism workshop, instead of giving a gift to a religious entity, the act is performed by making the offering in and for a public space. It is a way of honouring it. The offering on the street raises two important issues: one, to exercise ownership of the street, in the political and intervening sense, and to create on the street the place of an event, where in the encounter with passersby a relationship is sought. The offering is also for people who pass by or inhabit that space. So, the gesture of the offering on the street is a subjective and political action at the same time. Gentrification projects tend to individualize and privatize public life, eliminating social outcasts (homeless, prostitutes, artists, vagrants...) by sending them to hidden places in order to transform the public space into a place of safety, consumption and traffic, at the cost of more control. In this sense, making the offering is a performative, theatrical and ritual way of making contact with the public space and resisting forms of gentrification by investing in its appropriation.

CELEBRATION

Time to consider what was done, see the images produced, talk about them, analyse the dynamics used in the meeting, criticize or rethink methodologies; open opportunities for action and interpretation; eat and drink together.

* * *

The production of subjectivity, knowledge and aesthetic results are the instances that we want to introduce in as much as is possible and with great effort. They must be promoted, recognized and freed from a restrictive approach. A short digression about magic is worthwhile. Based on a materialistic assumption, we believe in the subjectivity of matter and the cosmos, we think of them as living things, as if we were immersed in a vast universal breath, on the move, and in the process of self-development. The means we have to activate this universal breath are varied. Different access to / encounter with technologies pervade religions, arts, sciences and other forms of culture. Technoshamanism is a way of pooling some of these instances, indicating without orthodoxy or fanaticism some paths to a relationship with the cosmic flows of forces, at times denser and others more diffuse. To name this, you may use whatever term you want! We take the opportunity of briging up these issues in this text to state that we are against the Belo Monte Dam — where the technology of metal does not respect the magic of the forest people!

A rehearsal of change: Theatre of the Oppressed

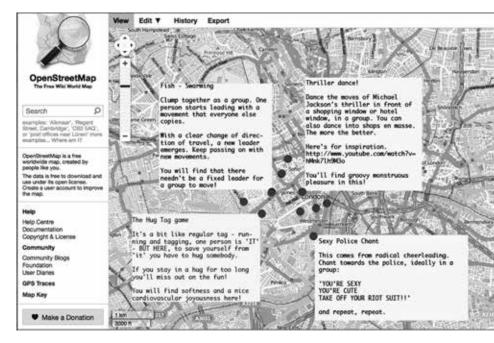
— Nelly Alfandari

Out of a desire to make political use of the communal moment of the theatre, theatre maker Augusto Boal develops the Theatre of the Oppressed (TOP) in Brazil in the 1960s – at the time of dictatorship. Through the fiction of the theatre, TOP re-stages current political and oppressive situations in order to collectively as well as actively explore ways to intervene in these. Boal calls this theatre a 'rehearsal of change'. Within the rehearsal process, theatrical exercises and games are used to create spaces and situations for a critical reflection on existing power relations and dynamics. These come to light through a combination of bodywork and the nature of play.

Using the Theatre of the Oppressed (TOP) within the context of nanopolitics and its desire to understand the political impact of the world around us on our bodies, enabled us to use the physical language of theatre – creative expression, play and images – as research forms. Below an account of some of the exercises we used.¹

Using theatre to explore power, conflict and perception

In a workshop fairly early on in the nano process, TOP techniques were used for participants in the group to engage with each other on a level that was not primarily verbal, but that was based on immediate and creative expression. These were triggered through games and exercises exploring power and trust within the group, matched with the honesty of playing a game. It facilitated the group to connect and build a shared understanding.



Sculpting and modelling series

As a first common denominator we decided to look at London as the space we move in. We used theatre to explore our different ways of perceiving the city and its conflicts in order to figure out where and how we felt we could intervene as a group.

Following an exercise sequence on sculpturing and modelling from the TOP arsenal, we shaped our various perceptions of the city onto each other's bodies. Some of us formed or sculpted the others into characters they associated with London. The sculptors then collectively collated their sculptures into a still image of London, negotiating without speaking how the different characters they formed would interact in the city. Does a business person use the same area of a public space as a youngster, or would one of them move into a different space? Where and how do the janitor and the university student meet? The shuffling of characters within the symbolised image of London revealed some of the conflicts we are sensitive to in our movements through the city.

Eventually these sculptures, as informed by the ideas and perceptions of others, and assembled into a shared space, were to try interact with each other in character, bringing the sculpted assemblage to life. A moving image of London and some of the relations we modelled and projected upon it. In a last



step those looking at the image could intervene by adding new characters aiming to change the image's dynamics.

Through this process we were able to 'discuss' our reading of the city without primarily talking to each other, but by exploring the imprints of the city we have on our minds and making them visible through physically printing them onto each other's bodies, informing each other through physically shaping ideas into images by using each other's bodies. At the same time, these exercises collectivise our perceptions through our embodying or playing characters created by others. In the final stage we started exploring ideas of how to change some dynamics and conflicts we see and live in our city.

The Machine

Having shared our London perceptions, we moved on to another Boalian exercise, 'the machine'. We initiated a 'machine' of London, building London as machine: one

person starts with a repetitive movement and a sound that in their association represents London. And one at a time the others add themselves to this body-movement until an image-like machine is created, in which one sound and movement triggers the next. Body after body plugs into the singular city machine in construction, a noisy assemblage emerges.

Within the nano workshop this felt like a very powerful way of representing or playing back the city as it was marked within our bodies. We felt 'the machine' would be a good way for us to bring our thoughts and perceptions back to the city, to confront the city with our reading of it, to make it rattle, change, break down...

Theatre to reflect collectively on trauma, fear and violence

After a year of working collectively, and in the different context of student protests and a city subjected to austerity measures on top of the usual surveillance and commercialisation, we came back to using elements of TOP to reflect on our experiences of fear and violence in the protests. We used techniques of the TOP method 'Rainbow of Desires', a form of theatre that uses body work and body-mask work to make the spectrum of oppression in a specific situation of conflict visible, and again, aims to reflect and change these conflicts. This created a strong common analysis - again only partly

verbalised – of our experiences and as such sparked many further creative ideas for action and being-together in spaces of contestation and protest.

Image Theatre

'Image is language. All images also are surfaces, and as such, they reflect what is projected onto them. As objects reflect the light that strikes them, so images in an organised ensemble reflect the emotions of the observer, her ideas, memories, imagination, desires... (...) Image Theatre is based on *the multiple mirror of the gaze of others* (...)'³

Through exercises we collectivised concrete moments of fear we experienced, and we explored the wider context of our fears and the ways to counter them.

The group shared their memories from the protest, the mental pictures they were left with, by sculpturing them onto the bodies of the others. This created a stream of live images, just like a slide show, but using each other's bodies as projection surfaces, to share our perceptions. In particular emotional memory can be shared through this non verbal approach, while, at the same time, participants support one another by playing out the situations some had experienced. This creates solidarity and trust.

Cops in the Head

We used this method in order to deal with power, fear and trauma through the body. Emerging from Boal's initial reflection on oppression in Europe – a context where oppressive power is more dispersed, less crystallised than in the environment of dictatorship he was exiled from - this series helps to look at the amount of different voices that are audible in one's mind when in conflict. It further explores the variety of obstacles and conflicts that are triggered within a person in a violent situation. However, instead of working on such 'inner' conflicts through individual therapy, the experience is collectivised, with others recognising and identifying aspects of these voices. By 'zooming out' of the actual conflict, and putting it into its political context, a range of effects such as inhibition, fear and trauma are being politicised so that a 'rehearsal of change' can start.

We looked at fear and anger within protest, as in situations when spaces or practices of creative resistance are broken by authorities, generally in the form of verbal and physical violence by the police. Group members could recognise different aspects of fear and anger they had experienced, and we analysed the different power struggles that are being fought in these moments. Most

importantly however, these exercises gave everyone a chance to re-work fears and scars left with their bodies and to *dynamise* as Boal puts it, alternative and empowering ways to deal with authoritarian violence in such moments. The workshop concluded with the plan to prepare for the next protest with a workshop session on games and exercises that can be played within the margins of a demonstration, that help to help 'rehearse change' together there and then.

Invisible Theatre - a desire to shape the city

The desire to take the experience that was shared in the safe setting of the nano workshop spaces into the streets was voiced very early on in the process. We explored it through different practices (see 'Street Training' for example) and were considering experimenting with Invisible Theatre. Finally we decided to combine elements of SOMA and Theatre of the Oppressed, to find ways of translating the ambient and relational settings of the nano workshops into public urban space (parks, streets). A particularly string desire was to use these newly found tools in collective urban experiences of protest. Thus our aim was to bring our ways of connecting and communicating with each other into the temporary spaces of a demonstration, to find ways of involving passersbys and observers in this shared dynamic, in order to use the exercises to open the floor for more collective non-verbal exchanges. Another aspect of our engagement with the margins of a demo was to use the performativity of the games to visually 'write' our images of power and change into the cityscape. We looked at the route of the protest and mapped selected games and exercises onto different locations along this route. This became a 'treasure hunt map' – the treasure to be found by playing the games was a safer, more collective, trusting and playful space, similar to those of the nano workshop experiences.

Endnotes

- 1. Many of these can be found in Augusto Boal (1992), *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, London: Routledge.
- **2.** See Augusto Boal (1995), *The Rainbow of Desires*, Routledge, Oxon. theatreoftheoppressed.org/en/index.php?useFlash=0
 - 3. Augusto Boal (1992), Games for Actors and Non-Actors, London: Routledge. p.175





EXERCISE The machine of rhythms

In April 2010 there was a nanopolitics session on 'Invisible theatre: From intimacy to aggression as bodies in London,' where we worked on how we see the city and relate and move in it. To do this, we built a London Machine, using an exercise from Augusto Boal's toolbox. It's a game where bodies compose to make a machine through repetitive movements and sounds, working on rhythm. Boal gives some advice on how to approach this:

'Especially in this exercise, it is important that the actor really plays the internal rhythm: a machine is obviously mechanical so we should not demonstrate the external aspects of people. [...] Sometimes, the rhythm of a social ritual can be shown by keeping the same rhythm and changing the pace - making it slower or faster - rather than by making faces. This is a rhythm exercise, not an image one. An actor goes into the middle and imagines that he is a moving part in a complex machine. He starts doing a movement with his body, a mechanical, rhythmic movement, and vocalising a sound to go with it. Everyone else watches and listens, in a circle around the machine. Another person goes up and adds another part (her own body) to this mechanical apparatus, with another movement and another sound. A third, watching the first two, goes in and does the same, so that eventually all the participants are integrated into this one machine, which is a synchronised, multiple machine. When everyone is part of the machine, the Joker [the facilitator] asks the first person to accelerate his rhythm – everyone else must follow this modification, since the machine is one entity. When the machine is near to explosion, the Joker asks the first person to ease up, gradually to slow down, till in their own

time the whole group ends together. It is not easy to end together, but it is possible. For everything to work well, each participant really does have to try and listen to everything he hears.'1

We begin this exercise by 'walking the streets' of London - you can do this with any other place or space too, of course.

1. WALKING IN LONDON

Walk in the space. Hold a hand in front of your eyes – think of yourself, your last night, morning, arrival to the workshop, how you felt, what and who you noticed, what you expected, etc.

Look at the space you are in - how does the space feel, where are you? Is it spacious, new, familiar, friendly, intimidating, etc?

Notice the other people in the room. Acknowledge them when you meet them. If this was the street and you were in a hurry, how would you acknowledge the other people? Would you be conscious of your encounters?

Choose to smile, or to block others – how does it feel to be blocked? How does it feel to block someone?

Choose one person that you prefer to hide from while walking in the streets, choose one person that is your friend in this – scale your fear.

Walk around and shake hands with everybody and introduce your name.

Then **gather** together and reflect: what did we see? Impressions – talk about our experience of intimacy and aggression on London's streets.

2. THE MACHINE

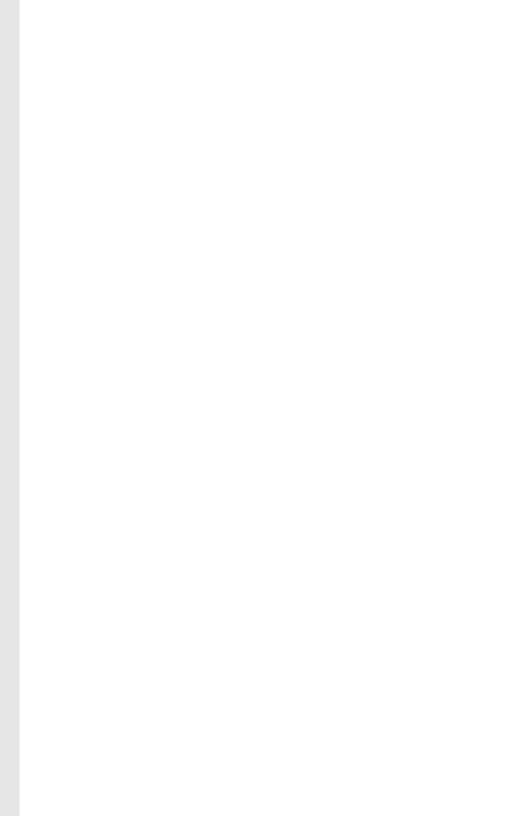
One participant steps into the middle of the circle, making a sound and a gesture that 'is' London for her: anything at all, whatever she wants to express when she thinks of London. She repeats the sound and the gesture on a loop. One by one the other participants join her, plugging their London sounds and gestures in with each other, until all are connected, building the London Machine.

Once all are 'connected', the machine can accelerate the rhythm, and slow it down, it can increase the volume and it can whisper.

One by one, starting with the first participant who initiated the machine, the group members step out of the machine, in order to look at it.

Play with this as long as is useful, then gather to reflect: what did we see and feel?

If you wish, resume the machine and try to transform it: one person steps out and re-enters in a new way, trying to make a difference within the machine.



Soma an anarchist experiment

— Jorge Goia

Declaration of an anarchist lover: Because I love you, you don't need me. Because you love me, I don't need you. In love we never let ourselves be completed by the other. We are deliciously unnecessary to each other.¹

A political context

Created in Brazil as an anarchist therapy, by Roberto Freire (1927–2008), Soma was used at nanopolitics' intensive workshops as a social laboratory, bringing art, activism and learning new skills together. Participants were invited to play as a way to rediscover the body, sharing collaboration games to rethink relationships. As a Soma facilitator trained by Freire, nano's sessions were part of a personal journey from therapy to experiment.

'There's nothing as contagious as the taste for freedom', Roberto Freire used to say to explain why he went on to create 'Soma'. Also, poetically, this sentence from one of his books introduces his unorthodox trajectory: graduated in Medicine, practised in Endocrinology and Psychiatry, trained in Psychoanalysis, journalism, worked widely in the arts – drama, music, TV and film, political activist, a best-selling writer with 30 books published in Brazil. In this productive walking through science, art and politics, Soma is a synthesis of Freire's activism.³

Roberto Freire was part of a generation of Brazilians who dared to live a dream. Together with Paulo Freire – not related – and Augusto Boal, he took part in the educational and cultural projects which were changing Brazil before the US-backed military coup in 1964. They worked together and were jailed and prosecuted during the dictatorship because their activities were considered subversive for the authoritarian regime. Later, Paulo Freire and

Boal's writings were translated and read all around the world, spreading their ideas on how to raise awareness about social and political justice. Roberto Freire is less well known, but their activism shared the same libertarian political approach. The *Theatre of the Oppressed* can be seen as one of the most engaging hybrids of art and activism, and the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is a revolutionary approach to education. *Soma* was developed in this context, with those who were involved in art, activism and popular education.

When Roberto Freire created 'Soma' in the 1970s, he was looking for therapeutic methodologies that could help and support people involved with the resistance against the dictatorship. He studied the psychological and emotional aspects of being an activist, the contradictions between ideology and practices. Why is so difficult to overcome emotions such as jealousy, envy and fear, which disrupt the collaborative process? Taking part in different kinds of social and cultural movements, Freire realized traditional forms of activism, from political parties to clandestine organisations, have the same limitations as the power structure they want to overcome. And he dug deep, pointing to viral strands of capitalism in all relationships - family, school, work, friendships, lovers, etc. – building up a set of moral values and rules of behaviour which regulate life in association with other people. Capitalism contaminates everyday activities and private relationships, making it difficult to associate and to collaborate; it seemed clear that an anarchist therapy like Soma should be like an anti-virus to capitalism.

Anarchism and pleasure

Freire created Soma as an open 'work in progress' through his writings, to present and make public his political views, theoretical approaches and ethical choices.⁴ In what follows I will briefly introduce Roberto Freire's ideas. His blend of science, literature and philosophy, his novels, essays and therapy books all express that an anarchist approach mixed with the search for pleasure, beauty and good-humour, are the most important things to being an activist.

His first novel, *Cleo and Daniel* (1966), was a big success among young people and an inspirational book for many Brazilians who took part in the fight against the authoritarian regime. It tells a story about the rebellious effect of love under power relationships and how moral and sexual repression can create despair, fear and madness. A dictatorship does not just shut down freedom of speech, but it also kills the possibility of love. The social and personal are one and the same when he writes about revolution: 'Why are those who want to change society unable to comprehend the nature of this society?

Because they want to make omelettes without breaking the eggs, that is to change society without changing themselves.'5

Like lots of people in Brazil, I came across Soma through reading Freire's books and got hooked by his writings. My favourite book is *Utopia e Paixão – A politica do cotidiano*, (*Utopia and Passion – The politics of everyday life*), published in Brazil in 1984, and written with Fausto Brito. The book was born from hours of conversation between the two authors: Freire, temporally blind as a consequence of tortures suffered during the dictatorship, spent most of his time in hospital talking to Brito. Reflecting on their hopes, they found that 'there's light even in the darkness', and wrote a poetic invitation to bring passion into politics and utopia into everyday life. They were two militants in crisis by the time the military regime approached its end: they had struggled to not die; now, almost survivors, they had to find a new way of living! And to live is more than just to survive, because 'love, not life, is the opposite of death'! When we are completely safe, there's no risk, no change, no movement!

Risk is synonymous with freedom. Power is established in the search for security. A person who likes risk and adventures has to accept insecurity, because she has her own utopia, she lives for satisfying, at any cost, her need for pleasure. The highest form of security is slavery. Being slaves, we are someone's property, we do not run any risk so long as we obey the fundamental rules of slavery: to not be free, to not have a choice.⁶

His other books went on to deepen this search for freedom and love in social and personal life, keeping a confessional tone through which readers could follow his struggles, contradictions and discoveries. Sem tesão não ha solução – Without tesão there's no solution – created a big polemic in the late 1980's, with some newspapers refusing to write the word tesão in their reviews of the book. In the dictionaries, tesão was defined as sexual excitement. But Freire captured the semantic transformations of this word, linking them to the 60s spirit of rebelliousness and love, when young people started to use tesão to describe something or someone that brings out the experience of beauty, cheerfulness and pleasure. These three elements are, either together or alone, parts of Roberto Freire's proposition for the meanings of the word tesão in Brazil. 'In its current use, the word tesão seems to have turned everything somehow sensual. Sensuality is the biggest honesty, that which really matters, it's the most clear and intense, the most sincere and real sensation of being alive.'

Based on *tesão* as a practical analytical tool for a politics of everyday life, Freire found that there are two kind of tendencies with in dominant

ideologies: one linked with pleasure and the other with sacrifice. He noted that you can find the sacrificial version in many different doctrines: Christianity is based in the idea of hoping to attain heaven, even if life isn't good down here; Marxism asks us to support proletarian dictatorship before reaching communist paradise; Psychoanalysis talks about repressing our biological instincts in order to allow for a functioning life in society.

Roberto Freire developed his own theory about a "pleasure principle" that should be an internal compass to guide our decision making. We would need to re-learn how to perceive our feeling/emotions, doing things because they bring us satisfaction, pleasure, fulfilment; otherwise, if we do things sacrificing our pleasure, we expect other people to do the same, and will feel upset and frustrated when they don't. The ideology of pleasure is Freire's anarchism against the ideology of sacrifice of capitalism and it's at the heart of Soma.⁸

Collaborative games

Soma was created as a journey to re-discover human relationships within this political framework, based on Freire's desire to bring anarchism into emotional matters. Soma seeks to challenge the regulation of life shaped by rules and social conventions through playfulness and cooperative games. The group dynamic facilitates an environment where participants can develop more autonomy and creativity throughout body awareness and the production of horizontal relationships.

The word *soma* comes from the Greek and it means the totality of being in the widest and most complete sense – the body and its extensions, relationships, ideals, dreams, skills – but above all, the body as the source of desire and pain, and adventures through the dynamic between risk and safety. There is no hierarchical separation of mind, body, soul, emotion, feeling, whatever: *soma* is antonymous to psyche in the sense that *soma* is material, touchable, visible and alive!

Freire adopted this concept in order to make a statement: Soma is not a conventional psychotherapy, where you talk and listen to a therapist. Basically, Soma sessions are split in two parts. First, participants play a game to experience situations that will open questions about their everyday life. Soma games came from a research into 'unblocking the creativity': a series of workshop which would facilitate a rich journey of discovery for the individual about the nuances of their behaviour. Inspired by Wilhelm Reich, Frederick Perls, Gregory Bateson and *capoeira angola*, an Afro-Brazilian art form, Freire created an experimental laboratory to inspire an empowering group dynamic where capitalist values should be challenged at personal level.

Soma games ask a group to interact physically, most of the time without any verbal communication, to create its own way to deal with impasses and differences. These games afford an environment wherein one can more intensively and clearly perceive physical reactions in usual situations of human relationships, conflicts, making choices, taking risks. They raise different responses that open onto observations of how we respond to situations involving trust, responsibility, sharing, collaboration, confidence, conflict, care, etc.

After they have played together, participants sit in a circle to talk about their feelings, emotions and perceptions. The talking part is as important as the games. It's when the paradox between therapy and anarchism creates a singular group dynamic. The aim is to observe how the body is related to emotions and how this experience can avoid generalisation and find its singularity – each one is one of a kind. To do that, it's necessary to leave behind two fundamental stones of psychological science and of all hierarchical relationships: interpretation and judgement. It's like re-learning how to listen to others.

Interpretation is when someone, usually an expert in something, can reveal what is unclear for other people. It's based in the power of knowledge, a cause explaining all the consequences, usually a ready-answer disenfranchised of human singularity. While facilitating Soma groups, people with previous therapeutic experience would look at me and wait for a 'scientific explanation' for what they said about their life/behaviour. I would come with a joke: 'Which kind of explanation do you want? One based on psychoanalysis? A cognitive-behavioural approach? I can also provide a body-emotion theory.'

At Soma sessions, an interpretation can close down what could be widened or uncovered, and lead to judgement and blaming of something or someone. Right and wrong, in terms of behaviour, are based in the idea of normality. It is not by chance that the first anarchists, a long time ago, put together the Trial and the Law as their main targets. There, above the materiality of the State and Property, is where the engine of social control operates. Listening to judgement-making immobilises the possibility to create, freezing in space and time 'reality' and its meanings.

But if we get rid of the capacity or authority to interpret and judge, how can we make use of psychology when listening to other people? I learned to think that we can keep asking interesting questions, opening different windows, offering different point of views. The big trap in modern science is reductionism: rational explanations that always leave out something of the process. What would happen if we dare to stop looking for definitive answers?



We could have more descriptions of possible interactions, to open up questions, not just point out ready-made responses. We would need to learn how to be a 'creative listener', the one that helps someone to perceive more things, to make more articulations, to escape from definitions and normalisations regulating everyday life.

A good listener is someone who makes the other feel fluent, bright and inspired when he/she talks to them. And there are listeners that make the other feel dull, boring and repetitive. Among the Zapatistas, what makes someone a leader is not that they are good speakers, but that they are good listeners. In the Soma process, this is one of the main skills necessary to develop a group dynamic based on horizontal relationships. Therapy has spread as a commodity in capitalist society, being listened to has become institutionalised, and rare, with the private of life outdoing the function of friends and communities. As lots of people spend a lot of money to have someone to listen to them talking about their life, psychotherapies come to resemble new religions, with all metaphors well applied. The same language of blaming is used, where one prays against sin, the other analysis over guilt. People go to therapy the way they used to go to the confessionary, looking for scientific explanations instead of sacred liturgies: health is the new salvation.

Neurosis, paranoia, anxiety, depression, syndromes. In the psychologising world of today, everything becomes a symptom for the prescriptions of pills, and recipes in self-help books. The speed at which 'scientific' truths are produced confuses anyone that relies only on the cartographies of psychology, neurophysiology, cognition, hormones, genetics, etc. What we believe as

scientifically proven fact today, may be in doubt tomorrow, but this doesn't matter to the consumers of therapy. They carry on believing in the authority of the therapist with scientific knowledge, which is another product of the neurosis of capitalism.

Anarchism is an important collective practice if we want to break down the colonising and reductive power of Science. Experiments are not the exclusive right of those who can control variables. Giving up the pretension of prescription, of establishing a general formula to be applied across the board, concepts and practices around laboratory, experiment and sciences can gain other meanings and follow other paths.

If in the modern laboratory theories sustain hypotheses, in an anarchist experiment theories are indications about how to find paths, avoid abysses, take short cuts, how to stop and enjoy the view. In a Soma workshop, we take the risks of missing the point. An experiment can be a life changing experience when it creates new possibilities: one more step, and we are not in the same place any more. It means looking more to the process than to the results, how it feels in the body, than what comes to the mind.

A body is an interface that becomes more and more describable when it learns to be affected by differences. A body is not a provisional residence of something superior, but what leaves a dynamic trajectory by which we learn to register and become sensitive to what the world is made of. To have a body is to learn to be affected, to learn how to make more 'articulations'.

The body is the inevitability of human beings; it is built, but not just by determination and definition. It has biological influences, but not like a gene holding its destiny; it receives cultural education, but not like a moral standard frozen in time and space. When the body is in articulation, it is in transformation. The more articulations we make, the more we are affected, the more we become sensitive to difference, and the more we can refine our senses to perceive, opening possibilities of new engagements, affects and effects. And when we perceive more contrasts, we make more mediation, and more articulations, ¹⁰ Soma gives voice to the body to express doubts, to ask questions, where often we pray for certainty. It doesn't try to define our body, but as process it attempts to keep our *soma* moving.

A Soma group is a space for experiences of what was previously only potentiality, where physical games create an environment that affords the development of relational skills. Skills only exist and appear in relationship with either something or someone, in our multiple interactions and possibilities within in an environment. This relational approach breaks with the idea that skills are something one owns, confined within oneself, and isolated from life experience.

The skills required to play Soma games can produce new ways to perceive and relate, discovering new forms of sociability. This process creates an environment in which a consensus decision making process starts in each participant's body, mind, emotions and feelings. Such approach breaks with the traditional rationalist way of developing skills, where the mind is split from the body and the individual removed from its surroundings. Consensus and autonomy are ethical proposals that require learning other skills than the ones developed by capitalist societies.

These are the reasons why I have been doing Soma as an anarchist experiment. Changing therapy into experiment, I'm trying to turn the sessions away from an emphasis on neurosis (there's something wrong with us) towards the gaining of skills (we can learn something new). Soma seeks to inspire skills to build horizontal relationships, skills that can transform the way we perceive the world, re-building the body, its dwelling and livelihood.

When we give up imperatives of 'Truth', ethics comes close to aesthetics, and science flirts with the arts. Soma can be approached both as an art form and as activism, envisaging a radical participatory, collaborative practice, where one can live singular experiences. And art and activism are pedagogical tools because they can affect people to create unusual articulations and new propositions.

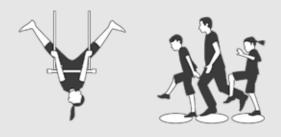
With this experimental format I've been practising, Soma can also be seen as a form of politically engaged live art that aims to challenge what we discover normalised in our daily lives, and aims to extend this awareness to other areas of our lives, to resist and to react against hierarchy and social injustice.

Soma is inspired by anarchism and psychology, two wide fields of subjects separated by a sea of ideas. Linking these, Roberto Freire dared to dream a bridge between them, with the possibility of fighting against oppression with more than words and rationality. The politics of everyday life begins with our private matters; when our feelings and emotions come together with our beliefs and ideology, we raise awareness and bring out the physical reality of our bodies educated in the capitalist culture of fear and security.

The original contribution of Freire's Soma lies in its hybrid approach: a mix of therapy and pedagogy, arts and science, politics and emotions. That was what we also have been trying to do at nanopolitics: emotions are not immaterial, subjective, something that just appear in the lack of reason, they are bodies affecting themselves and others. Emotions can be at the same time cause and effect, result of changes and trigger of modifications, affects for a life less ordinary.

Endnotes

- 1. Roberto Freire (1990) Ame e dê vexame. Rio de Janeiro: Ed Guanabara.
- 2. Roberto Freire (1988) *Soma uma terapia anarquista –* volume 1 *A alma é o corpo*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Guanabara. Roberto Freire (1991), *Soma uma terapia anarquista –* volume 2 *Prática da Soma e Capoeira*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Guanabara.
- 3. For further information about Soma: somaexperiments.wordpress.com (English) and estudosdesoma.org (Portuguese)
 - 4. Unfortunately, his main books are not translated into English yet.
 - 5. Roberto Freire (1984) *Utopia e Paixão A politica do cotidiano*. Rio de Janeiro: Ed Guanabara.
- **6.** Ibid. This quote is almost a premonition of the Health and Safety paranoia of nowadays, but it's not related to the way financial capitalism has appropriated the word in its 'risk-taking' culture.
 - 7. Roberto Freire (1987) Sem tesão não há solução. Rio de Janeiro: Ed Guanabara.
- **8.** It's important to have clear that Freire was not talking about consumerism or capitalist hedonism of nowadays when he wrote about pleasure.
- **9.** Bruno Latour (2002) 'How to talk about the body? The normative dimension of science studies' bruno-latour.fr/articles/article/077.html
 - 10. Ibid.
- 11. Tim Ingold (2000) The perception of the environment essays about livelihood, dwelling and skills. London: Routledge.



EXERCISE Testing limits, playing with gravity

Soma games ask the group to interact most of the time without any verbal communication. The surprise factor is essential to the methodology. Here is a short description of one of the games played at a nanopolitics workshop.

The balance exercise is a sequence of movements and games embodying a personal search for body balance, and investigating issues of risk, pleasure, safety, trust, confidence, fear; all of which can arise when we research the limits of body locomotion in space.

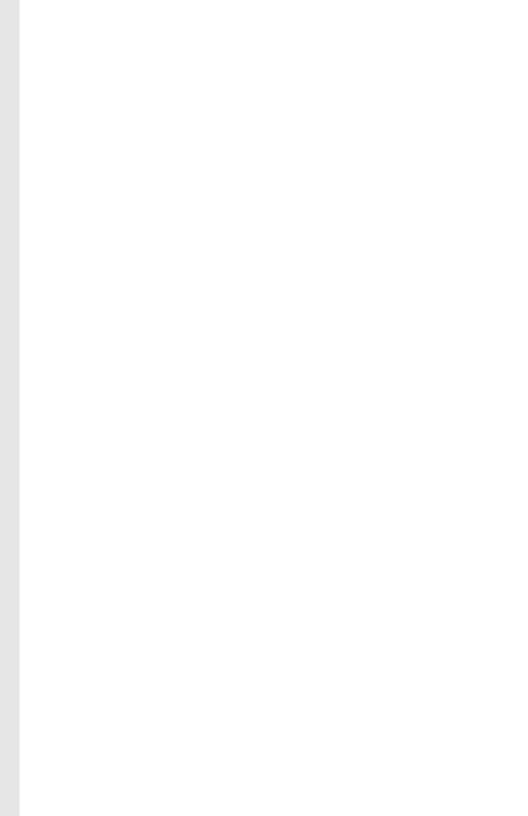
First, participants are invited to discover the maximum locomotion they are able to achieve, without moving their feet and without losing their balance, in an erect body posture. They will experience moving forwards and backwards, left and right, until the limit of their balance.

This body movement in the upright position is the maximum point of movement freedom in the space of our body, without walking and without falling. After a while, participants are invited to go beyond their balance limit to the point of almost falling. To enlarge these limits, for our bigger freedom and pleasure, we must take risks. We can only take these risks, to enlarge our possibilities of movement, if we look for association with other people, who will help us to do this while also assuring safety.

The session continues, expanding the numbers of participants involved in the movements, with more possibilities of body locomotion in space. With 3 participants, one stands in the middle and can literally fall forwards and backwards because of the other two partners' support, waiting close with hands ready to catch the person in the middle.

At the end, the group plays as a whole, with different formations. For example, a big circle can be formed, everybody standing shoulder by shoulder, with one person in the middle being able to fall in any direction, and also to be rotated around by the dozens of hands ready to support.

In all these phases, the participants are challenged to work in self-organisation, taking responsibility for the safety and risk-taking of everybody, making clear that is the association/collaboration that brings more freedom and pleasure.



Street Training: experiences of co-creating public space

— Lottie Child

Street Training attempts to demonstrate that as much as our surroundings have an effect on us, WE can have an equally powerful effect on our surroundings with our behaviour. Street Training is the name I give to any actions and suggestions, often minute gestures such as smelling flowers, climbing walls, floating leaves in puddles and smiling at strangers, gestures that people do all the time in public spaces. I see such acts as a distributed assault on the pervasive culture of fear and cynicism that we otherwise perpetuate and normalise as we constitute our urban public spaces.

The aim of Street Training is to harness this behaviour and develop awareness of how urban spaces and behaviours can be actively shaped, safely and joyfully. Posing as a kind of martial art, Street Training is all and any of the joyful, funny, poetic, challenging things people do as they move through the streets. When formalised in Street Training sessions, all this gets combined with observation, analysis, intervention and play. It seems that when people inhabit the streets for anything other than walking down the street with their walking-down-the- street-face, they are perceived, and we perceive ourselves, as suspect. We constantly reproduce the myth that the streets are for going to and from work and for shopping and spectacle. So teenagers who have nowhere else to go are stigmatised when socialise in public.

There are other ways of being in the streets, and to explore this I attach particular importance to practice, exchange and mutual learning in the training of myself and other people in relation to the urban built environment. Traditional learning hierarchies are often challenged or reversed when I apprentice myself to children and young people in order to discover and develop activities, attitudes and behaviours. Together we train adults who have roles in the shaping of city streets. Those have included police officers,

architects, planners, councillors, activists, parents, artists, performers and curators. We do this by mucking about in the outdoor places where the young people spend their time: they show me what they do, the games they play and the risks they take, and we invent lots more. Then we make all this into a training circuit to take professionals through. In the process, Street Training addresses issues concerning the regulation, design and use of urban space, forms of 'proper' and 'improper' behaviour.

After some group discussion, the young people took us out on to the estate to teach us some ways to be playful and joyful, such as climbing on roofs, squeezing through railings, jumping over fences, jumping over bollards, balancing. They also hosted a tea party in their den under a tree. As my colleague Aida reflected afterwards, this was quite an unusual way of presenting a project. During the walk we were invited to explore the city physically, bodily and performatively. We were encouraged to behave as adults are not supposed to. Indeed, our realising how awkward we felt was an important part of the pedagogy [...]. Conversations with the police revealed that they had enjoyed the training, but I was also interested in hearing how, through taking part, they had got know some of the young people who lived on the estate and how they were much less likely to think of them as causing trouble as they realised that they were just legitimately using their own local space.¹

Working in particular locations and with specific individuals and groups, the practice has involved the production of 'manuals' as well as documentation of tours and explorations. The first manual contained the words of all the people I spoke to during my first twenty-four hour exploration of Camberwell, South East London. I asked them how to be safe on the street and how to be joyful on it: as an answer to the first question people generally affirmed a perception of the streets as dangerous. The second question was seen almost as a non-question: was I mad looking for joy on the streets? This collected wisdom was then organised into the 'path of safety' and the 'path of joy' in a kind of martial arts style booklet.

Taking place in many different cities, often together with art audiences, a central idea to Street Training is that of the socially constructed nature of the spaces we spend time in. The ways we behave in the streets may feel normal, but they have roots in ideologies that we are either conditioned by or deliberately adopt, they are not really 'natural', and what we think of as our desires are often enactments of agendas we have not consciously subscribed to.

MANUAL DE TREINAMENTO NA RUA



The distinction between the personal and the political or between private and public is itself a fiction designed to support an oppressive status quo: our most personal acts are, in fact, continually being scripted by hegemonic social conventions and ideologies.²

If our actions are scripted maybe we are also capable of co-authoring ourselves, our lives and our surroundings. I propose we do this through sensitivity and reciprocity, if we are constantly looking for sensual experience and social engagement we can be considerably more awake to our surroundings. Can we use our behaviour as a personal political form of direct social justice?

Everyday gestures such as how we walk may at first seem to have less force because they are apparently so normal. Many critics have argued however that they are not normal but normalizing, actively establishing certain behaviours as normal and others as strange, though neither is essentially given.³

I began the Street Training session with the nanopolitics group by describing a way to read the territory of the streets and asked if we could find another way. We lingered in back streets of Brick Lane and experimented with what Manuela described as 'new' but actually old' ways of being, remembered from childhood. 'We take care not to forcefully intervene in the space of others: rather we create a new space and offer it to others to contemplate or enter.'⁴

Guided by each other we walked for a long time with our eyes closed on the periphery of an estate. How hard people sometimes find it to trust each other and how hard to be the one who must take responsibility. Did we feel different as we entered the space of the housing estate, nervous that we might be taking up space that was not ours? As we balanced on very high barriers, did we find our trust turn to each other even more than when blind walking? Goia wanted to put parts of his body in an abandoned bike lock that was hanging from a lamppost on the corner of Brick Lane. With one foot hooked into it he leaned back and cantilevered his body in space. Momentarily obstructing the pavement, his actions gave the group the stimulus for wordless, personal and collective reflection on how, if and why we might want to impact on those around us. As a result we became a very sensitive organism, responding very sweetly, making space, and quickly learning how to be an unthreatening gang, and sometimes enhancing people's experience of the little bit of street we were on. Our power was clearer to us than usual, and we became aware that if we choose to disrupt, offend, interrupt, complicate people's passage and the smooth flow of capital, we were well equipped to do that.

There have been so many street training sessions since 2006 that they merge in my mind. Did we do handstands on the zebra crossing while the cars had to wait? Did we commandeer a traffic cone for song? Did we explore the texture of the bricks in the walls with our hands, and ask how we could have fun with bike racks? Did we scale the wall only a few feet up and from there marvel at the contrast between our seemingly irrational bodies and those drinking outside the five star deli? Did we expand in every sense walking down the graffiti adorned street and shrink slightly in front of the expensive shops?

[...] [we] all took our time to get into the various different possibilities for exploring the space and our bodies. I think this becomes effective in changing social norms (if that's what we mean by performative) in that it actually has continuity with our everyday, the constitution of our bodies, our desires, the architecture around us. In that it inspires rather than impresses upon people. For me it took a while to understand how I could and wanted to compose with the city. I ended up wanting to climb on top of things or hang, for the most part. It struck me as important to give time to feel what it is you are up for doing with your body, in that moment, and to slowly start to play – instead of trying all kinds of extreme possibilities or being instructed about all the things we could do.

As Lottie said, such instruction also wouldn't make sense since it sets a limit to what this street training can be, when there really is no limit, or prescribed forms. To me the difference between such street inhabiting becoming spectacle and it being a beautiful experiment and learning experience, lies in the difference between having a focus towards a projected outside – towards spectators, towards virtuosity, eccentricity, or towards 'the authorities' - and having more of a focus on the connection between people in the group and their environment, taking care that we have fun first of all. It helps to take time for this, but just giving time doesn't automatically produce such a situation where 'something happens'. Something happens when people are open and listen to themselves and each other... That's maybe also the difference between doing this in a didactic way - showing off, either to assert that one is cool or morally superior because one is doing these extraordinary things in the street - and producing desires in people witnessing those things by virtue of having fun oneself (stimulating their mirror neurons, rather than their sense of morality or fashion).⁵

I valued the detailed, insightful reflection of the lived experience we created together in the session and the lightness, scope and spontaneity of the group.

Nanopolitics was a precious context in which to share and reflect on Street Training. An experimental process and proposition where people begin to collectively constitute a thoughtful and very bodily hybrid practice. It is connected with academic institutions, which perhaps grounds nanopolitics' ability to sensitively use both practice and theory. I've rarely played with people who are so able to fully inhabit the moment and also contextualise events in terms of theory and politics. I especially liked the way that during our session they totally inhabited the moments that sometimes passed before irrational, instinctive or incoherent behaviour began. They sweetly co-created situations and mooched off to have solo experiences. They also rolled up their sleeves and devoted time to talking, musing, contextualizing and creating understandings of what we had done. We explored how we felt, the lines of flight that we had spun and what they might mean and how we might change the ways we live, just a fraction, as a result.

Endnotes

- 1. Alison Rooke (2010), 'Experiments with Form: Street Training as Public Sociology' in *Street Signs*, Autumn 2010, Centre for Urban and Community Research. London: Goldsmiths. Read the complete text here: academia.edu/687004/Experiments_with_form
- 2. Dino Felluga (2002), 'Modules on Butler II: On Performativity' cla.purdue.edu/english/theory/genderandsex/modules/butlerperformativity.html
- **3.** Jen Harvie (2009), *Theatre and the City*, Palgrave Macmillan: Houndsmill, Basingstoke, Hampshire.
 - 4. Ibid.
- 5. Manuela Zechner (2010) Street Training nanoreflections, email conversation, unpublished.



EXERCISE

Smiling at strangers, smelling flowers, walking with closed eyes, hanging from bike racks...

STREET TRAINING MANUALS FROM LONDON, VENICE AND RIO

These three excerpts contain the wisdom of people in the streets of London, Venice and Rio de Janeiro. The Paths of Joy and Safety are compiled from people's answers and my own observations for how to be safe and joyful in the streets of each place.

These manuals contain a wide variety of people's knowledge, and the ideas are sometimes conflicting, as they often are when it comes to different ways of using public space. Please, study carefully these instructions passed on to you and start by trying the ideas listed here,

then move on to develop and invent your own. Many of the activities suggested here only take a few seconds but the effects they have are accumulative and confidence building – perhaps any behaviour practiced for long enough becomes instinct. Street Training has two components, the Path of Safety and the Path of Joy, everyone who uses the street considers safety, but joy is usually forgotten.

иодио I

JOY

Find a phone box and squeeze	yourselves	inside (of it with	as many	people
as possible					

—Young man from Archbishop Michael Ramsey Technology College

Shout your name out

— Young child, Comber Grove Primary School

Seek out beautiful things and look at them

— Daniel, treasurer in the street in Camberwell

Climb on the roof of the supermarket to get a clear head and a clear view

— Young man from Archbishop Michael Ramsey Technology College

Take a shoe off and throw it over the railway bridge, try to catch it on the other side

— Daryl, young man from Cambridge House

Find empty shopping trolleys, get naked and have a naked shopping trolley race

— Michael, skateboarder

Smile at people and if they don't smile back that's ok, just keep on

— Jamilia, young woman from Cambridge House

Share your chips / sweets / cigarettes with strangers

— Ron, young man in the street in Camberwell

SAFETY

Stop and talk to homeless people, sometimes you will learn a lot about how to be streetwise

— Woman on Camberwell New Road

Have your wits about you

— Passer-by, Camberwell Green

Walk around as if you own the streets

—Woman serving at supermarket checkout, Camberwell

Keep all your valuables out of sight

— Constance, mum in the street, Camberwell

Don't go to dark corners

— Dunia, young person from Cambridge House, Camberwell

Weave in and out of the trees if you think someone is following you, they won't be able to see you the whole time

— Naomi, a lone woman walking home late in Camberwell

If you see a gang turn around and walk in the other direction

— Young man in the street by Camberwell Green

VENICE

JOY

When local traders are carrying things up the steps of the bridges offer them a hand, I helped a man carrying Persian rugs on a trolley

— Young woman from Istituto Comprensivo San Zaccaria

Pretend to use the public phone boxes with your friends and sing funny songs loudly into them

— Young man form Istituto Comprensivo San Zaccaria

Practice copying each other, falling over and rolling around on the street, peer at each other through the legs of passers-by

— Demonstrated by a 2 year old boy and girl on Via Garibaldi

Do handstands, back bends and draw in chalk on the ground in your Calle (narrow street)

— Young children outside their homes in Corte dei Preti

When entering a Calle on the way to or from school, and being confronted with a long line of tourists on a tour, shake hands with or high five every single one of them as you walk past

— Young man form Istituto Comprensivo San Zaccaria

Carve the initials of the person you love onto a padlock and, together, lock it to the bridge you love the most

— Teacher from Istituto Comprensivo Dante Alighieri

SAFETY

We know the streets and the police know the streets, if we cross each other there is a big panic, we run and they run and sometimes we end up knocking into people and hurting them (recently a bride was knocked over and there was a lot of trouble). Sometimes the police split up into two groups, using their knowledge of the network of small streets to corner us, this is often at Sestiere Castello. We prefer the police from Padua because they don't know their way around the streets and alleys. Sometimes there are places to hide, we make holes in the fabric wrapped around the scaffolding and hide in there. When we are being chased we try to get over the bridge at Campo Arsenale because then we are in the interior and it's harder for the police to find us.

— Senegalese man illegally selling handbags around Venice

Sometimes a group of teenagers who are too young to go to bars will gather in this square to hang out and have fun, it is very quiet and it's next to the water. The problem is that the people who live here call the police and tell them we are taking drugs so the police come and there is nowhere for young people to be.

— Elena, who, while showing Venice, recalls her teenage experiences

When we were young, the police used to come when we were playing football in the streets, they used to corner us in the small streets and take away our football, there has never been a lot of space for children to play in Venice.

— Sig Gervasuti, local elder who has always lived in Castello, Venice

RIO DE JANEIRO

JOY

Do tricks on the tram, grab the handles, run along side and then jump on; you can twist your body round to face the back, then jump and turn to the front again, or you can wedge your body horizontally on the side of the tram.

— Robert and his friends in Santa Teresa

Fling your flip flop from your foot, have a competition with your friends to see who can throw it the furthest.

— Omar, Gloria

On the bus with your friends, practice percussion by drumming on the seats and on your knees, there is a flap at the back of the bus where the bus number is displayed, this makes a good noise when you slam it.

— Frado, Lapa

You'll feel joy when you help someone.

— Luiz Claudio Lobo, Taxi driver, Copacabana

Dance with your friend, and while you dance, mime taking your friend's face off, rolling it up, lighting it and puffing the smoke in their face.

— Real and Eron, Morro Dos Prazeres

Particularly in Rio De Janeiro there are a lot of beautiful women walking the streets, so you have that thing... the girl is walking in your direction, you just see the front, you're not seeing the other side so when she passes everybody has this habit to look back to see her bum. This is a way to have fun.

— Waldinar, Gloria

If you find the remnants of a fire in the street, pick up the charcoal pieces and use them to draw on everything.

- Lila, Marcella Maria, Marcia, Centro Velho

SAFETY

Sincerely, Walk with God in your heart, then things can happen but you're Protected.

— Luiz Claudio Lobo, Taxi driver

When you're in a favela your pretty safe, there is very strict law there and no tolerance of crime. People know the rules and play by them from a very young age.

— Marcia Derriak, filmmaker, Flamengo

This city is dangerous, it's like this, I pay attention to everything. It is not right to talk to everyone, pay attention, don't trust everyone.

— Fernanda, who works at the lavatory at Copacabana beach

Ignore the TV news because otherwise you would not leave the house. If I don't feel safe I evoke my positive thoughts and I go where I have to go. I observe the characters in life and I have fun interpreting reality

— Marcella-Maria, ex-actress, Lapa

I try to walk as if nothing is going to happen but I'm always alert. I walk around with my bag hanging off my shoulder, very relaxed, by doing this I'm saying: go on, take it!

— Eliza Brandão, Morro dos Prazeres

Relax your hips when you walk and stick your breasts out. They will think that you live in a favela, it's like that – you speak Portuguese and you're Brazilian. If you walk with your nose in the air and if you walk fast the guys will see that you are a foreigner.

— Paloma, Morro dos Prazeres

Bodily semblances, temporary dwellings: somatic moulding of spaces and subjectivities

— Carla Bottiglieri traduction du français de Manuela Zechner, Carla Bottiglieri, Brent Waterhouse

Weaving an uncertain genealogy

When I was invited to propose a workshop to the nanopolitics group, based on the practice of Body-Mind Centering, I accepted with enthusiasm. Firstly, because the reflections that underlie the constitution of this group in many ways match the preoccupations that have moved my own research in the last few years, as well as the questions I ask myself concerning the political or micropolitical dimension of the particular *technologies of the self* referred to as methods of somatic education, or simply *somatics*.

The approach known as Body-Mind Centering (from now on abbreviated as BMC) stems from this vast field of western practices of movement, which can be historically inscribed within a marginal culture of the body that, since the beginnings of the twentieth century, has occupied an interval between legitimate disciplines (institutional medicine, hygiene, care), and empirical forms of knowledge.

To sum up BMC in a few words, I will quote its founder, Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen:² 'It is an integrated and embodied approach to movement, the body and consciousness...an experiential study based on the embodiment and application of anatomical, physiological, psychophysical and developmental principles, utilizing movement, touch, voice and mind'.³

Like many other methods (Feldenkrais, Alexander, Eutony, Laban-Bartenieff Fundamentals, Kinetic Awareness, Rolfing, and so on), BMC explores qualitative aspects of motion, bringing forth the singularity of each individual's sensorimotor and perceptual experience; the assumption is that a deeper differentiation, integration and articulation of movement and expression may enable a dynamic and transformative process to affect both one's own *body image*⁴ and one's functional abilities.

Somatics was first formalised in the United States during the 1970s, through the initiative of the philosopher (and, later, somatic practitioner) Thomas Hanna.

His first essay, symptomatically entitled *Bodies in Revolt*, gives a new etymological foundation to the notion of the 'soma' involved in these methods: 'the body observed from the first-person viewpoint', the body 'felt from within', 'the body of experience and not of objective science'.⁵

The revolution is from the outset both perspectival and paradigmatic, announcing a shift in sensibility and knowledge, and a specific form of self-learning which relies fundamentally upon an holistic awareness of the self and the environment.

The constitution of this field of practices, along the entire twentieth century, often passes through an exemplary narrative of alternative strategies that have been elaborated and designed at a given moment, by certain individuals, towards the resolution of problems that traditionally available methods in medicine, dance, physical education and psychology could not offer. From those first, empirical researches, *self-trained* founders – often drawing from a wide background and formation in traditional therapies, dance, movement and the performing arts – came to develop specific training programs and schools, most often refusing to frame their methods as *therapies*, and preferring to highlight their self-educational and pedagogical dimension. In fact, in order to preserve their autonomy with regard to the institutional field of care, somatic schools developed a self-sustained economy, based on trademarking, copyrighting and licensing fees – with evident repercussions on the costs of training.

Despite the feeble institutional recognition they encounter today in some countries, where they are beginning to be affiliated with paramedical practices of functional rehabilitation, investigated in clinical research protocols or integrated in some university curricula, somatics are very unequally distributed, which is also a sign of their complicated genealogical mix: while informed, in some aspects, by ancient eastern traditions (meditation, yoga, martial arts...), or gravitating towards the constellation of New Age philosophies (due to geographical and historical contiguity), they have been massively appropriated by the markets of wellbeing and personal development, with their paradoxical montages of esoteric spirituality and consumption, consistent in the end with the neoliberal rhetoric of post-capitalism.

So how to orient oneself in this jungle of ambivalence? And how to understand the catalytic role that the aesthetic revolution of somatics brought about

in the history of dance, theatre and performance, by transforming uses and representations of the body?

Incidentally, a revolutionary potential of transformation is affirmed by numerous founders of different somatic schools. Thomas Hanna himself inaugurates this path with the particular messianic style that fills *Bodies in Revolt*: strangely enough, his visionary, utopian proposals oscillate between a hymn to technological progress and an accusation of traditionalist western society and culture, forecasting the coming of a new humanity, a mutant species that will fulfil the promises of its evolutionary destiny, in a world finally liberated from its atavistic fears and the domination of rational knowledge.

With caustic irony, Hanna depicts the dead end that both 'militants' and 'hippies' were facing in American counterculture:

The somatic imbalance of the Hippies and the Militants means that, adaptationally, they are maimed somewhat like the very cultural traditionalists whom they are either fleeing or attacking. The short-lived destiny of these two group-expressions of proto-mutation is due to the fact that they have one foot in the technological environment (a positive adaptational factor) and one foot in the moribund cultural tradition (a negative adaptational factor) upon which they must depend in order to orient themselves.⁶

Right or wrong, Hanna's clearance of history reveals the political ambivalences of somatics, most of all in his unsettling discourse on adaptation and assimilation, which is build upon an almost transcendent vision of human evolution, and seems to ignore the disquieting operations with which capitalism annexes the myth of 'individual emancipation', and the tentacles of contemporary biopolitics.

The first gesture towards a critique of usage, or towards a critical use of this body of practices, would perhaps be to draw a completely *exogenous* constellation of references, a field of ethical and political concerns that is capable of holding together historical symptoms as well as the questioning and mobile tensions of the present.

It is in this sense that the recent discovery of the work of a filmmaker – who couldn't be farther away from this entire domain – allowed me to uncover a new thread of a possible genealogy.

Robert Kramer, member of the militant cinema collective 'Newsreel' in the New York 60s, has (among others) made two emblematic films that intertwine documentary and fiction: *Ice* (1970), a science-fiction film that projects a guerrilla scenario, enacted at the heart of the American empire, based

on small nuclei of armed struggle; and *Milestones* (1975), which follows the defeat of the political imagination and of the revolutionary hopes of that generation, in trying to map out the aftermath of these movements, their shift towards new forms of life.

Interviewed in 1976 on the occasion of the screening of this film at the Cannes Film Festival, together with the co—director John Douglas, Kramer evokes the historical turning point that is represented in *Milestones*:

A lot of people say that the 70s is like a time of falling away from political militancy. There's a sense in which that's true – if emphasis is put on the word militant, and a strong, sustained confrontation with the powers that be. But there's another sense in which that's not true, because we came to a dead end, and it seemed as though we couldn't continue to be militant in that same way. That's to say we didn't have enough stamina.⁷

The abandonment of political action yields to a proliferation of micropolitical experiences: the creation of communities, experimentation with various healing techniques, the invention of intimate, poetic, groping and creative practices, are all attempts in constructing new pathways of relations that might weave collective and individual experiences together, in a new genealogy of filiations and alliances that questions the inadequacies of the traditional nuclear family. It is significant that the film opens and ends with the story of an old woman, who arrived in New York at the beginning of the century during the massive surge of immigration, recalling the small jobs she accumulated beginning with her very first occupation as dress-maker.

Milestones, indeed, seems to expose fractures while repairing and sewing them in a common, living tissue: the apparent atomisation of individual lives that takes over all of the characters in the movie – Kramer casts at least a dozen co-equal characters whose lives are densely interwoven – is rather a search for re-appropriating and re-weaving the molecular affects, gestures and intensities that the molar modalities of certain struggles had cast off during the previous decade.

In so doing, the film questions the fundamental relation of individual and group – the collective understood, as Simondon suggests, as a transindividual process rather than the alignment to an ideological stance ('I don't want to act any more out of guilt or habit, or because I learned I ought to', says a character).

The interconnectedness that knits the narrative, jumping from one character or group to another, from cultural history to personal history, is echoed

in the leitmotiv of texture and weave, and the long master-shot of a home birth literally witnesses a becoming that involves more than one life.

It is as though the loosening of any and all strong ties to the past would reveal a reticular structure, something like an interstitial tissue, and simultaneously blur the contours of figures and forms ('In some ways, after working with you, I feel less defined', says a girl to her friend, after an acupuncture session that takes place in a tent planted in the middle of the woods, where the commune has settled).

Milestones maps individual trajectories through the experiences of other modes of relation to life: a relation to an environment that is at once pragmatic and speculative, a relation to history and its violence that brings inevitably into play *pathic* resonance and vulnerability to the affects and forces of the world. It shows, therefore, a process of re-subjectivation that operates at the moving threshold of de-subjectivation, where the possibility of deploying a new distribution of the sensible hinges.

More than one body

Here I would like to entwine the thread of my somatic reflections. In trying to describe the kind of perceptual explorations we practice in BMC, I will take a few examples from the pages of Linda Hartley's *Wisdom of the Body Moving*:

Begin by lying on your back on the floor (if you wish, you can use small cushions under your head and knees for greater comfort). Close your eyes.

Feel the places where your body makes contact with the ground; sense the floor spreading out around you, in all directions, supporting your weight; imagine the foundations of the building reaching deep into the heart of the earth, too (...)

Let your body soften and spread to meet the ground that is holding you. Feel your skin opening to receive the touch of earth and air.

Now observe the movement of your breath flowing gently in and out, connecting your inner space with the surrounding space. Notice where in your body the rising and falling rhythm is deepest; as you relax more, this movement may change.

Can you feel this filling and emptying motion spreading through your whole body, into the chest, the abdomen, and right down into the pelvic area? Allow the breath to move you. Can you imagine it going into your arms and legs, as far as your fingers and toes, and up into your face

and head? (As your attention travels like this around your body, there may be places where it is hard to feel or imagine the breath going, areas that seem dark and difficult to contact. Don't force the breath; just observe).8

The exploration described above is quite common in somatics, as well as in many relaxation techniques. The initial scanning of supports - recording the contacts with the ground -, the perception of weight and gravity, the open attention to breath, the observation of tiny, inner rhythms and movements, are the basic setting of the somatic listening, and they affect the quality of tone and the pre-movement attitude.

Tone, generally understood as the (metastable) state of readiness to action - that is, in neuromuscular terms, the more or less variable degree of muscle contraction – is fundamentally linked to our experience of the gravitational pull. Such experience, taking place in every moment below the level of conscious awareness, is actually an on-going negotiation between the body and gravity, which relies upon the automatic organization of our orientation in space. Tone, or better, tonic function, according to the definition of French movement's therapist Hubert Godard9, is thus a complex system: anatomically, it involves the parts of the body – brain, nerve pathways, fascia, muscle spindles, Golgi tendon organs and other stretch receptors - that coordinate our dynamic response to gravity (as well as our apparent stillness in standing). In somatic terms, the more we train our sensory and perceptual awareness, the more we allow other expressions and movements to unfold, opening the range of our responsive ability (it's in this sense that I can think of adaptation or adaptability): 'when the movement control system responds automatically to gravity or to circumstances that mimic gravity, it does so much more economically, effectively and pleasurably than when control is purely voluntary.10

Fundamentally relational, tone is therefore a temporal notion – like the invisible phrasing of our own gestural net, or the rhythm of our personal, idiosyncratic tensional distribution. In the gravitational field, whether lying or standing, the body is an event, moved and modulated by the polarity between earth and sky.

Drawing from the principle of polarities organizing exchanges, and therefore providing the space for differentials and intensities to emerge, BMC considers tone as the interplay of several processes that happen below the higher brain levels of registration and control. That is to say that prior to sensing, prior to kinaesthetic and proprioceptive information¹¹ – eventually available and retrievable through conscious sensorimotor monitoring – there is a living

field of metabolic processes, which BMC *contemplates*, and traces back from physiological systems to tissues, membranes, fluids, cells.

As Linda Hartley writes, following the previous exploration:

Become aware that your body is made up of billions of tiny living cells. Each cell is different, but each has the same basic structure: a nucleus at the centre surrounded by cytoplasm, which consists of 70 to 80 percent water and molecules of various kinds, and a semi-permeable membrane that envelops the cells and forms its outer boundary. Through these membranes the cells are breathing, minutely expanding and contracting, out from and in towards the centre, in a pulse of life taking place throughout the whole body.

As you listen, the breathing of the cells may give rise to the perception of a subtle pulsing, vibrating, or tingling, a sensation of heat, or perhaps an undulating rhythm of movement throughout your whole body; there may also arise a sense of deep stillness and peace. Be open to perceiving a sensation of the cells breathing, to feeling this rhythm. This is not the rhythm of the breath coming in and out of the lungs, nor the throbbing of the heart that you may also be able to feel; go deeper.

Again you can let your attention travel into areas where before it was harder to feel your breath or make contact and allow the cells there to breath fully.

Feel the body as a whole, every part alive with this very subtle pulsation. Hold lightly in your awareness the knowledge that your body is one connected entity that at the same time consists of billions of tiny individuals breathing cells.¹²

Cartographies of an uncharted territory

Lewis Carroll, in his poem *The Hunting of the Snark*, tells us that in order to capture the mythical animal, we might use a map that is 'a perfect and absolute blank.'¹³

What are they there for, then, the anatomical and physiological maps that are used in BMC, if what we attend to is precisely the uncharted, singular, diffuse landscape of those life processes that happen far below the threshold of consciousness?

And moreover, how to deal with the facticity of anatomical and biological discourses, their historical and ideological construction, if we are to 'invent' a new experience and sense of the body, far away from any transcendent or universal claim of truth, from normative prescriptions and interpretations?

To understand the particular use of anatomy and physiology in BMC, I think that we have to withdraw from the very idea of truth: this means, somehow, assuming that we don't know if what we are looking for exists – but that only what we find exists.

On this premise, the use of images and maps is nothing but a certain setting, or preparation of the exploration, a way to carve attention and orientation, a fictional tool for producing affects and sensations: the image, therefore, hints to a certain intensity, and projects or anticipates our next step in the landscape-to-come, like an inner compass.

Anatomy is put at a distance from the medical and scientific discourse, and transferred into the experimental realm – dynamic and poetic – of sensorial and affective speculation. Cohen gives an example of it, in referring to the exploration of the organ system:

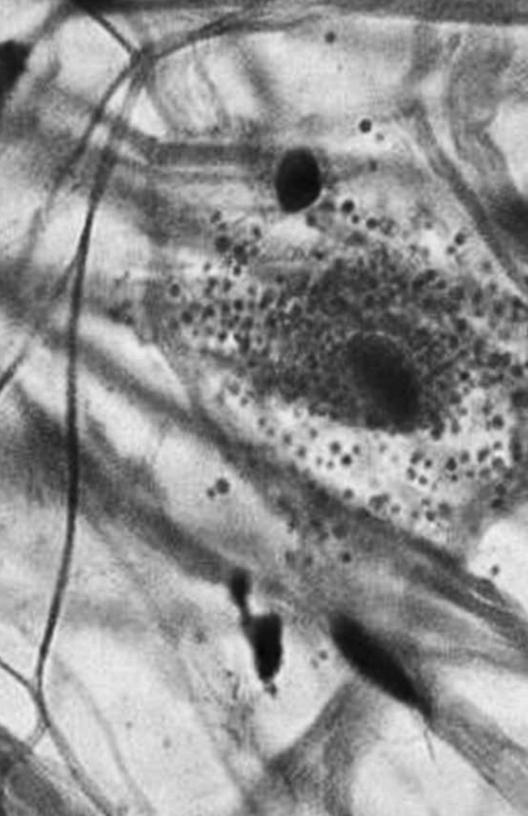
Feel a 'place' in your body, somewhere in the contents of your pelvic, abdominal, thoracic or cranial cavities, inside your skeletal-muscular container. You do not need to know the name or function of that 'place', but you can simply use your sensory mindfulness to localize your focus. Or, locate the organs in an anatomy book and study their names, size, shape, location and function. Then utilize your imagination to transfer that information to your body.¹⁴

These two procedures, which Cohen calls *somatisation* and *visualisation* respectively, are differently linked to sensation and image through a kind of interlacing that's also a dynamic transfer: from sensation (kinaesthetic) to the image, from the image to sensation.

If the living body is an event, a process of forms and forces, its developmental history – as it is conceived in BMC – is virtually 'available' as an immanent, non-chronological and non-linear source of becoming. Drawing from embryology, for instance, Cohen proposes to explore 'what does it feel like' to have not yet a mouth, not yet a differentiated structural organization (somehow: how to make a 'Body without Organs'), but just six limb buds radiating from, and moving around the navel.

'What does it feel like' needs to be understood as both a performative play,¹⁵ and a *transductive* experiment of kinaesthetic empathy, from image to sensation. Here is the description Hartley makes of the *navel radiation* exploration:

Begin by finding a comfortable place to lie down, preferably on your back. Close your eyes and spend some time focusing on cellular



breathing, as in the previous exercise. (These two exercises can be explored together, to help you experience their interrelationship).

Imagine your breath entering through the navel, filling the middle of the body, front to back, and side to side, and radiating from there to all parts of the body on the inhalation; as you exhale and empty, imagine that the breath flows out through the navel again. Keep imagining this movement of the breath until you can begin to feel the flow of energy, carried by the breath, through each limb – from the navel to the fingers, toes, top of the head, and tail of the spine, filling as you inhale – then returning back to the centre again, emptying out as you exhale. Stay with this until you can feel the sensations of this subtle movement of breath spreading equally through all six limbs. Focus on allowing the cells to breathe wherever you experience a lack of connection.'16

The underlying rhythm of the breath – this condensing-expanding motion connecting center and periphery – is then amplified and transferred to larger impulses: one experiments with beginning movement from the navel, sequencing it outward to the end of each limb, or beginning movement from the ends of each limb and sequencing inward to the navel.

As one finds the connections of each of the six limbs into the navel, one can experiment with their relationships to each other through the navel; in this process of differentiating and integrating all of the extremities, the emerging map creates a baseline for further explorations in space, providing support for more active movements:

Begin to feel the floor with your hands, feet, head, and tail, allowing the earth to support you through them. As you release your weight into the ground, feel how it responds by supporting and pushing back, right through your centre and beyond. As your movement becomes even more active, open your eyes and receive your environment through them and feel how it, too, supports you. Allow yourself to become more present again to the room. (Again, you might use music for this last part, opening your hearing to the sound and letting it, too, move and support you).

You may wish to come gradually up onto your feet, using the internal connections of the navel radiation pattern for support as you move from the floor through changing levels – rolling, sitting, kneeling, squatting hands and knees, and so on. From here you can explore the relationships of limbs and centre in improvised dance movements.

Finally come to stillness to acknowledge the end of the exploration, maintaining awareness of your centre and six extremities, and the sense of connectedness throughout your whole body.¹⁷

Tuning tones: haptic relations

From the point of view of developmental psychology, bodily self-awareness builds on the simultaneous phenomenon of perceiving the world and perceiving oneself, that is to say that proprioceptive perception is triggered by exteroceptive perception.¹⁸

The notion of *haptics*, proposed by James J. Gibson¹⁹ in 1962, in the framework of his ecological psychology, points to the interlacing of sensory and kinaesthetic events occurring in the experience of touch. Neither purely passive (as cutaneous tactile perception), nor purely palpatory or motor, the haptic dimension measures the slippage from a peripheral to a focal sense. Thus, the selective reception (i.e. the action of perception) of the sensorial flow of stimuli, as well as the disclosure of potential actions in the environment (what Gibson calls *affordances*²⁰), are mutually constructive of each other, and correlatively constitute a *subject* and a *milieu*. It is for this reason that haptics can outline the particularity of somatic experience, as much in individual explorations of the milieu of movement, as in the experiences of touch guided by the tactile listening between the partners.

Haptic perception entails an intentionality of exploring objects or environments: the hand, haptic organ par excellence, displacing itself along objects, modelling and varying its grasp, is lead by the search for the sort of stimulation that can 'make sense' for what is touched. The hand's activity is therefore 'propositive'.

The polarity of focal and peripheral references – the *self* and the environment - manifests itself in all the distal sense modalities: vision and hearing share this double regime of affection with touch, along the reversible arrow of the perceptual attitude, a moveable cursor or gradient between ego- and exo-sensitive landmarks. I can focus, for instance, my gaze on a visual field in order to extract clearly outlined shapes and figures, exercising the ability to objectify, name, historicise, analyse; or I can blur the edges of things, letting the background come to reach me, and eventually dissolving and merging in the amplified environment of my peripheral, horizontal, timeless perception (this is, perhaps, the *selflessness* that meditation aims at).

In somatics, both attitudes are necessary, but the first gesture of touch between two persons is preceded by the openness of receptivity and attention – a *floating*, non-specific listening -, that inaugurates the constitution of a

common milieu, a transitional space at the limits of which the two subjectivities exist, as co-emergent selves.

To describe this tuning phase, BMC often uses verbs such as *meeting* or *matching* the tone: this points to the setting of a circular resonance, allowing information to pass in both directions, but also to the relevance of a middle, *third* space of inter-subjectivity, that doesn't merge nor abolish the two parallel (or a-parallel) paths of subjective experience.

The partners of the exploration rely on their respective gravitational sites, where a feeling for a continuity of self is held: a base upon which gestures (and images) articulate in order to come to meet the other and the space. This site is a postural, tonic dwelling, as well as an affective and emotional one, reflecting the historicity of a certain image of oneself and of one's body. The *active* person takes indeed the initiative of moulding a milieu of sensorial stimuli for the person that is being touched, but his/her gestures are radically moved, and almost blindly directed, by the perceptive and sensorial affordances of the other. Hands, therefore, both receive information and convey the vision we are holding of the movement potential we may help to free.

Tuning tones implies the synchronisation of two temporalities, or two kinds of tonic musicality and textures, woven by the gravitational invariant and the orientation in space: touch, here, is closer to hearing than to vision, since it shares the regime of sequentiality, a regime of duration and rhythms, of contraction and dilations, of silences and intensities.

This means that the tactile invitations addressed by the active partner are at the same time those that she/he can project and emulate within his/her own imaginary and perceptive dwelling: their 'efficiency' or effects, their silent enunciation, their dialogic consistence, depend on the displacement of that dwelling – the horizons it can perceive, the otherness it can host.

To hold together a transitional, transindividual space reminds of the similar experience that contact-improvisation dancers may have. Contact distributes both action and passion: I'm moved by the other, to the extent that the other is moved by me. But what actually moves, is the space of relation, recording our distances and proximities that are otherwise un-representable: *alterities* to which I couldn't assign a topography, nor a depth or a surface, if it is only through the otherness of the other, which allows me to meet and inhabit my own otherness.

It's remarkable that while elaborating contact-improvisation techniques in the early 70s, its founder Steve Paxton should have been inspired by the work of Daniel Stern, the psychoanalyst authoring *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*²¹. Stern speaks of the *affect attunement* between the baby and its mother (or the person who's taking care of it), as a tuning of two emergent subjectiv-

ities via tonic variations: an imperceptible negotiation of micro-movements, a *tonic dialogue*²² mediated and modulated by contact, through *handling* and mutual *holding*.²³

We could say that the tonic function – our whole responsiveness to the gravitational field – expresses our own past and present experiences of 'holding' ourselves and to be held. It is the 'support precedes movement' principle – almost a refrain in somatics and BMC -, rooted in our affective history; but we could also translate this *place-holder*²⁴ function in a topological manner, as a nomadic dwelling that allows for temporarily indexing a polarity within a field of movement potentialities. As Varela writes: 'My sense of self exists because it gives me an interface with the world. I'm 'me' for interactions, but my 'I' doesn't substantially exist, in the sense that it can't be localized anywhere.'²⁵

Varela's statement could be extended to Simondon's theory of individuation, namely to the pages the latter consecrates to the individuation of the living:

The living lives at the limits of itself, on its limits...The characteristic polarity of life is at the level of the membrane; it is here that life exists in an essential manner, as an aspect of a dynamic topology which itself maintains the metastability by which it exists...The entire content of internal space is topologically in contact with the contact of external space at the limits of the living: there is, in fact, no distance in topology.²⁶

While designing some guidelines for introducing the experience of touch in the workshop, I was reminded of Simondon's membrane and of Varela's theory of autopoiesis, which defines boundaries in a living, self-organized system, as the interface of recursive and circular processes between an 'entity' and its environment.

I proposed, then, to explore a score for touch, using images of biological membranes and connective tissues – a succinct yet heterogeneous anatomical atlas: my purpose was essentially to 'individuate' the different qualities that our touch could enact and emulate, relying on information about textures, chemical composition, location, density, and so on.

The layering of those strata would also phrase a specific modulation of time, orienting the gestures of attention and intention between the two partners of the hands-on exercise: from one layer of the skin to another, a changing limit, other viscosities, other rhythms and respirations, other slippages, other nets and fluid patterns.

Perhaps it's the notion itself of spatiality that is challenged here, the partition of interiority and exteriority: as Simondon writes, the living organism is a topology of several layers of interiority and exteriority, *implication* of the outside.

That's why, in the empirical exploration of these thresholds and levels of relative interiority, in these scrabbling experimentations, in these apparent dives into organic depths, the *in-side* is structured as *out-side*, and inversely: movement will no longer be an instance of displacement in space – that's to say, exclusively transitive, from one point to another in space –, but withdrawal of temporal and spatial relations shaping and inflecting a smooth space, wherein the 'body' is but a site of passage and modulation of environments, a pulsating force of dilation and intensification.

As Deleuze writes: 'The outside is not a fixed limit but a moving matter animated by peristaltic movements, folds and foldings that together make up an inside: they are not something other than the outside, but precisely the inside of the outside.'²⁷ The haptic dimension of the image – a 'blind' image, a bloc of sensations, affects and perceptions -, unfolds a landscape of tonalities and pure differences. When touch becomes haptic, it makes for the experience of moving rims, double membranes that project a relative inside and outside: a distance that listens to another distance, passing from one outside to another.

The imagination of the living

Body-Mind Centering is a word that may provoke some perplexity: if the term soma, in the accepted meaning of somatics, already designates embodied subjectivity – thus, according to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, the body-subject, which makes possible lived experience, overcoming the dualism between nature and consciousness – then what it's that still need to be centered?

Cohen borrows the idea of 'centering' from Mary Caroline Richards's book about potter's craft – 'a potter brings his clay into centre on the turning wheel, and then he gives it whatever shape he wishes'²⁸ – but unlike it, she means by that a 'dynamic flow of balance around a constantly shifting focus'²⁹, a 'process and not a place of arrival'.³⁰

In BMC, centering hints to a gesture that can begin anywhere, at whatever point, and propagates itself in any given direction: many centres as many potential sites of beginning and amplification. But what is it that begins? Cohen has often explained that the mind into question, here, doesn't refer to a mental entity, but rather to the Buddhist notion of mind: an opening, a fundamental light that mirrors, and resonates with, the surrounding world.

In this sense, mind is the opening of a space of relation.

I would venture, then, a further hypothesis: the relation that the gesture of centering inaugurates, that which displaces itself along a sensorial path – somehow, a haptic modulation – points to the living and the lived, to the embodied subject and to the life that exceeds it, while at the same time constituting it.

It's in this perspective that Evan Thompson, in *Mind in Life*,³¹ speaks of a phenomenological gap, no longer between body and mind - as in the tradition of western metaphysics -, but between lived and living, two forms of embodiment that articulate a common reference to life.

The unifying proposal of this fundamental non-identity of life with itself, or its excess over itself, is perhaps what defines spirituality as a tension towards the total transparency of lived and living, in a kind of specular circularity where all differences fade away.

And yet, if the spiritual dimension is not absent from the discourse of Cohen, the somatic experimentation of the discontinuous continuity – of the *inseparatedness* of life, as Muriel Combes points out³² – is the practice itself of this paradoxical relation.

The phenomenological gap, thus, is not there to be filled or solved at the end of a dialectical process – as for 'integrating difference' -, but rather is cared for as the space of further individuation and dis-individuation, as the nexus of several polarities and supplementary differential dimensions.

In this regard, the 'lived' – the phenomenological subject of perception – is exceeded by life: the pre-individual field of affects hints to the pre-perceptive and pre-cognitive level that is proper to what Deleuze calls 'passive organic syntheses'.

In order to untie the repetition of a determined action/perception loop, that is to say in order for potential actions, for new gestures, to become possible, we need precisely to temporarily suspend the habitual order of perceptions and representations through which we are used to recognizing ourselves, and to re-index it in another landscape of sensibilities and affordances, in other imaginaries.

The language of biology – human anatomy and physiology, in the case of BMC -, is but one tentative representation of the living, that is, just one among many possible maps. In this sense, images are used in BMC for experiential strategies and purposes, departing from a speculation that is literally empirical. This figurative atlas functions first of all as a tracing tool, an instrument of localisation and projection of pathways – speculation on forms, differences, textures, passages, milieus, surfaces...

If the imaginary impregnates sensations, it's not by way of a representational determination, or of a symbolic determinism: forms cannot be prescriptive of forces. The operation of visualisation, in fact, displaces the iconic content of the image towards its imagination, or towards its perceptive speculation and emulation.

As Thompson notes: 'In visual imaging or visualizing, we do not experience mental pictures. Instead, we visualize an object or a scene by mentally enacting or entertaining a possible perceptual experience of that object or scene.'33 Haptic images draw the anatomical imaginary towards enactive imagination, in a movement that with Simondon we could characterise as a 'transductive dynamism', that is a fundamental operation of phase-shift, in this case a leap from cognition to affect.

The cartography resulting from a certain distribution of qualities and differences is reinvested in an exploration via the deployment of a sensorimotor landscape, through an amplifying transfer: it is this excess of the imagination over the imaginary that hinders the fixation onto a single field of references, because the amplification is the counter-effectuation of the map, acceleration of other series, swelling of virtual spatial and temporal dimensions.

In this respect, the use of biological images is not metaphorical – if by metaphor we mean a binary set of correspondences, from 'nature' to an ultimate, symbolical order.³⁴

Maps, in this sense, are useful for localizing – as speculative and pragmatic tools of a contingent, relative system of representation; but in BMC, more fundamentally, they trigger and fictionalise further images and sensations, eventually producing new different cartographies, according to each person's experience. Imagination, thus, is not a return to the image from which it departs: a *repetition* of the same – but a displacement or drift: repetition of the *different*.

It is as if the faculties of thought and imagination, in 'jumping over' the level of the perceived and the perceivable, mobilise *the imaginations and the contemplations that we are.* Hence Deleuze's 'protestation':

Perhaps the reason lies in the illusions of psychology, which made a fetish of activity. Its unreasonable fear of introspection allowed it to observe only that which moved. It asks how we can acquire habits in acting, but the entire theory of learning risks being misdirected so long as the prior question is not posed – namely, whether it is through acting that we acquire habits... or whether, on the contrary, it is through contemplating? Psychology regards it as established that the self cannot contemplate itself. This, however, is not the question.

The question is whether or not the self itself is a contemplation, whether

it is not in itself a contemplation, and whether we can learn, form behaviour and form ourselves other than through contemplation.³⁵

It is in this sense that we may understand the relation between lived and living in the empirical explorations of BMC: a leap over – above or below – the phenomenological gap. Beneath the acting and perceiving subject, an interstitial field of 'larval subjects' or proto-subjectivities opens itself. It's here that the willing subject stops managing its faculties of understanding and perception, becoming itself a 'field', a process of relation wherein 'intentionalities' are reversed: the lived turns towards the living, no less than the living turns to the lived, and informs it.

What Cohen defines as *embodiment* is however the level of experience where image is no longer the mediating instrument: the living 'knows itself', or rather is 'consciousness', before even being felt, being integrated by sensation and imagination.

Cohen seems to be strangely closed to Deleuze when she affirms that: 'Embodiment is the cell's awareness of themselves. You let go of your conscious mapping. It is a direct experience; there are no intermediary steps or translations. There is no guide, no witness (...). In this instance, the brain is the last to know.'³⁶

And Deleuze:

A soul must be attributed to the heart, to the muscles, nerves and cells, but a contemplative soul whose entire function is to contract a habit. This is no mystical or barbarous hypothesis. On the contrary, habit here manifests its full generality: it concerns not only the sensorymotor habits that we have (psychologically), but also, before these, the primary habits that we are; the thousands of passive syntheses of which we are organically composed.³⁷

Embodiment seems to hint to a movement of successive individuations and dis-individuations: on the level of somatic experimentation, it is the care for relating to this pre-individual and pre-personal force, that allows for other body semblances, other nomadic dwellings, to emerge.

In the 'centering' process, thus, lived and living, affects and percepts draw two faces of a topological limit where forms and forces mutually affect each other, repeat themselves and differ, occur to each other, in a constant reversibility of two intentionalities.

This is the double sense of becoming: a desubjectivation in as far as it wrenches us from a given identity, and propels us to a new subjectivation.

While we were holding it together

But how to think together resistance and de-subjectivation? How to hold in the same space the relation to self and other(s), if not by holding the tension between an 'ethics' and a 'politics' of subjectivation?

Following Foucault, the articulation of ethics and politics can't be founded upon a categorical distinction that opposes the individual to society, or private life to public life – as if they were separate spheres upon which power is respectively enacted via disciplinary techniques (the anatomo-politics of the human body) and strategies of control and regulation (the biopolitics of the population): these modalities of intervention are interwoven, in the late works of the philosopher, by the transversal notion of government, inaugurating the most fundamental biopolitical nexus in the story of western modernity.

Muriel Combes underlines this emblematic aspect of Foucault's thinking:

If biopolitical management is characterised by the mobilisation of techniques that apply themselves to the very site of the elaboration of a relation to oneself, then the problematisation of subjectivation, and the search for new forms of subjectivity, do not constitute an ethical withdraw, but concern politics.³⁸

The wide project that Foucault undertook around the genealogy and the constitution of the modern subject in western culture and history, finds in the 'technologies of the self' the problematic site of articulation between ethics and politics within the sphere of an 'aesthetic of existence'.

Drawing from distinct European contexts and traditions – Greek, Roman (via Stoic philosophy), early Christianity – Foucault intended to examine those practices of self-government that aim to the institution of a relation to self, as the fundamental site of attachment to an identity, be it determined by the self or by others.

In fact, the 'care of the self' is linked, for Foucault, to the immanent tension that 'holds' the subject in the ambivalent folds of subjection and subjectivation: that is to say, as Judith Revel remarkably points out³⁹, the attachment to an identity – whether through a deliberate or an imposed choice – is in itself a means of objectification.

If the stoic notion of 'care of the self' is a project of self-detachment – maybe, in this sense, the closest to other, not 'Eurocentric', geographies of selflessness -, this operation is never performed by an individuality closed in upon itself. On the contrary, the techniques analyzed by Foucault always

bring into play the fundamental relation to others, or to another, whether as real or fictitious interlocutors.

In this way, far from constituting an 'hypertrophic' individualized identity, the self that is the object of such practices and trainings of self-government, knowledge and care, is not an identity: rather it is the fundamental space of relation to what's other to self – that is to say, the place of a pure potentiality that brings out the radical, reticular *otherness* informing the tissue of subjectivity.

It's this same inflexion that problematizes the biopolitical question, in invoking a force that goes beyond individual subjectivity, at the very limit of the living: impersonal, though not objective, the notion of *life* in Foucault (as in the notion of... *a life*, in Deleuze), points to the folding of the outside in the interiority of the living, and fundamentally expresses itself as the capacity of trial and error, of resistance, of creation of singular conducts and norms.

The shift from individual to collective exposure to *life*, which is to its essential vulnerability, is the genealogical repositioning that Roberto Esposito invites to undertake within the notion of community. By emphasizing the Latin term *munus*, from which both *immunitas* and *communitas* derive, and that stands for 'gift', 'office', 'obligation', Esposito conceives community as the experience of shared vulnerability: 'This is why, if the members of a community are characterized by an obligation of gift-giving thanks to the law of the gift and of the care to be exercised toward the other, immunity implies the exemption from or the derogation of such a condition of gift-giving.'⁴⁰

* * *

I often return to an interview that Agamben gave to Stany Grelet and Matthieu Potte-Bonneville, the two editors of the French magazine *Vacarme*, which was published in 1999 under the title 'A minor biopolitics'.⁴¹

The Italian philosopher was asked about the apparently *a*political turn in his own thought, particularly in relation to the place that the notion of desubjectivation may occupy, as it seems to contradict the emergence, and even the possibility, of a minoritarian political subject, capable of resistance and struggle.

The engaged and militant editors of *Vacarme* were concerned about the political violence that disempowers those individuals who are already in conditions of vulnerability and precarity – such as migrants, ill or unemployed people – and captures them via control apparatuses that secure the upholding of an identitarian categorisation based on the double mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, freezing their capacity to act. Agamben's reply seems to

extend Foucault's aesthetic of existence to the hypothesis of a 'minor biopolitics', enacted within the margins of a desubjectivation process, as the strategy for re-establishing a space for becoming through this zone of 'impersonal power' and opacity that constitutes 'life itself'.

For Agamben, the 'care of the self' should be referred back to a more promising notion of 'usage': analysing, in fact, the etymology of the Greek verb 'krestai', he draws the medial and neutral position of 'use', as what that might render the typically 'mediated' nature of an action – that one is at the same time the agent and the patient of – and therefore in keeping with the double becoming that subjectivation means within this nexus.

Agamben's ontology of modalities is echoed in his philosophy of a politics of potentialities, and goes back to the analyses he develops in *Means without End.* ⁴² It is here that he constructs the sphere of 'gestures' as the proper ethical and political field of 'pure means'.

Gesture, he says, is the suspension of action, the withdrawal of action upon itself: it unties the knot that binds action to an instrumental end, while revealing and exposing our own being-in-a-medium. The impersonality of gesture is the very condition of its appropriation, of its subjectivation: I become subject through (my) gestures.

We are not far from somatics' concerns about the interruption of the action/perception loop: as diverse as they may be, their methodologies and strategies attend precisely to the qualitative, modal experience of movement, as the source for potential changes.

In this regard, they are technologies of self, but precisely in so far as they are capable to hold and to care for the tension between subjectivation and desubjectivation, between ethics and politics, in the knot of an aesthetic of existence.

If resistance means finding new gestures to displace the diagram of power relations that we both enact and endure, we need to reconsider our own cultural categories and perceptual representations, to insinuate doubts in our certainties, and to challenge them with the singularity and the contingency of the events we are exposed to: it is indeed a time consuming task, like watching *Milestones* (more than three hours long), like knitting and unknitting theory and praxis.

Are somatics of some use in all of this? Or are they rather the comfortable 'rehearsals of utopian sensations and relations'?

I guess rehearsal time is not exhaustible in one performance.

And improvisation is a life-long practice.

Endnotes

- 1. For the history of somatics, see: Don Hanlon Johnson (ed.) (1995), *Bone, Breath and Gesture. Practices of Embodiment*. North Atlantic Books: Berkeley CA. In the introduction of his essay, Johnson traces back the origins of somatics to the end of the nineteenth century, throughout Europe and the US.
- **2.** Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen (1942 -), an American therapist, movement artist, researcher and educator, created the School for Body-Mind Centering in 1973.
 - 3. bodymindcentering.com/about
- **4.** 'A body image consists of a system of perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs pertaining to one's own body. In contrast, a body schema is a system of sensory-motor capacities that function without awareness or the necessity of perceptual monitoring', Shaun Gallagher (2005), How the Body Shapes the Mind. Oxford University Press: New York. p. 24. The notion of body image, though, is at the crossroad between phenomenology, psychoanalysis and the neurosciences; its first introduction, in fact, is due to the Viennese psychoanalyst Paul Schilder (The Image and Appearance of the Human Body, published in 1935).
- 5. Thomas Hanna (1970), *Bodies in Revolt. A Primer in Somatic Thinking*. Free Person Press: Novato CA. In particular, Hanna writes: '*Soma* does not mean *body*; it means "Me, the Bodily Being". *Body* has, for me, the connotation of a piece of meat (...). Soma is living; it is expanding and contracting, accommodating and assimilating, drawing in energy and expelling energies', *cit.* p. 35. In doing so, 'Hanna recovered the older Christian mystical use of the term, whose source is in the New Testament. Paul distinguishes between the Greek word *sarx*, which has a sense of "a hunk of meat", from *soma*, which Paul used to designate the luminous body transformed by faith', J.H. Johnson, 'Introduction', *op. cit.*, p. XV
 - 6. Thomas Hanna, op. cit., p. 258
- 7. Robert Kramer, John Douglas, 'Reclaiming our past, reclaiming our beginning', interview with G. Roy Levin, in *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, n° 10-11, pp. 6-8: ejumpcut. org/archive/onlinessays/JC10-11folder/KramerDouglasIntLevin.html
- **8.** Linda Hartley (1989), Wisdom of the Body Moving. An Introduction to Body-Mind Centering. North Atlantic Books: Berkeley CA, p. 18
- **9.** See: Aline Newton (1995), 'Basic Concepts in the Theory of Hubert Godard', in *Rolf Line*, vol. 23 pp. 32-43
- 10. Kevin Frank (1995), 'Tonic Function. A Gravity Response Model For Rolfing Structural and Movement Integration', in *Rolf Line*, vol. 23, pp. 12-20. For articles related to Hubert Godard's work, see: somatics.de
- 11. Proprioception is the sense of the relative position of neighboring parts of the body and strength of effort being employed in movement. It is distinguished from exteroception, by which one perceives the outside world, and interoception, by which one perceives pain, hunger, etc., and the movement of internal organs. Proprioception refers to the integration of several sensorial modalities concerning body movement in space, its equilibrium and balance: vestibular system, joints receptors, pressure receptors, etc. Although the word *kinesthesia* is sometimes used interchangeably with proprioception, kinesthesia is the general sense of body motion.
 - 12. Linda Hartley, op. cit., pp. 19-21
- 13. I'm indebted to Mårten Spångberg for pointing this section of Carroll's poem in his conversation with Silvia Bottiroli: 'Fellow Travelers', in *The Swedish Dance History* Vol. 4, 2013
- **14.** Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen (2008 [1993]), Sensing, Feeling and Action. The Experiential Anatomy of Body-Mind Centering. Contact Editions: Northampton MA, p. 31
- 15. Isabelle Ginot has developed the analysis of the performative regime of somatic discourses in her article: 'From Shusterman's Somaesthetics to a Radical Epistemology of Somatics', in *Dance research journal*, n°42, University of Illinois Press: Champaign (USA), summer 2010, pp. 12-29. Available online at: danse.univ-paris8.fr/chercheur_bibliographie.php?cc_id=4&ch_id=11

- 16. Linda Hartley, op. cit., pp. 34-35
- 17. Ibidem, pp. 36-37
- 18. This view comes from the seminal work of French psychologist and psychiatrist Henri Wallon (1879-1962). Rather than viewing the individual as an isolated phenomenon that comes into being through self-propagating processes, Wallon understood the human child's development as determined by both physical and social environment. Lacan turns to Wallon to support his idea that the perception of an 'I' in the psyche of the developing child is not a natural, internal occurrence, comparable to physical growth or to cutting teeth, but is rather the effect of an encounter with an 'other', the child's identification with a reflection in the mirror or with another human being.
- 19. James J. Gibson (1962), 'Observations on Active Touch', in *Psychological Review*, vol. 69, n°6, November.
- **20.** James J. Gibson (1986), *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. Psychology Press/ Taylor & Francis Group: New York,. In particular, chapter 8: 'The Theory of Affordances', pp. 127-143
- 21. Daniel Stern (1985), The Interpersonal World of the Infant. A View from Psychoanalysis and Developmental Psychology. Basic Books: New York.
- **22.** *Tonic dialogue* is a notion coined by the psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Julien De Ajuriaguerra, drawing from Wallon's theory of *emotional-tonic reactions*.
- **23.** *Handling* and *Holding* are the two key concepts in the theory of the pediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott. They relate to the early infancy experiences of touch (through the techniques of care) and support (how the child has been held and carried, from the mother to the family as a whole, and to the wider world surrounding it).
- **24.** I borrow the term of 'place-holder' from Judith Butler's analyses of subject and subjection: 'The subject, rather than be identified strictly with the individual, ought to be designated as a linguistic category, a place-holder, a structure in formation. Individuals come to occupy the site of the subject (the subject simultaneously emerges as a "site"), and they enjoy intelligibility only to the extent that they are, as it were, first established in language'. J. Butler (1997), *The Psychic Life of Power. Theories in Subjection.* Routledge: London, pp. 10-11
- **25.** Francisco Varela, 'The Emergent Self', in John Brockman (ed.) (1995), *The Third Culture: Beyond the Scientific Revolution*. Simon & Schuster: New York. Available online: edge.org/documents/ThirdCulture/d-Ch.12.html
- **26.** Gilbert Simondon (2005), *L'individuation à la lumière des notions de forme et d'information.* Million: Grenoble. The work was first partially published in 1964, as *L'Individu et sa genèse physico-biologique*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris. For the English translation, I used the passage that is quoted in Gilles Deleuze (1990), *Logic of Sense* (trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale). Columbia University Press: New York. pp. 103-104
- **27.** Gilles Deleuze (2006), *Foucault* (translated and edited by S. Hand). Continuum: London/New York. pp. 96-97
- **28.** Mary Caroline Richards (1964), *Centering. In Pottery, Prayer and the Person.* Wesleyan University Press. p. 3. Interestingly enough, the theme of potter's craft is also present in *Milestones*.
 - 29. Susan Aposhyan, 'Foreword', in Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, op. cit., vii
 - 30. Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, op. cit., p. 1
- **31.** Evan Thompson (2007), *Mind in Life. Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind.* Belknap Press/Harvard University Press: Cambridge MA
- **32.** Muriel Combes (2011), *La vie inséparée. Vie et sujet au temps de la biopolitique.* Editions Dittmar : Paris
 - 33. Evan Thompson, op. cit., p. 297
- **34.** This is because medical science of anatomy draws already from metaphors, in naming and partitioning the human body in the double regime of 'visibilities' and 'discourses', as Foucault points out.
- **35.** Gilles Deleuze (2004), *Difference and Repetition*, (translated by Paul Patton). Continuum: London/New York. p. 94

- **36.** Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, "The Process of Embodiment", in *Sensing, Feeling and Action, op. cit.*, p. 158
 - 37. Gilles Deleuze, op. cit., p. 95
 - 38. Muriel Combes, op. cit., p. 82
 - 39. Judith Revel (2008), Dictionnaire Foucault. Ellipses: Paris. p. 128
- **40.** Timothy Campbell, Roberto Esposito, 'Interview: Roberto Esposito', in *Diacritics*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, summer 2006, vol. 36-2, p. 50
- **41.** Giorgio Agamben, Matthieu Potte-Bonneville, Stany Grelet, 'Une bio-politique mineure', in *Vacarme*, 10, winter 2000. Online link: www.vacarme.eu.org/article255.html
- **42.** Giorgio Agamben (2000) *Means without End. Notes on Politics* (Translated by C. Casarino and V. Binetti). University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis



NOTE TO READER: exercises are found within the text above

experiments and experiences



Notes and Reflections from some nanopolitics session

— The nanopolitics group

Introduction

Perhaps nanopolitics is not about knowing what a body can do, but about *doing what bodies can do.* From this the bodies might learn or unlearn something, especially if knowing is not the blind goal of movement.

Nanopolitics is a methodology that brings together many methods. The methods we've played with, learned from, criticized and hacked, are not methods for producing knowledge as much as methods of collective embodied experimentation with experience. The 'expertises' that we all bring to it – and particularly those shared by facilitators and teachers – ground our collective experiments and experiences, producing the unstable and open bastard methodology we call nanopolitics.

Here we share some experiences from our sessions, a textual rendering of the pulses of nanopolitics.

Discovering, affirming, crossing boundaries: contact for Radicals¹

Could nanopolitics be about mapping out the coordinates of some of the things that make us feel unwell/uncomfortable and sharing the practices (pedagogic/therapeutic/political) we have in order to act on this discomfort? [...] Definitions of politics are implicitly gendered through the way politics is traditionally defined as the distinction between public and private [...] Different ways of giving – what is the difference here between rational giving and pleasure giving? [...] Format of talking and dancing – embodying made it meaningful and honest. How can we take some of the physicality out into other spaces? [...]

Need to find ways of holding that are different, exercises didn't work without holding [...] How can something like this, dealing with internal interpersonal relationships within group – how can they impact on a wider community beyond the intimacy we have here [...] Sharing body weight: the honesty of body communication; creating something together through sharing body weight; issues of give and take between people, different parts of the world, groups...offering oneself up to give weight and take weight, this is interesting to explore [...] Challenging boundaries – how can we find the balance between pushing boundaries and creating or establishing boundaries? [...] Boundaries: duality between safety and risk; UK health and safety rubbish; kids can't play here anymore. How much do we need safety and how much do we need risk. The polarisation is complex, how much do we want to be safe and not give up something to risk...? [...] Knowing what boundaries to push and which boundaries you want to establish [...] Going beyond imagining others' boundaries towards actually sensing them [...]2

There's something quite paradoxical about writing up reflections and memories from such a material and affective experience more than two years after it happened. Narratives in time translate corporeal memory into a different form. Yet the sediments of that experience, mended and re-gathered together with other participants, may disclose new meanings across translation. After all, there is no 'genuine account' of the body-self, especially if complicated by a collective experience of contact.

The title chosen for this text may remind some of *Rules for Radicals*, a book written by a brilliant, if politically contradictory, community organizer from the United States.³ Now, what we discover through the nano-practices of our first workshop of contact improvisation is still a community politics, but one that engages with rules in surprising ways. Contact improvisation is by some called a dance, the improvised, subtle and signless movement of bodies in contact.

Two intense days of rolling on the floor, and on each others backs, testing and adjusting equilibria and dis-equilibria between each other and intra-selves, touching, pushing and lifting, skins, bodies, bones and tissues. Sometimes deeper, all the way into the bones, *but not too much, carefully*. Here, by experimenting between bodies in space, we discover: the boundary, its legitimacy, and its political meaningfulness. A boundary sensed, more than communicated.

We always wanted to "go beyond", to challenge or deceive the physical and cultural borders between ourselves and others, while pushing, reinventing

others and ourselves. A sense of endless stretchability and capability may be reflecting the self-confidence of the enlightened or materialist individual will. But also, it may be reflecting that incurable desire to rebel against the inhibitions of a protestant body or the oppressive constraints of the catholicism so rooted in our bodies and morals, so pervasive in the sentimental education and habitus of many of us, especially Southern and Central Europeans. Yet, for the first time, through the body and the words of the other, I acknowledge the *impassability* of some boundaries. This is not about lacking the rebellious, revolutionary passion to dare. This is rather about the capacity to observe and listen to another affective embodied history, connected but separate, *different* from mine.

It is also, deeply, about gender. And how gendered is that history of boundary-drawing, boundary-violation, and openness.

Thus, it is not a coincidence that I end up in the session's working group on gender and sexualities.

There are indeed so many other interesting discussions to join in relation to borders and contact: e.g. how to expand nanopolitics beyond our relatively privileged and self-enclosed communities? How are we thinking about differences among us, who can and who cannot (afford to⁴) do a nanopolitics workshop, what are the limits to experimenting with our bodies? Impaired bodies, (impaired hearts!), disabilities, identity politics, othering, self-othering, them/us, intersectional differentiation...

But despite all the possible points of focus and discussion regarding this session, I choose the working group on gender and sexuality here. It is for me the most vivid memory of that session of contact improvisation, the most enjoyable in a way and the one I remember challenged me most.

We start with talking thoughts and how differently concepts of bodies and their possibilities, openness and closeness are understood in relation to sexuality. What came out of that initial conversation? For instance that 'men' perceive sexual boundaries so differently to 'women'. This might seem obvious, yet is it simply a way of seeing yourself or how you are supposed to be in relation to 'your gender'? Are 'ladies' expected to be *careful* with exposing their bodies and to *protect* them, while the male body is it still supposed to be protecting the female body? What about queer experiments with your own body and the other's? What about the freedom of *doing whatever you want with your body*, reclaiming it against the state and the family, against the heteronormative matrix?

We end the workshop with an exercise of wordy rolling bodies in another big room just for us. This is the most difficult task of all: *moving while talking*. It is, most essentially, a stream of consciousness, of overlapping,

messy, collective voices in movement. And it may be that radicality (the radicals playing with rules, reinventing them) emerges exactly there, from this uncontrollability of words, bodies and emotions. There is no clear intentionality, no conclusion, no solution, *but we are sharing a lot*, even understanding something, maybe.

(Our hands now all together, the impossibility of disarticulating this snarl of hands and thoughts, *and desires*).

And now suddenly...shit! He is running behind me! Does he want to touch my bum!!? Is there an intentionality there, e.g. to make me understand how bad it is to be assaulted? To touch me without permission or even against my will? I am excited but I am running away, I am escaping - and I realize only now, to what extent I am actually always available. Or better, when my body is available it convinces itself that the mind is so rich, resourceful and strong that it can control any exceeding affect, any leaking desire or fear, any vulnerability. Any wound can be cured 'cause my mind is in charge', and in fact there is no wound, or it is too deep to emerge as a boundary. There is only the old spirit of rebellion, the temptation of breaking the rules.

(...and these women who think they are strong, and these men who feel they are so weak, and the women so willing to look after that spot of weakness, and these queers who believe they are liberated, and the multiple, old and new oppressions still within all of us, across ourselves...)

And so, eventually, after thinking through gender and sex, I ask the question again: why is *he* running behind me and trying to grab my sensitive body parts? Is he challenging my supposedly fearless and sceptical view of the boundary? Is he at the same time *asserting his masculinity once again*?

In the reflecting circle at the end of our workshop, when we gather all together, 'curly-hairs' reminds me with soft but sharp words, that there are boundaries that should be simply re-affirmed (to be then crossed again?). We are *not* ever-welcoming porous beings, we are full of wounds. And we are about to understand that these are much more profound than our skin and membranes. Deep down in the pumping muscle, our invisible mysterious organ reclaims its amenability to wounds, as much as its eagerness to pumping more blood and circulate, re-create new life, new loves.

Memory calls older memories. Years ago, with my southern women-only political collective, we discussed why 'girls' 'today' often seem to perceive and practice their sexual liberation almost as if it were quantifiable. And we wondered if awareness of our body was something lost in the pretention that we can do everything as far as we are in charge. 'Exposure' was limited and guaranteed by self- and collective confidence. But in my new feminist queer collective of the north we say we rather do not moralise over 'how girls or boys behave today. Rather we want to recognise the variety of old and new forms of expression of femininity and of violence. On the one hand, there is a banal process of aesthetization and consumerism, advertising the excitement of boundary-less lives. On the other hand, new forms of violence and oppression emerge and entrap our affects and imaginations. Yet, there are also emerging, irreducible forms of consciousness, ironic sensitivities and practices of doing and undoing gender, crossing and playing with gender itself.

Contact for Radicals was a peculiar opportunity to push my self up against my boundary-history, enjoy and open up the process, with other bodies and other voices - re-drawing and re-affirming the *relative* porosity of my body and my heart, in relation(s).

Nanopolitics in the midst of struggles: protest debrief, inhabiting protests otherwise⁵

This is a new configuration of movement, how to relate if you're not in a group/not an activist? How to expand beyond the police/mob confrontation and focus more on effective actions? Composition of this movement: lecturers, students, young kids (the 'banlieue' in the UK). Yes: but this is much broader, needs other articulations, it's not just about student fees anymore, if it ever was just that. How can these recent events inform (micro/local) practices of groups, as a more sustainable mode of struggling/engaging that goes beyond the state of emergency/exception status of these weeks? How do we relate to events and the event-temporality of these weeks, how to keep staging events (they are media effective, otherwise things don't get seen) but not get stuck on them? [...] The kettle: should we be protesting in front of parliament, our supposed right to protest, how useful is it to get kettled? The complex social, affective and organisational composition of the kettle, that's something we learn from, very interesting space, perhaps all the more so because we are stuck in it together – but then, how can we transpose that complex composition to other spaces? [...] Was that enough, do we need more of that sort of protest? One thing these demos surely did was pull people without affiliation to a group in, in a different and broader way than occupations did - that's something that couldn't have been achieved without them.[...] So much merging/ connecting of groups has happened • How can these large initiatives be sustained without people losing their local/situated/micro focus? [...] Radicalization that happened over the last weeks – what does that mean, to be radicalized? What will Christmas do to these young

kids that go back to their families? How can we keep learning over Christmas, reflecting, how will we return? [...] How do you respond to people who say 'but this isn't about you!'? [...] Belonging – this word seems very pertinent in these days, our sense of belonging is shifting/ growing. How can that be strengthened... [...] The kettle gives you a sense of belonging, as a space it crafts that, but it doesn't give you a sense of your power and right to protest. That sense of your right to protest, to space, to the city etc. comes when you swarm through the streets. Shouting 'whose streets? Our streets!' was very powerful. [...] We love the pedagogy of the movement: the workshops, protest labs, discussions, [...] Recovering from the kettle and violence – how? What forums and platforms for this recovery, especially for people who have no affinity group? [...] What does it take for all this to make sense....? • Kids still do what they always did, get drunk, roam the streets and dance on bus shelters every once in a while, but now it's 'political', now it makes sense, it has an orientation... • But what does it take for something to make sense – does it maybe require more than an ideological-political orientation, does it need to entail a sense of meaningfulness and continuity beyond the moment, a sense of embeddedness, support, safety - so that you need all that on top of the ideology for an event to really make sense to you, in the body as well as the mind. [...] People are learning to pick their fights these days, it's good. The *violence has of course always been there, it's been structural* [...] Imagining another state is a matter of imagining other organisational forms, unless we want to just focus on imagining top-down distribution/power, so those experiments in organisation and relation are key. How do we negotiate social roles with relationality across this protest: the police in its human face (smiling, being nice) and in its automated, dehumanized face (beating us up, turning ice cold upon the command of a walkie talkie) - this has been more widely criticized in terms of police tactics, that recent techniques only leave police an option of on/off, and the same goes for protesters in fact – the kettle *promotes property destruction and violence* [...] *maybe violence can* be understood in that light of rigid social roles: the structural violence of the state is based on cutting peoples welfare, making education more expensive, etc. - and the physical violence of the state is based on the role of the police. The big difference between us and the police/state is that their violence is supposedly legitimate, our uprising is never seen to be. violence often lies in abstraction, in disregarding a relation in favour of an abstract idea. difficulty of the idea of dialogue in this: police

have been cultivating a mask of dialogue, the reality is that they'll beat us if they are commanded to do so, even to death. we're excited and exhausted, going to take a break now, but we'll be back [...]⁶

The nanopolitics group came together a few months before the beginning of the fiercest cycle of struggles in recent British history. The student movement, public sector strikes, local anti-austerity campaigns, the insurrection of the London banlieue, the occupy movement, extreme class struggle from above, welfare cuts, total policing and racist migration controls... Between the months of November 2010 and March 2011, there was a demonstration more or less every second or third week, mostly around the student movement. We went to protests and occupations together, alone or with others, and gradually nanopolitics developed as a space where we could work through our often



COLLECTIVE MAP OF STUDENT MOVEMENT AND EXPERIENCES, FROM 'DEBRIEF AFTER THE LAST WEEKS OF EDUCATION STRUGGLE', SESSION ON 12.12.2011

violent experiences in the movement, as a support and affinity group in demonstrations, as a practice from which we experiment with new ways of engaging in the movement. We became used to experiencing the city in other ways, swarming and jumping, outrunning and out-cunning the police, huddling up and chatting, chanting and planning in spaces otherwise reserved for tourists and shoppers. We walked and ran kilometres each time, and an exhaustion made itself felt, as well as the need to debrief from encounters with the police (our clashes, shouting matches and conversations of tense and honest awkwardness, speaking to them about *their kids, their pensions*).



We met for our first nanopolitics debrief at the end of the intense month that began with demonstration in November 10th, which lead to the occupation and trashing of the Conservative Party headquarters at Millbank, and ended with the kettling⁷ of thousands outside Parliament on the day the bill to triple the university tuition fees was passed. Keeping our experiences alive, talking them through together, we created a forum to allow us to support each other beyond the day of protest itself, a forum which facilitated what many friendly conversations would, but did so with more focus and depth: the political creation of an affective, analytic and narrative common.

We shared our recent experiences with police violence, we worked on our fears and paranoias created or made worse by the repression, and talked about our different needs, and how to prepare ourselves better; how to make it through 'the kettle', and how to avoid it. How to deal with the different levels of acute violence, the intensity of the experience. And how to strengthen the group that is shaped through sharing this experience, move from being subjected group to becoming a collective subject, to making leaving the kettle something more than a dispersal of a number of sca(r)red individuals. We discussed how we could contribute to creating a sense of belonging beyond the spectacle by opening up spaces for learning everywhere. We talked about the need to learn from each other transversally, to fight for learning (doing ourselves!), to create a pedagogy of occupation (learning about consensus,

learning about power, learning while making, learning about more than state violence, learning – by doing – what we can do).

We shared our stories of encounters and non-encounters in the protests, the distances that separate us from each other in the movement and what brings us together. We tried to map out the composition of the movement, the differences in age, class and of so-called ethnicity (which the British state measures with such solicitude), the different backgrounds, experiences, thoughts and concepts that brought people into the movement, and did so differently. We mapped out the different collectives and campaigns. Who was at the centre (student activists, unions and networks...), who was at the margins (teenagers, unemployed graduates...), and who was perhaps afraid to be found there (migrants, minors). And we posed the question that is always so central: what angers and desires are in the movement beyond the immediate unifying agendas, the official slogan, such as opposing the restructuring of the university system and the raising of the fees, and how can we deepen and broaden the struggle without simply proposing new official lines?

On 12th March 2011, we ran a workshop on 'How to engage at the margins of a demo: games, formats, tools. A workshop using SOMA, Theatre of the Oppressed and other methodologies to explore, understand and activate the margins of our protests.' As part of a big convergence at the London Student Union, we practiced ways of connecting and moving, getting to know new people with a similar desire to inhabit otherwise the often rigid and boring spaces of demonstrations.

Later, with our experiences from the student movement in mind, and based on our debriefing sessions after other mobilisations, we felt the need to make some of our ludic, theatrical and choreographic tools available. We made a collaborative treasure hunt map for a big upcoming mobilisation on the 26th of March: 'a map of some treasures we may find as we protest: games, flirts, dances, toilets...' This was developed in a workshop and incorporated information on basic infrastructures as well as meeting points at the march.

Our session for the day after March 26th had to be cancelled due to absolute dispersion, exhaustion and many arrests: 'Our protest: resonances, impressions, processes. A workshop to tell of experiences, reflect and imagine, using our resonant bodies in various ways'. Not the first time that we didn't find the time to debrief, discuss and process, or didn't manage to meet in preparation of things to come: time runs, politics runs, we run after it, or we get carried along by it. With spring came political burnout for many. Nanopolitics during this period was a constant space for us to process experiences from the movement and to share intimate and playful moments to distract us from the violence of it all for a bit. A nice warm space indeed, to pause and

process rushy events and feelings bringing the softness of nano to the harshness of politics on the streets, in our universities and communities.

The voice in movement8

[...] it's easier to be in sync when using the voice as well as moving, than when only moving – one gets into a shared breathing pattern and can be almost synchronous in ones production of sounds and sighs [...] The idea of producing harmonies together entitled us, although we need more time for this experientiation/experimentation [...]

I remember when I first saw that Nanopolitics was going to have a workshop about the voice... I felt instantly drawn to it. I very quickly sent an email to register and then thought about not going to it a hundred times right until the last minute. I find the use of the voice fascinating but also very frightening. It seems you can tell a lot about somebody by the way they speak just like by the way they move. The voice can be used to charm, scare, reassure, whisper, shout... and be the vessel of so many human emotions.

One of the reasons why I thought about going to this workshop was because I was thinking: "if one can do so many things with their voice, how come we seem to use our voice in very limited ways?"

When I was a teenager I used to be very introverted and communicating with others was always very problematic. As a result I remember that I didn't speak much and when I did, it was close to whispering, to the point where people often asked me to repeat myself because they could not hear what I was saying. There is something very powerful about the voice as it comes from deep inside us and it can be a huge challenge to be as loud and clear as social beings are supposed to be in order to affirm themselves, when you're not comfortable with who you are. This followed me well into adulthood. I don't think I am the only one with that experience and just like I think "moving" can transform your personality, so does having a greater knowledge of your own voice. That was definitely something I wanted to explore...

The workshop was one of the most amazing experiences I have ever had! Hagit, the facilitator, had a wonderful energy a unique way of working with people. I remember being very impressed when she told us she used to work with children who didn't speak, possibly because of a traumatic experience. She was trying, through movement and voice, to make them familiar with their voice again, or find a new voice.

I think the relationship between the voice and our very inner, deeper self – as something we are, perhaps, or as something we are becoming – was very

central to the workshop. As we explored in other workshops on the voice too, the resonance created between the vocal chords tells us a lot about how we are, filtering and vibrating throughout the body and its different tissues and the resonance chambers of the diaphragm, chest, head, pelvis. Where no resonance is possible, there is blockage, and one has to tune into that to find ways of bringing circulation and life into stuck tissues. As Anne Carson says: 'reality is a sound, you have to tune into it not just keep yelling.'

I do not remember everything we did but I do remember two exercises in particular.

The first one was an exercise where we had to start on the floor and slowly go to a standing position moving in whatever way we wanted. As we were doing this, Hagit asked us to sing a song we knew from our childhood, start on the floor singing in our lowest voice and, as we slowly stood up, to increase the pitch of our voice. Some people noticed that when asked to sing, they felt really challenged: not only singing per se, but also singing a childhood nursery rhyme, that wasn't so easy, whether this was because of possible associations of childhood memories, or because we found the nursery rhyme troubling (in its sexist, racist or otherwise politically regressive content). I noticed when I heard my friends speaking that they change the pitch of their voice according to what they want to express or whether they're talking to their mates or to their boss. I also read in a study about gender that people consciously or unconsciously alter their voice according to their gender. Women tend to speak with a higher-pitched voice when they could actually speak with a lower voice and men tend to speak with a lower-pitched voice even when they could speak with a higher voice. In this exercise people identified as both boys and girls seemed to be able to go from a very low voice to a very high one.

The second exercise I remember completely blew my mind! It was the last exercise that we did, so you need to keep in mind that we were "warmed up" and already in a state of excitement. Hagit gave us some structure but it became very quickly, without us actually realizing it, some sort of self-organised exercise in a very strange and crazy way. Each of us found a partner so that the group was divided in pairs. Our instructions were that one person of the pair was to produce voice and movements in any way she wanted and the other one was to mirror them. It all started with everybody being sort of self-conscious and hesitant but very soon people became absorbed in this game. You could be as creative as you wanted to.

After I got over my self-consciousness I started to shout and make noises I had never made before, as if going deep into some sort of animal primal me. It's like everything that my body wanted to externalise, whether in sounds or movement, just came out. I felt free to move and be oral as I wanted to in

complete freedom because everybody was doing the same. No one was going to look at me funny or judge me, so I went crazy. I remember there was a lot of anger, I remember screaming and hitting the ground with my fists, I remember running around in the room, laughing sometimes, sometimes almost crying. I went through so many different emotions and my body moved in ways it had never moved before... releasing stuff... yelling! Sometimes when we tune into reality, it makes us quite ready to yell, and it can be nice to yell with others just as to dance with them.

The atmosphere was incredible. The air was thick and hot and buzzing... there was so much energy around. It felt as amazing to lead as it was to follow my partner.

Social pressure on how to talk, behave and move creates frustration... that day we realized or were reminded how true that was and mostly how we needed to find a way to express all these emotions through our voice and the movements of our bodies. In big cities we mostly use movement in productive ways. We go from one point to another, there is always a reason why we move. The human body is a moving body, it is not meant to be still, and it seems to me it is important also to just move, not to do anything or achieve anything in particular.

Hagit's workshop felt so revealing because it was about moving and using your voice for no reasons external to us and the collective movements of our bodies: expressing ourselves and our repressed emotions, from anger to joy, throwing yourself around whilst experimenting with different voice intonations, undoing the codification of our gestures and the stiffening of our bodies, learning to lead and follow each other temporarily and in turn, responding to each other's movements and voices, producing a collective empowerment of our bodies through affects... I am so glad I went in the end. I felt just a little taller and better equipped to face the world.

Working with fear¹¹

Why and how is learning not to block, but to engage with fear a political act? (and how it is located in the body) [...] What is it about our personal fears that is political? [...] What is it about the way that we deal with fear that is political? [...] What is the relationship between an individual's past experiences that have a bearing on the present and how they are affected by and affect others? How does an individual past come to circulate in a collective present? [...] What is the connection between dealing with one's personal problems and the wider political connotations?¹²

Merav comes from Berlin to facilitate a nanopolitics session on fear using the Grinberg Method. She speaks of fear to make us think and perceive fear in a different way. Since we were kids we have always been told not to be afraid: we learned to prevent fear, suppress fear, keep it away. Merav proposes us to deal with fear not through our mind, through voices telling us this and that, through potentially paranoid inner selves, but through our intellect and body – thinking-feeling fear otherwise. We start with a series of exercises that help us feel and listen to our body. We also do exercises to 'energize' our body: we cannot face fear with a low bodily energy, this is what we do most of the time, but then fear becomes a pathology, Merav says.

Merav distinguishes between two types of fear: old and new. The first comes from our past, we got somehow accustomed to it, it is inscribed in our body, and we feel it as something grave: it is more difficult to deal with this kind of fear, stratified in our body. The second is present fear, relating to something that might happen to us, a fear that does not build upon bodily memory: in this case there can be a component of excitement in fear.

How do I get stuck and paralyzed in fear? What are the patterns I fall into habitually, settled beyond my perception? Fear can become many things: discomfort, paranoia, panic... At the bottom of all this there is a force that has no negative or positive connotation in itself, and there is our body, and through the body we can make use of fear as an ally, a friend, a companion...

It's a matter of turning fear as characterized through our mind, into a fear as a bodily force, as movements that affect our bodies.

We do an exercise to 'gather energy' by ourselves. It's intense. I know that if I start shivering it's ok. After a while I do shiver, not much, but sometimes my body trembles, it moves by itself as through an unconditioned reflex. We end the exercise on the floor, and Merav comes to me and starts rotating my head. The exercise ends, I am completely spaced out. 'And now a volunteer... you!' I really wanted to do it ('I felt your body wanted to do it' she told me afterwards). Merav will do an exercise with me, on specific work



related fears. 'This works well if the fear is related to your job.' She asks me questions about myself and what I do, my fears and imaginaries. I try to answer, but I cannot really talk, my face is almost paralyzed, as if anaesthetized. 'Don't worry, it's because of some techniques I used with your head.' I work as a teacher – she asks me to imagine myself in class, she asks me what I feel, what I think about myself, what do I think the students think of myself. 'They think I shouldn't be there, they think I'm not appropriate for that job, they think I'm not really a teacher. They think there is something wrong with me...' (at this point my friend Molli, as she will later tell me, starts crying). I feel calm, I can answer the questions, but my body is reacting in a different way. It was as if the body was detached from myself, or the mind was detached from my body. I started stomping my foot on the floor. Molli told me afterwards that she never saw me like that, so angry, that she thought I was going to punch someone in the face.

'And let goooo... breathe...' Through breathing my chest seems to expand in space. 'And now look people in their eyes.' Some of them are turning their face away. Some of them are visibly upset. For me as well is hard to look at them in their faces. 'Now you are a teacher!' says Merav. I try to smile, but it's hard...

Later on, we talk about power and domination, and their difference. To empower myself (through these exercises, if they have the desired effect) could be a way to empower us, as a group. To 'liberate', let go, open something up in collective spaces, through our bodies. As always with cathartic approaches, one big question remains about their effects: producing great distress to then produce great release, does that necessarily shift the way we feel, think and relate? Does this kind of frontal 'hacking' of reflexes generate new, more sensitive pathways? Is it too loud and harsh to give rise to new sensitivities? Is there something to be cleared out of the way forcefully?

Assuming that release, liberation and opening take place, there is as always the issue that these techniques can and are also to empower some to dominate others. Grinberg is a therapy for wellbeing, and it can well be a therapy for the wellbeing of workers, for the companies they work in, for the wellbeing of capitalism... Such exercises can be used to shatter the subject in such a way that capitalism can take better advantage from it: I become a fearless worker, I don't know what is going to happen to me but that's ok, I don't have an image of myself anymore and I can fearlessly face every kind of (work related) risk, any kind of (working) situation.

Through Grinberg and other such methods capitalism can make use of the forces of the unknown, of bodily energies, of our openness towards encounters. Our ability to cope with the new and the unknown gets developed, to unleash creativity through our bodies, to free ourselves from a fixed identity, with the aim not just to flexibly shift from one identity to the other, but to remain always open to the possible, to any situation. These are techniques of deterritorialization. What characterises capitalism's deterritorialization? 'Empowerment', 'Self-help', 'Personal Development'... highly ambivalent terms and practices.

As often with nanopolitics, we try to appropriate some powerful tools, away and against the principles of capitalism and its framework of profitability. Yet copyright signs and high training fees make certain methods less accessible to politically radical purposes than others. Grinberg draws on shamanic and sometimes ancient knowledges and practices from Israel, Latin America and beyond, as well as other approaches such as that of Wilhelm Reich. It has been created in the 1980s as an assemblage of different techniques. We too want to reclaim techniques and practices, and their traditions, to create something else – beyond work and profit. A bodily relation with fear, as a state of force, the undoing of bodily patterns constituted by traumas and stratified fear, through an attentiveness and openness (without end) to what can happen beyond identity across our bodies: free Grinberg for all!!!

These reflections come a posteriori however. At the end of the session, we gather to talk and feed back as usual. What's the politics of the Grinberg method? Not much comes out of our discussion unfortunately. We are all very tired, some of us have been crying all day, others are upset.

Tonalities of relation¹³

You say tones for colours as well, and also you have intonation and tonality in music. [...] It's about frequency and vibration so it's also in a solid material, when it's tense or relaxed. [...] It's also when the passage between two different states becomes visible; in music tonality, is still a metric of a spectrum, a gradient; it's a different type of skin, at some point it's not skin anymore. [...] Quality shifts as well as quantity. [...] We got very close to each other, and then the siren started. Our friend had broken one of the barriers of the university space. She opened a locked door, by a simple push of a red button. The alarm went off. The Nigerian security guy was furious and saying: you are not getting back *in here, locking us out from our space and our stuff ... the fire brigade* was on the way... standing outside barefoot, arguing harshly about security, tone and pitch skyrocketing[...] once back inside, we had this discussion about exclusion, and suddenly all these brains came back in. How do you understand the tonalities of neo-colonialism, between race, borders and wage labour?14

We have been waiting for Carla to come to London for quite some time, and now she is here, to lead a workshop as part of nanopolitics. Tonalities of relations, exploring tone and relation through touch: some 15 exhausted weekend bodies show up for this experiment.

We start by laying on the ground. Carla talks, but hers are not instructions, she doesn't really tell us what to do and how to move our bodies, her words are not entirely meaningful, they *suggest* rather than *mean* something, using some more or less anatomical terms, leading us across different body parts, movements and tissues. Her words come towards us, and we react to them, encouraged to reach out into the void of their signification, each of us in a different way: it is not about getting it right and doing the same thing all together, everybody seems to follow something else, a different voice and body, new imaginaries of the layers of our corporeality.

What we seem to do is to 'map a different geography of our bodies', as Carla puts it. Fascia, bones, muscles, fluids, tensions, softness, resistance, breath... We trace a new map in the sense that we learn to perceive, think, feel our bodies differently. Our body becomes something else, its interiorized hierarchy changes: the umbilical zone becomes the living centre of the body, and so the head is now another limb, it moves like an appendage, the coccyx turns into a tail, into another limb that we've lost long ago, we now regain it in this becoming animal, becoming starfish, becoming octopus. Maybe the term 'body mind centring', which is the curious name of the method we are exploring, refers to the shift of these two familiar entities, body and mind, to the possibility of moving them around, recomposing their relationship? We don't dwell on abstractions such as mind-body relations but plunge into the depths of our sensed anatomy, sensation aided by the terms Carla gives us. Carla asks us to imagine the navel becoming a mouth, she says 'imagine...', then she doesn't say it anymore, my navel is opening, I can feel it, a living cavity opens in my belly. I get scared, but just for a moment. The sense of our existential geographies shifting and undergoing earthquakes, which we all know from relationships, precarity, migration, now takes on a very geological dimension. Anxiety is the way a loss of reference points feels, says Simondon, and we each have our moments of vertigo as some certainties about our supposedly stable and objective maps of our bodies are undone.

I do still think, I use my brain during this exercise, but this is not the "centre" of my body anymore. Other parts of the body begin to emerge, consolidate, they gain a different consistency, as if they would think by themselves, as if part of my leg becomes a head with a brain: it starts pulsating, it is alive, I can feel it, it is thinking! My body loses its outline, my six limbs elongate in space, the body becomes limitless, at least this is how it feels. It feels, because

in a way it is not really me feeling, it is the body itself. Now our bodies touch each other, grazing, it is as if part of my leg, my foot, becomes something like a hand, a sensitive piece of flesh which is not quite mine anymore. This reconfiguration of limits allows for other kinds of encounter, far beyond the verbal or even vocal.

Thus we explore 'tuning into': bodies that tune in with one other. In themselves, the movements and gestures we make are simple - I gently lean my hands onto someone else's body. But it is something else than just leaning what we do. Carla talks about the bodily tissues behind the skin, about muscular fascia, about what is unseen of our bodies. She seems to use anatomical knowledge, an anatomy far more complex than the one we've learned in school. Carla asks us to touch and sense and affect the connective tissues of someone else's body, imagining is a mapping which allows us to start engaging with the tissues of our bodies. Carla tells us how, because of the way the body is constituted at a 'nano' level, a pressure on its surface becomes a pressure on its interior (but Carla never talks in terms of interior and exterior of a body). 'Anatomy is a kind of fiction' says Carla, and it is also the 'real', solid base for these exercises. I really 'yield' into someone else's body with my own. I perceive the other body alive, moving, palpitating. Then I don't perceive it anymore, I forget that my hand is pressing someone else's shoulder, I forget someone's hand touching my leg. My body becomes limitless in all directions: its shape changes not only outwards but also inwards, it is made of moving fractals.

Whilst Carla talks to us about connective tissues my mind wanders off and I start thinking of something apparently unrelated to what we are doing. I think about the way I often tend to position myself in relation to others, from strangers, to friends, to people I work with: I realize that I use something like a judgement scale that works according to largely undefined parameters formed more or less unconsciously. An example of one of these parameters I inadvertently use could be called 'intelligence', the 'ability of expressing myself through words', or 'formulating theoretical knowledge'. This scale of judgement with its parameters constantly produces a sort of negotiable but nonetheless repressive power structure where I position myself in relation to other people. I'm compelled to feel, speak, act differently, according to the position I end up occupying on this provisional structure. There is something almost 'nano' in this mechanism that makes me feel inadequate most of the time: it is something that happens largely below a threshold of consciousness, something that Carla's exercises bring to fore. But substantially this devise of judgement is an individualizing one, the relations it dictates are based on a separation between individuals. It is through thinking and experiencing the

nano of the relationship between our bodies that this everyday internalised mechanism of relation operating at the level of subjectivity becomes thinkable and perceivable. It is a very different model of relationality what we are experiencing here in this workshop. Carla is offering us, with her anatomical explanations and through the BMC exercises, a different model of relationality, which does not leave subjectivity, or the relations between us, untouched.

Carla's way of practising this 'centering', that really seems to be an undoing and shifting, is a way of 'multiplying our capacity of perceiving and sensing', as she puts it. What we've done here is a training for us to get away from ourselves as individual subjects, away from our bodies as we have learned to conceive of them and perceive them, away also from the hierarchy of uprightness: the thinking head above, closer to the sky.

Desubjectivation offers the possibility for the body to become something else, other than 'human', escaping the imposition that 'humanity' carries with it: presiding over other species, putting a western patriarchal culture above all, holding the head up high with the intent of saving or helping others. We develop a different relation amongst what we usually perceive as our mind, with its capacity of thinking rationally, of perceiving things from the inside or the outside, and ourselves as thinking and feeling. We can think with the body and sense with the mind: this implies a recomposition of our bodies according to a different geography, a geography unknown to our selves. The body becomes other than what we see with our eyes, we start to perceive it and perceive everything else in many other ways. We experience the possibility of composing something anew using our bodies together, in a merging of different bodies, the possibility of collectively being something else than the sum of ourselves, something else than a unitary fusion of bodies. Our bodies tune around each other: we expand an ability of organizing forces, intensities, and other things on the verge of the perceptible.

Neoliberal desubjectivation is sickening, it ends up stiffening the shell of paranoid bodies: it's all about myself, and how much can I integrate myself in a main-stream to assert myself (subjectification as becoming a subject), or how much can I protect myself from devastating "pressures" (desubjectivation as a shrinking self).

With this workshop desubjectivation becomes something that overcomes the opposition between an inside and an outside: I lose myself and I gain everything else – the possibility of multiple conjunctions. This other desubjectivation is always multiple, plural, never reduced to the individual. This is the important difference, between a desubjectivation of the individual, becoming flexible, fragmented, fractured, and always fucked up, staying by itself (at the most it is just connected, through a networking system, with other subjects),

and a desubjectivation that is a becoming plural, a multiplication, a practice of conjunctions where everything tends to move away from what it is, from how it gets established, towards encounters and new compositions. One is a desubjectivation which affirms separation, the other affirms ways of connecting alternative to the sanctioned ones (nuclear family, work, nation...).

And in the midst of all this, a shakeup. In the middle of the session, as harmonies seem possible and gentle tones abound, we take a break to eat. Someone is impatient to leave the high-security university building to smoke outside. The university is full of switches, gateways and borders, like a prison only those with the right keys can enter and access it. A neoliberal institution like any other, built on paranoia, 'health and safety', restrictions, exploitations, divisions, competition. The aspiring smoker presses the fire alarm button next to the door, mistaking a fire alarm button for the switch to open the door (there is no switch to open the door: only access card holders can swipe open doors). So a fire alarm goes off in the midst of our tonal experience, with a loud sound that makes your hair stand and makes your muscles tense.

With this shrill sound comes a whole other world of relating: a fight crupts between our smoker friend and the security guard who rushes to reprimand us. The fire brigades have to be sent, even if this was a mistake. Some of us try to mediate as agitation turns into anger in the heated back and forth, and voices go shaky with frustration. We're all barefoot, sandwiches in hand, standing around by ugly prison-like university gates. The tone gets harsher, pitch higher, frequencies clash. The guard (from Nigeria) asks our smoker (from Brasil) for her name, to complete the protocol. Our friend rejects this request, suspecting that it's because of her accent that she has to give her name (memories of border controls perhaps, of racist experiences perhaps). She feels vulnerable and gets angry. The guard in turn gets upset about this crowd of largely white barefoot people trying to hamper him doing his job, fulfilling the protocol. He insists all the more. A minor instance of accent (or suspicion thereof) gives rise to a large shift in tone, changing our bodies.

Eventually we can return into the building, not least thanks to some careful mediations, and inside we find ourselves sitting in a circle trembling, overwhelmed by this experience. Securitisation meets postcolonial sensitivities meets class differences. How to talk, to make sense of what just happened, from the point of view of tonality? Tone has become quite tangible to us in this hour, in a way contrasting with the beginning of our session. Our protected nanospace meets 'the outside', subject of many nanopolitics conversations. 'How to connect with the world/s outside?' we often ask. No simple or single answer of course, and as we felt so clearly this somatic work, we may well want to give up ideas of 'inside' and 'outside' in favour of more subtle and

malleable understandings of geography, of other approaches to relation. The categories and regulations of the worlds around us will not be immediately undone through our changing of tone, of course; but between us, much becomes possible, new radiations give rise to new questions and relations, on which we then build our common worlds.

Endnotes

- 1. This section is based on memories and reflections of the first nanopolitics session, 'Contact for Radicals', facilitated by Daniel Mang and Ulli X in January 2010, London. It was assembled by Gabriella Alberti and then edited collectively.
 - 2. Extracts from collective notes of the first nanopolitics session, 'Contact for Radicals'.
 - 3. Saul Alinsky (1975) Rules for Radicals. New York: Vintage Books
- **4.** Nanopolitics sessions are always free, but time is money they say, particularly in cities like London.
- **5.** Text based on nanopolitics sessions on 'Our protest: resonances, impressions, processes' (collectively facilitated) and 'Engaging at the margins of a protest' (facilitated by Nelly Alfandari), both in spring 2011. Based on memories and reflections of Manuela Zechner and Bue Rübner Hansen and edited collectively.
- **6.** Fragments of collective notes from nanopolitics session in December 2010: 'Debrief after the last weeks of education struggle'.
- 7. Kettling (also known as containment or corralling) is a police tactic for controlling large crowds during demonstrations or protests. It involves the formation of large cordons of police officers who then move to contain a crowd within a limited area. Protesters are left only one choice of exit, determined by the police, or are completely prevented from leaving. (Wikipedia)
- 8. Text reflecting on nanopolitics session facilitated by Hagit Yakira, 'voice and movement', in May 2010, London. Based on memories and reflections of David Boudon, then collectively edited.
 - 9. Extracts from collective notes of nanopolitics session on the voice and movement.
 - 10. Anne Carson (1998) Autobiography of Red. A Novel in Verse. New York: Knopf.
- 11. This section is based on memories and reflections of the nanopolitics session 'Working with fear', facilitated by Merav Gur Arie in June 2011. It is based on the notes of Paolo Plotegher and edited collectively.
 - 12. Excerpts from collective notes of Grinberg session.
- 13. This section is based on memories and reflections of the nanopolitics session, Tonalities of relation' (based on Body Mind Centering and other somatic methods), facilitated by Carla Bottiglieri in April 2011, in London. It is based on reflections by Paolo Plotegher and was then edited collectively.
- 14. From collective notes to the nanopolitics session 'Tonalities of relation' and of a collective nanopolitics writing dinner in early 2012.

The body of a teacher

— a nanobody

When I first became a teacher and needed to use the restroom in the middle of a class, I had no clue as to what my elders did in such situations. No one talked about the body in relation to teaching. What did one do with the body in the classroom? Trying to remember the bodies of my professors, I find myself unable to recall them. I hear voices, remember fragmented details, but very few whole bodies. (bell hooks)¹

The body of a teacher as a body to learn from: the teacher as a body in control, controlling other bodies

After years of de-schooling my body, this describes my experiences of a year in teacher training, schooling my body, training my body to be a teacher. On the way to de-school my body [a map]:

```
decisiveness - to change
                  honesty – clarity for honesty
                                                        trust connectedness
connect with my desires
                           feeling my skin, flesh, organs
                                                                  connect with
others – perceive, listen, communicate
                                               boundaries – for honesty
my nano body is
                                      in collectivity
                                               vulnerable needs space
                   in process
                                     open
the nano body
                   wants to in relation
                                                                  together
                            in reflection
                                                        is creative
                       takes time for process
has time for process
                   permits time for process
                                               with others makes my desire
        to teach.
                                                         To transgress?
```

Reflections before being trained

To me the body of a teacher is essentially a body in constant interaction with a group of people. A body perceiving a group, reading this group, conducting the organising of this group, in order to facilitate learning. This interaction happens initially 'through' the body of the teacher; the teacher is listening to the group and the group is being conducted by the physical presence of the teacher. My task as a teacher I see in taking in a class, their ability and willingness to learn and to listen to each other.

As a teacher I want to listen to the students, inspire their ideas and help channel their expressions, questions and thoughts through my body – but eventually I want to be able to step back and let the class focus purely on each other. To learn from one another.

Reflections during my initial training — observing other teachers

I am observing throughout how the teacher is tightly shaping and controlling the learning and behaviour of the students through the use of her voice, her language and her body. She uses her voice in order to conduct the tone of the different parts of the lesson. Her choice of language clearly sets the kind of working environment she wants to produce. Finally her gestures and movements across the room physically shape the space and with it the students' behaviour, as well as supporting her facilitation of the children's participation.

The students line-up in a straight line. Silence is expected from them, otherwise they are not allowed to enter the classroom. The teacher stands in front of the line and only welcomes them into the space once they are calm and quiet.

Her physical presence organises the room, she remains calm but highly determined and firm. Soon the class will be allowed to move their bodies in order to take part in the exercises. However, until then they are expected to show an excellent behaviour, sitting up straight, facing the teacher, performing their participation.

The body of the teacher is taming the crowd, enforcing their participation rigorously.

Trust vs Control

First ground rule in British schools today is 'Respect' – there are various practices however how to teach respect...

I trust your values
I trust your interests and curiosity
I trust your word
I trust your sense of responsibility
I trust your choice

I control your behaviour
I control your participation
I control your learning
I control your values
I control your actions
I control your promises
I control your presence
I control your appearance

Educating responsible citizens

In an environment where CCTV cameras control both – the controlled and the controlling bodies, in order to 'support' safety and learning, trust becomes a radical action for the body of a teacher.

```
darling... in bed.... bladder infection... :(
gonna stay here i suppose....
unless i manage to get out...
(also preparing a poetry class)
```

been in bed most of past days - well, in bed and school like, this thing got quite full on, but got antibiotics now, so much better...

...me ok, full of flu now. think my body aint happy with all this stress. also kinda intense days over here. and too much workload. kinda dizzy.*

* Email conversations around my initial training period: metaphorical wounds just taking over. my latest slogan: forget me till christmas.

How the body of a teacher reacts

Bladder infection (first teaching month) – bladder infection seems to be a common illness in the teaching profession.

The controlled body is constantly controlling other bodies – there is no time to go to the toilet when teaching.

My gynaecologist speaks about the toilet as the place many women use as space for their legitimate withdrawal, to have a legitimate break from their responsibilities to others. Many women, so she has observed, develop bladder infections in order to be able to claim their break time....

Flu (first half term, i.e. first holiday) – most common teacher illness – everyone gets the flu, working with so many young people etc. - most likely teachers are getting ill in their holidays.

Headaches (especially on Fridays) – on a regular basis. Never really had headaches before this training.

A Friday note:

'teeth popping stomach imploding head pounding through my ears shoulders in agony breasts bursting made it through this week of REAL work?'

I didn't get ill after my first teaching month, not until the very end of the programme. That was equally scary. My body was in control. Functioning in order to be controlling.

I got wrist problems however, repetitive strain injuries in both wrists. Due to intense tensions in my shoulders. And I realised when I was teaching I held both my hands as if I was pushing away an imaginary wall, or holding it from falling on me. One night I even woke up with an intense pain in my back – I realised I was stemming both my hands into my hips as if telling someone off, in the middle of my sleep....the controlling body in control....

THE BODY OF A TEACHER:

...tells, doesn't ask. The space for learning is organised by the teacher making students follow rules we did not establish collectively.

...has no time to reflect. Plans – executes – assesses – progresses - evaluates progress – plans.... Time for reflection? Time for process?

...does not look up. It is all-round looking, overseeing the bodies it controls, or at least it gives the impression it sees everything – hey wow, look, that's a beautiful sky...?

...lies in order to control. Toughen up.

...challenges, cares, enthuses... ...others. Pushes. Others. Pushes a lot of energy into others to be motivated to learn despite a curriculum that is not developed with them in mind.

- ...wakes up early.
- ...is disciplined.
- ...thinks of achievement.
- ...measures.
- ...does not have time to get new inspiration.
- ...focuses. It feels so good to be focussed. Organised. Planned.
- ...is exemplary. School is preparing students for office life. That's why we all dress smart. And sweat in school uniforms. Or feel uncomfortable in heels and dresses. We don't study with our bodies.
- ...maintains order from the outside. Tie up your shirt, do your tie up, put your blazer on. Bags off the table. Look smart. As if you are studying.

The teacher body has to makes others have to fit in.

...feels...?

Pressure. Tears.

hey

it'd be nice to catch you these days. got a few days off school. millions of essays to write and so far all i wanna do is eat and sleep. it s pretty hardcore and at too many times just feels as if i'm doing a training to becoming a prison guard. like, that's expected from me to be, by both, the other teachers, but also by the kids, as they somehow have learnt to read such behaviour as a way of giving respect or something. tricky. and quite daunting.

i am fully taken in by my course, and am being asked to do a lot of things i dont believe in... being squeezed into a system, which was

the purpose of doing this i know, but is kinda really draining and difficult.

but i am still interested in the experiment. thats for sure. anyhow. pretty demanding.

oh, and you dont use the word power, you say dilemma.

yo sorry, wanted to really come and exchange some knowledge from you yesterday but just couldn't take in anything any more (had a full one hour shout down at school juhuuuu) so collapsed instead... maybe later but happy protesting in case you go!!!

more and more mute as days go by... more and more tears.... but hey... still sparks of hope I'll be getting something out of this....

The controlling body in control is under an enormous pressure.

The teacher educates young people.

The teacher passes on the great knowledge of our ancestors.

The teacher teaches skills.

The teacher tames young people.

The school is the place young people are being formed into being good citizens.

The teacher is responsible for the well-being of society.

The body of a teacher is exemplary for our society.

The teacher receives the frustration of young people daily.

Practices of education

Definitions

Education in its broadest, general sense is the means through which the aims and habits of a group of people lives on from one generation to the next.² **Learning** brings together cognitive, emotional, and environmental influences

and experiences for acquiring, enhancing, or making changes in one's knowledge, skills, values, and worldview.³

Questions reflecting on definitions

Can aims and habits live on if they are passed on rigidly, without being questioned? How can students learn knowledges of past generations in order to make a change to their own knowledges, values and skills without shaping that information according to their existing understanding and experiences? How can the teacher know of the students' existing understanding other than by listening to them? How can students find their voice to express their understanding if lined up in a formation that does not come from them?

What constitutes a good teacher?

I strongly believe that facilitating creativity and critical engagement are essential for any form of teaching. Learning should be a tool for emancipation and I see it to be the teacher's role to provide an environment for the students to be able to access and nurture their own potential, as individuals as well as the whole group.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed

(...) education makes sense because women and men learn that through learning they can make and remake themselves, because women and men are able to take responsibility for themselves as beings capable of knowing – of knowing that they know and knowing that they don't. (Paulo Freire)⁴

There is no such thing as a neutral education process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of generations into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the 'practice of freedom', the means by which men and women deal critically with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (Richard Shaull drawing on Paulo Freire)⁵

Etymology

Education is to lead forth/ to draw out: from educe to ex [out], ducere [to lead].

Education as a practice of change, as a practice of engaging with knowledge and using it to create knowledge. The function of the teacher to facilitate a process of drawing out that knowledge, to lead forth the process of creating knowledge. The body of the teacher as the head of a class, lining up

in single-file: Drawing out ideas from the students – in a line? A single body 'drawing out' from a group of bodies what they are or should be? How would that single body know? The body of the teacher forming the students into a line – to lead forth an engagement with knowledge?

The body of the teacher forms the students into a line in single-file, leading them away from what they are.

The body of a teacher under pressure:

- ...from society to keep young people in straight line single file
- ...from young people rebelling/ testing their power when forced into a straight line single file.

How does the body of a teacher react to this pressure mill?

Isolation - Collectivity

The body of the teacher enters a classroom on behalf of society in order to include the young into its knowledge, its history, its ways of functioning and behaving. When entering the classroom the body of a teacher is representing an established system of power. The body of the teacher has to follow the rules of the game (even if its aim is to change these), otherwise it triggers a power imbalance in an environment of bullying, in which the young have learnt to play their part.

Solidarity: As long as I can fit my body into my profession I am part of a network, I can expect the solidarity of others.

If the controlled body fails to control itself, immediately other controlled bodies are in place in order to maintain the controlling of the students. Solidarity amongst teachers – I help you to control when you fail to do so. If there is a glitch in the controlling, a student or a class rebelling, the control gets fixed, re-established, but never questioned. As a teacher my body is part of this system. I am not being asked, neither are the students. In order to sustain the body of a teacher on a daily basis I have to focus, disconnect from other worlds. The jump between bodies/ the perceiving, connected body and the controlled body is difficult.

```
yes our precious precious resources.... which are soon hard to feel before we over exhaust them..... and then their lack pushes us to enforced breaks.....
```

lost it yesterday in the classroom, overdid myself shouting at a, to be fair pretty disre-

spectful and not very funny, classroom clown. and suddenly all blurred in front of my eyes and i had to leave the room.

in a short moment of anarchy that same classroom clown, seeing the state i was in, tried
to re-establish order, asking whether that
would make him not go into detention. That
moment the teacher came in, and the system of
regulation shot out from within the invisible,
senior management, walkie talkies, letters to
parents etc and finally an exclusion for the
clown. my official statement of things.

my throat hurts, my ears hurt, my body longs to be on holidays, can't bear the idea of seeing violence or injustice today.... and felt wrong and ashamed somewhat to go to the learning strike in hackney.

might still whiz down there for a little now, to feel collective strength

guess i have to close my heart and soul even more to do things right in there, no good to be so much in it that i loose my physical self.

today my head's pounding like it wants to set free.... and i slept the entire afternoon.... the freer i get in my weekends, the more bizarre the monday world becomes?

also realised how much a year of full-time work and schooling affects ideas/ practice of we/energy/creativity....

what a shame that all our jobs are under such time pressure isnt it... i think thats what i hate about teaching most also. the time / production pressure. i am all for progress through process. but never time for that pffff.

Trapped in the maze of marking and measuring progress, the body of the teacher swallows the stress of working within a system of league tables, of success, of failure. Within this system, the body of the teacher is equally measured, is pressured, is expected to forcefully squeeze others into an expected shape: 'No talking when I am talking! Quiet! I am waiting! Out! OUT!'

What would happen if the body of the teacher would drop her teachy-role and reveal who she was, what she believes in and why? Would she be able to carve out a space where everyone could be encouraged to be who they are? A space to listen, to discuss, to trust, to act? What would we need to be able to create such space? What could we 'teach' each other to create such space?

Endnotes

- bell hooks (1994), Teaching to Transgress, Education as the Practice of Freedom. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, pp. 191-192
 - 2. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education
 - 3. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Learning
 - 4. Paulo Freire (2004) Pedagogy of Indignation. Boulder: Colorado, Paradigm. p.15
- 5. Peter Mayo (1999), Gramsci, Freire, and Adult Education: Possibilities for Transformative Action, Macmillan, p. 5





EXERCISE Columbian hypnosis for groups¹

One person in the middle, **all** others clustered randomly, surrounding.

All [surrounding]

- 1. pick a body-part of the person in middle to focus on shoulder, heel, belly, forehead...
- 2. your task is to maintain equal distance between your own bodies and the body part you are focussing on, when the person in the middle starts moving you have to move accordingly, maintaining your distance.

One [in the middle]

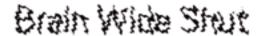
- 3. breath into your diaphragm, bend your knees slightly, lengthen your spine, relax your shoulders, relax your forehead. Open your arms slightly, palms facing outwards. Try and perceive the energy coming from the group, see most with your peripheral vision.
- 4. your task is to explore moving (first on the spot, then in the space) in order to both, challenge the group following, but still not making it impossible for them to follow.

Group reflection on power:

One in the middle: How did the power you experienced feel in your body?

^{1.} Variation of Boal's Columbian Hypnosis: Augusto Boal (2002), *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, pp. 51-55

All: How did the group experience power? Is the group a group? Imagine you are a school of fish – are you able to work with each other in this formation? Discuss experience/perception of trust and control within the exercise for each player.



— Mara Ferreri

The accident

The factual matter stands as this: I fell off my bike and hit my forehead on the tarmac. No blood, no fainting, all good. A 'minor head concussion': the diagnosis. Concussion.... in the hours after the accident my language abilities faded in a messy pulp of confusion, I just could not bring myself to translate 'concussion' into my mother tongue. I could not remember much English either, and I was alone. When I sought help at the nearest shop I broke into uncontrollable tears at the realisation that I couldn't gather words as simple as 'ice' or 'plaster'. A perplexed pharmacist offered a glass of water and a chair to sit down, as if to an invalid.

Fright, exhaustion and the curiosity to put a new (painful) experience into words. New words. A concussed head, I dutifully *sensed*, as the encounter of... a *muscle* (the brain), its fragile *shell* (the skull) and everything else around it. A muscle flexing against a barrier, itself flexed against the tarmac, the air, the light, a soundscape.

Returning home I made a dark cave out of my bedroom, every inch of window and light covered by blankets, gaffer tape, old newspapers, cardboard. Yet the world pushed through, like an insistent trickle. I craved total darkness and total silence: luxuries that urban living cannot afford us.

Recalling, exploring

The first spark was in that encounter with the ground (gravel, tarmac, dirt, gravitational forces): out of that first touch, everything became surface. The slowest surfaces yielded to my gentle cautious touch, the fastest morphed into

insurmountable barriers all around me, painful at this new and expanded sense.

Slow surfaces: as I walked, blades of grass, soft soil, the carpet in my room; as I lay down, the mattress, the dim light coming through coloured paper, a low murmur, the muffled sound of an audio-book through the foam of my headphones lying half a meter from my head.

Fast surfaces: a phone ringing, people talking at a high pitch, walking gingerly on a hard floor (the tapping exploding in my head), pressing the cold wall with my palms, sun light on my eyelids.

That was it: a *surfacing* of my head, inside and outside my skull. Pressing against the skull wall, realising for the first time its consistency as a muscle, a muscle that had flexed and was now sore, that ached a dull, continuous ache, like a fever.

Later, I became alerted to everything happening around me. New ideas swelled and breathed with the aching. The inertia-driven primacy of the mind over the body retracted at the touch of the world on both. Everything became a body, and my feelings and thinking became painfully inadequate representations of these affects.

Interacting with others was like wading with my whole body through a soft white mass: I could move, I could speak, but all was muffled and fastidious. Words failed me, as did concentration on long sentences or complex conversations. In choosing solitude and rest, I was left with a confused whirlpool of thoughts and impressions. Words appeared as pale reflections of the dull aching of my brain, crawled off its surface, rolled till they reached my tongue where they jammed and stumbled. The more I tried to control it, the more the brain swelled and bent, reluctant.

All is surface

In touch with sounds. Sun light, artificial lights, all these were bodies that I entered into contact with, pushing and pulling my naked brain, teasing it. Sound became a surface in contact with my own body-surface – the physical nature of waves too seemed to touch me, in a peculiar synaesthesia where everything turned into touch, and touch was my whole experience of the world.

Beyond the head, my whole body became a surface of contact. The talons, the tips of my feet, light on the pavement, heavier on the grass lawns, the plants of my feet transmitting complex textures, displeasing or pleasing, everything becoming touch, everything apprehended through my body, and my thoughts, heavy marbles rolling against the rough cloth of a pulsating bag, my skull. And my only organ was a sore muscle-brain. Visualising, feeling this contact. Discovering degrees of vulnerability and sensation, protective layers, boundaries of contact, felt degrees, between the skull and brain, contracting and swelling, to protect, to enwrap. The brain swelled and stretched, pushing against the skull. The skull protected, nurtured, resisted. My whole body exhausted by this resistance – but also by the enhanced conductance, my body like a sheet of copper – of the adapting, yielding and holding, of my body, my brain. An opaque fever, a dull confused murmur, not a flame but glowing embers on the wrong side of my forehead, while no fever could be felt on the outside.

Later still, I remembered the word, I could touch it with my feverish brain: concussion is *commozione*, which also means 'to be emotionally moved by something or someone'. My brain was moved. Co-moved. It moved and had been moved in the encounter with its own boundaries and the world outside them.

The nature of movement as a matter of contact and encounter, of bodies rolling over bodies, painstakingly and prosaically tangible...

Much later (days, weeks), it all dimmed out. My brain gave up the struggle to escape and expand, and settled in, finally, just a bit shaken. My eyes returned to appreciate light, and the way it gently touches surfaces to colour them. My ears too were once again able to apprehend high pitch sounds, near and far. Only my sense of touch seemed to remain – *come dire?* – somewhat more diffused, spread out over my body...

That... and a receptiveness, a heightened conductivity, a tingling of the body-brain-surface tensed outwards and within.



EXERCISE Body surfaces and boundaries

Stand up legs slightly open so that your feet align roughly with the width of your shoulders. Loosen your knees without bending them much. Loosen your shoulders. Choose a comfortable standing position, with your hips centred on your body axis. Head straight up, arms hanging on the sides. Breathe slowly without forcing. Concentrate on the soles of you bare feet, and on the contact with the floor. Close your eyes if you feel it helps you to concentrate. Feel the point of contact between the push of the floor and the push of your weight against it. Feel the different and uneven points of pressure on your soles, the talons, the plant, and how they relate to the weight and gravitational pressure of different parts of your body.

Slowly, from the breathing, begin to visualise/feel how the air that you are inhaling (cooler) and exhaling (warmer) has consistence too, inside your body and against your outer skin. Feel the air surrounding you as a body touching you, as if you were standing still at the bottom of a container filled with water. Wake up your whole body to the contact with the ground and with the air, felt as another body coming into contact with yours.

Relax. Open your eyes. Move about the space, touch an object, a person, and sense the difference.

theorizations



A politics of network-families? Precarity, crisis and careful experimentations

— Manuela Zechner

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

How do we inhabit and sustain our movements in the midst of the current phase of neoliberal-financial destruction and accumulation (often called 'crisis')? What can we make of our shared lives and militancy in the context of a system that cultivates short-term, unsustainable ways of relating and acting? Drawing on feminist-autonomist options for re-imagining trust, belonging and reproduction, I will reflect on the importance of care networks² and militant families for the self-sustainability of movements here³. These reflections are enabled by the nanopolitics process in no minor way and I draw on some interviews with people from the group here.

Care, networks, families

First, a few words on care and networks and how they might relate. Care is the practice through which we hold together our everyday, pay attention to others, our environment and ourselves, and value life as worth sustaining. It's that absolutely vital practice mostly engaged by women and subaltern people, undervalued and invisibilised not only in patriarchal and capitalist spaces but often also considered secondary in political organising. The feminisation of work does not necessarily render us more sensitive to the care needs of others and ourselves, which remain confined to the ghost-like 'unskilled' specialists of our everyday needs, such as mothers, nurses or nannies. I will

be concerning myself with the 'feminised' everydays of young, urban and politically active people here, trying to learn from care as the back door that can point to other forms of struggle.

One of the main organisational forms of care has historically been the nuclear family: a form that some consider the privileged way of organising social reproduction while others consider it radioactive⁴ and highly poisonous. In what follows, I will point to possible ways of reflecting on it in relation to militant cultures. Within patriarchy and capitalism, the family is mostly hierarchical and enclosed, privileging males and structuring much of the unpaid care labour which sustains our economies and social worlds: something we'd rather not reproduce. The locus of care has been the family home, tucked away from political as much as work spaces, yet giving a key dimension of stability to many lives, including those of activists. Beyond a dichotomy between hyper-activism and enclosed families, may we imagine radical networks of care?

The network has seen its emergence as a paradigmatic organisational-associational form in relation to the internet since the 1970s. Networks organise relations without necessarily inscribing them into hierarchies or fixed roles, by encouraging informality and leaving much space for individual choice. They have had their heyday of recognition and investment: throughout the bubble years, particularly the dot-com and creative industries booms saw digital networks become primary organisational forms for economic as much as social life. We learned that the benefits of the network was that it optimized communications and allowed for variable commitment while maximising profits via flexible accumulation as well as association. An ambivalent matter, or to put it in other words: network individualism, flexible accumulation, non-committal relations, precarious lives.

In the contexts of (global) social movements and digital struggle, many people found that networks allowed for swarming as well as organising horizontally, flexibly and across borders. With time and intensifying neoliberalism however it also became apparent that networks suck time and vital energy because of their virtuality, fluctuations, speeds and looseness, and that the formula of horizontality can lead to a disavowal of complex power relations and differences. As well as subtle concentrations of power, a lot of unpaid and invisible work happens in networks: based on their understandings of labours of love and home-based work, feminist voices have addressed this variously⁵. Yet networks also build opposite relations to families: they facilitate quick connections and flexible relations, often at the price of producing weak ties and opportunist behaviour that accustom us to low-trust interaction. The problem with network politics is often that it encourages self-interested

ways of relating that run counter to long term attentiveness or commitment – whether as juvenile collaborative or professionalised career cultures. We often don't question our network relations because they are so 'informal'.

So the network mode of collectivity is a dispersed one, intense in connectivity but relatively noncommittal and often inconsistent over time. Networks structure time and attention in specific ways, and while their innovative and revolutionary potentials will not be denied it is also important to see that on another level, the quickness and unsteadiness of networks often amplifies the existential uncertainties of precarity. Relations of care – which we all depend on in life, for life – require long temporalities, slow and singular rhythms, times of listening, healing and supporting, of growing up and getting old. Networks produce modes of attention that often clash with those of childcare or careful listening, of taking time and tuning into other peoples fragility. As someone in the 15M movement points out:

One effect of the network is fragmented time. Fragmented time means that my time continuum of the 24 hours of the day is fragmented into moments that are incompatible with one another. They don't form a unity. [...] you go jumping from fragment to fragment. And so with fragmented time, you can't project a future, because you're going towards a fragmented future. A fragmented future is not a good future because what you expect from the future is security – because if not, it's like the present. That's to say: while a person is young, they have power, health and energy, they can lead a sexual life that gives them pleasure and all those things – well, you don't need a future. With a fragmented present, if you are physically and psychically well equipped, you can stand it, and you can live well, but you can't project a future. You can't see yourself where you'll be in 30 years, because these fragments don't take you anywhere, they'd bring you to hundreds of places. But that's not sustainable, that won't be able to exist – if it's the case, it'll be because you've died young⁶.

To speak of care networks might seem a provocation in the first instance: as if networks were ever spaces of care, and as if care was ever that networked? Indeed the more precarious our world, the more networked our forms of caring: the less welfare state and institutional support, the more webs of self-organised care. Unless we wish to bring back the nuclear family to save us from precarity, to bring women back into the kitchen and men back into the workplace, as conservative politics proposes in response to the current crises.

The challenge in thinking care in a way useful for strengthening our networks rather than disengaging with them, is to avoid some moralizing,

blackmailing, guilt-driven and thus ultimately disempowering ways of speaking of 'care'. Care not as charity, the pitiful minding of a fucked up world, nor as naturalized gendered instinct or something to take for granted. Care as an attitude and action that we both want and need in order to affirm life, something we actively engage. Something that involves politics, conflict and negotiation as well as work and dedication. As someone told me, in the spanish 15M movement the initial 'care' commissions soon became commissions for 'respect', not least to avoid christian-capitalist blackmail.

Care networks

So what of the seeming disconnect between the network forms that structure our work, relations and economies, and our needs and desires to support, nourish and sustain our lives? Beyond and despite the long list of grievances against networks and their alienating dynamics – as well as beyond certain hyped affirmations of networks that have largely passed – as our everyday relational bases, networks are also spaces of life and of care. The network is the paradigmatic form not just of economic and social organisation in neoliberalism, but particularly in situations of precarity and crisis, where new forms of conviviality, association and organisation are invented *despite* being attacked (by neoliberalism). The decomposition of social rights and public institutions in times of accumulation by crisis and austerity make it urgent to build networks while at the same time 'hacking' them with care. Is there another way of thinking the network on the horizon, to do with the ways in which we reproduce our lives in relation to each other, in the context of our current impasse?

We start from our own dispersed social-economic microcosms in struggling to re-establish collective resources, and in infusing that struggle with our singular modes of love, respect, intelligence, effort and passion. For people who are more or less young, educated, precarious and/or migrant these days, those microcosms tend to be organised as networks. Friendship, cowork and militancy compose in curious ways with our biological families, which we actually rely on quite a bit for long term support and care. Like our bio-genetic families, our chosen network-families are spaces we perhaps lament for not corresponding to the everyday we desire, often because we're not sure we can rely on them. We appreciate network ties and negotiate our lives within them, but still they may feel too loose to build a future on. Our ways of sharing reproductive tasks, worries, bodies and household economies with friends, lovers and comrades are ambivalent. How can we take those relations seriously as sites of mutual construction, to trust and invest in them?

How to act in this world, how to risk oneself in an action with an uncertain outcome, when one doesn't know of what the future will be made? In order to act in conditions of uncertainties one needs trust (a 'belief') in oneself, a trust in the world and a trust in others. One has to make a tacit agreement with oneself, the world and others in order to act in a world where the 'routinely rules' won't serve to guide action. Action thus constitutes a jumping into the unknown which 'wisdom' and 'knowledge' can never help us to go through. Our scepticism and our political impasses aren't cognitive, because 'we live forwards and we think backwards' as James says in quoting Kierkegaard. Living forward means 'to believe in the world and in the new possibilities of life' that are wrapped up in it, Deleuze adds.⁷

In the current context of crisis, the need to self-organise structures of survival becomes more urgent, giving rise to desires and needs to institute other practices of reproduction and cooperation as a way of inventing new forms of life. Commoning. Our financial-economical crises are indeed symptoms of a broad *reproductive* crisis of capitalism, wherein not just the capital-e 'Economy's but also the *oikos* as our house, home and collective ecologies are in trouble. A moment where we need to re-imagine the ways in which we organise and sustain our work as well as life. Across our flat shares, our (home) offices, our political meetings, our local pubs and cafés, our facebook pages and skype calls, what do we share, how do we pay attention to each other?

Relational debris and crisis capitalism

The neoliberal bubble years pushed us into various forms of entrepreneurship, organising our work, lives and relations around 'new economies' that have now turned sour and left us unemployed, precarious, indebted and fed up. Maurizio Lazaratto emphasises the weight of the debt economy on our material as well as psychic lives, as its logic of guilt infests many aspects of our existence: our social rights turn into debts, whether it's in accessing education, unemployment benefits, healthcare or pensions. The neoliberal project reaches a new brutality in the way it cuts up and sells off our common safety nets, not least the welfare system. Our trust in each other and society fades. The competitiveness of current job markets burns us out, and the politics of measure and evaluation that protrude into all spheres of life are rendering not just our work meaningless but also many of our relationships.

In this context, many collective engagements leave us with tristesse and dissatisfaction. Our political activity too is configured by neoliberal time,

space and subjectivity: we have too little time and space, they are fragmented and unstable, it's hard to commit to projects. The long term becomes unthinkable as we are constantly busy assuring that next week and next month will work out: and the feeling is that the crisis may tear us apart (again, as many of us are migrants already). In London at least, we have lamented that the social aspect of political work often amounts to an overpriced tired and impersonal drink in a noisy pub. A sense of intense uprootedness and drifting marks relations in the neoliberal megacity.

In many nanopolitics sessions we note that through post-fordist work, we often feel alienation as guilt, insecurity and mistrust that infest relationships proper. It often seems utopian to imagine cultures of trust that can hold longer term alliances, solidarities and spaces of conviviality, not to mention pleasurable and intelligent ones. Although we may share houses and collaborate, we rarely find time to consistently be with others. We feel alone not just because there seems to be few people to rely on but also because we know that few people can rely on us. Engagements often turn out cold and awkward, reproducing a culture of activism driven by nervous and heavy affects, marked by a lack of seemingly everything: time, space, affective warmth and trust, consistency, pleasure, eroticism and a sense of future.

This 'crisis' is a moment of intensification of dynamics that have long been at play, but which become more imposing than ever in their destructive tendencies. We come to nanopolitics marked by some of the complications and sufferings of body, mind and soul that this current cycle of capitalist destruction implies. A destruction-subsumption of space, time, resources and energies that's not as hard on us as it is on those in the old colonies, in the debt-enslaved countries at the margins of the EU or in the deepest outskirts of our cities, but intense enough to be debilitating, since there is nothing creative or intelligent about it. If 'crisis' is the moment that decides whether a patient will live or die, then for sure capitalist destruction is becoming critical, amny of us feel. Walking between the ruins of hospitals, universities and other public institutions, across tense and fragile political spaces, nanopolitics became a place to rest and check in with each other for some moments, across some years.

Reclaiming the future, collectively

Precarity fragments time and splits the future into thousands of impossible possibles. Meanwhile, measure and debt/credit capture our capacity to act on our own terms altogether, in submitting the future to their (moralistic-instrumental) terms:

The importance of the debt economy lies in the fact that it appropriates and exploits both chronological labor time and action, non-chronological time, time as choice, decision, a wager on what will happen and on the forces (confidence, desire, courage, etc.) that make choice, decision, and action possible. 9

It is because of this double capture of time that collective organisations and imaginaries need to deal with care as much as organising around work and resources. The neoliberal phase of accumulation has taken hold not just of our capacities to work but also of our capacities to decide, imagine and act together: it makes us into those weak pitiable beings that it can then take and put on the medical-therapuetic-consumerist drip. We internalize the special capture of neoliberal care: diagnosing ever new problems while producing ever more symptoms, while inventing ever more formulas for self-enslaving self-improvement.

How do different collectivities conceive of this capture of vital time and energies and how do they resist and transcend it? Those problems clearly concern our sociality and not just our individual bodies. Beyond the multiplication of competing and individualizing scenarios, how to engage with the possibilities of the present in a collective way? Whilst crisis and austerity do make new collective organisations, solidarities and resistances emerge, their consistency and sustainability hinge on the building of collective trust, desire, invention and care. This requires a politics of resisting finance, debt and accumulation as much as a new micropolitics of trust and associational bonds. Aside from inventing other forms of common production and reproduction, that's also a matter of how our political work relates to our lives, of finding singular ways of enjoying that. If nanopolitics has so far served as a space to freshen us up in our shared collective struggles, its challenge lies in reaching further towards the very organisations of our networks.

In a 2011 interview, a nanopolitics facilitator/participant describes attempts at building a micropolitics of belonging and trust that enables collective action, in referring to the models of the family and the village:

I think it was... because we all decided to shape our time as passionately as we wanted, as we felt it – so most of our activities and interactions were led by our desires to spend time with each other, to make sense of each other's skills, potentials, thoughts... in quite clear political response to a completely over-systematized empty tick-boxing world around us. Yeah, and we really liked what people were... we really liked people I think, we really liked people, all of us. I think that's why it felt so... I

mean you know how a village gets together because it's so.. [gestures rubbing fingers against each other] – it's density, and I think that [it's] this strong joy for people made this density. 10

Capitalism can make the village, family and network impossible as sites of respectful collectivity, turning them into privatised, hierarchical, competitive places. It's in this moment, and with a sensitivity to the revulsions with which our bodies, minds and hearts respond, that some of us felt a need to come together and share a space: to investigate what is going on with us and the world around us. Starting from vulnerability. And also realising that 'we're strong, we're joyful, we're friends and we're fucking capable of doing things!' as someone from the group insists. How to draw strength from our movements, beyond the momentary power of doing actions and beyond the anatomy of our 20s? I remember someone from the micropolitics group saying: 'if you're not a commie before you're 20, you have no heart; if you're not a capitalist after you're 20, you have no brain'.

The challenges that 'growing up' poses to activism are hardly unknown. A beautiful personal account of struggle by Maria Rosa dalla Costa echos in my head, where she recalls the effects that feminist struggle in 70s Italy had on womens bodies:

Towards the end of the decade we were exhausted by that [totalising and exasperated] kind of life and activism. All our margins of reproduction had been eroded, notoriously narrower than those which men, comrades included, enjoyed. After about ten years, the body of women – even militants have a body, much as it is often denied – felt that the biological clock was marking other deadlines. For instance those women who wanted to have a child, and it was already late, had to decide with whom and in which life environment [...]. As social transformation was not at the same level of the new feminine individuality, the process of surrendering began. Many had to give up.¹¹

In order not to give up, we need to invent continuities and sustainabilities. What experimentations need to become possible? And what experience and tools-resources do we already have? It takes some work to recognise and strengthen networks as spaces where we meet eachother in our difficulties, blockages, illnesses and darknesses as much as in our lucid, glorious, productive and performative moments. It's tough to relate across distances and keep close. Nanopolitics has been a space for reflecting on what isn't possible, as limits, blockages and borders. Being able to determine and act upon

limitations: to give up the silly promise of unlimited potential, so typical of networks, and engage in crises and fragilities with care and love. We find those places in our bodies and imaginaries where things go out of control, which we thought we couldn't confront except in the present of a therapist. The group opened onto a collective dimension where we began to trust, understand and respect eachother in ways thought to belong only to couples or families before.

A politics of network-families

Letting go of the very networky idea that we are just in more or less random transit towards something better – relationally, politically, existentially, geographically – how to draw on the many movements and changes we have in common? Migration implies a practice of building networks, allowing people to connect via long distances and support eachother in finding alliances, pathways and support. To go beyond opportunism, this requires for trust to become somewhat cosmic: to care for the network even though we're not in control of it, and there are no guarantees. Not an unproblematic situation. Even more so when we try to 'marry' the network with the family, two equally freaky spaces of relation and (non-)commitment. As someone else from nanopolitics points out, the relation between network and family clearly exists though it's hard to figure out how:

[...] all of us were quite individualized, all of us in the group of friends in London, because we weren't committed to anything long term; we didn't have family responsibility, we didn't have older people to care for, we were quite a good prototype of the neoliberal self-entrepreneurial individual: critical, self-reflexive but absolutely free to reinvent themselves all the time without commitment, responsibility. And so the fragility of this is more than the fragility of a more traditional way of owing to eachother and being part of the same family, of having social duties almost because of your role, because of your family position. But at the same time, there were commitments and we did create other forms of expectations between colleagues, between friends, between people sharing political projects maybe. But it's still a kind of commitment that will always forgive... the fact that at some time you will go. It's your choice, you're always free to leave eventually, and actually maybe people would envy you if you manage.¹²

How to negotiate commitment with flexibility, in the context of precarity? How to find each other within and across localities, and imagine nourishing each other even though (and precisely because) we don't know for sure what will come? Care does not just rely on the existence of stable local lives, fixed jobs or homes: the networks emerging around so-called migrant 'care chains' are instances of how people invent ways of being able to care for each other, across the most difficult circumstances and long distances. To be sure, it takes a lot of trust to establish care across borders, and those relations do not replace a shared material-physical everyday where care means looking after bodies. Yet as increasing amounts of young people migrate with rising unemployment in Europe (where this text speaks from), to find work abroad, transnational forms of care increasingly have to be negotiated with local ones. This means that the roles of both family and networks change in providing care¹³: how to intelligently and sustainably negotiate local commitment with trans-local movement in the age of global capitalism? The way capital likes us is punctually cooperative but ultimately isolated, competitive and dispersed. Can we imagine another politics of the trans-local, a networked politics that reaches across borders not just formally in organising and collaborating, but also more intimately in solidarity and care?

What if we imagine a kind of marriage-like bond with our friends, if we imagine co-habitation and co-parenting based on our existing organisation of life and work? Someone from the Barcelona Schizoanalysis Group points to the difficulties of negotiating migration, flexibility, trust and care:

Many and many of us were migrants at that moment: and that could be migrants from Spain itself, or from Europe, or some of us were from Latinamerica, so it was a migration that could be from nearby or from farther away, but we all lived that 'being foreign' a bit. And so there was always this thing of - between coming and going, feeling that it took a lot to have a more stable common territory. And we were also very afraid of not knowing up to where we could count with the other, because we all lived a bit in this indeterminacy. I knew that I could count on myself, and that the other person probably really wanted to support me and to have me support them, but those then were very temporary pacts, very brief, where very probably the other would leave and then I could no longer count on them because they'd no longer be around. So this question of housing/home [vivienda] not just as in 'the house' but as in 'how to inhabit'. So that was something that was there, as in... concrete practices of inhabiting. And the other [question] is to do with the precarity of work. To know that we were very fragile but that in any moment we could be left without work, and on top of that, without a network – that at least when you're in your place of origin you have

a family, or a somehow older network that supports you, but here... that made you a lot more vulnerable. And it was paradoxical if only family ties could be ties that last. That's to say that it seemed that the only thing that could be consistent was the family bond, of blood and all that, or a couple bond. And I remember when I had married – for papers precisely – a friend who is amongst my closest, said: 'I just think we ought to have marriages for friends. I would really like that you and I, that we do a wedding and get married. Because I want you to always be in my life' and I told her, 'Yes of course, I also feel that link with you, where I would like to be able to ask for this kind of commitment. I want a marriage with my friend and I want her to never leave, I want to be able to ask of her to be present'. But within this politics of freedom... well of course, making demands is no good! And it's very difficult, to know how to ask the other to be there...¹⁴

A process of imagining other kinds of families, inspired by queer and migrant experiences, is underway for many of us. If we understand family as a space of commitment, mutual support and love that enables people to collectively raise children and care for old people, then why shouldn't we be able to build our own? Beyond merely blood-based, hierarchical, patriarchal or local models of family, the urgency lies in finding desirable ways of reproducing our everyday. While it takes a lot of effort and sustained struggle and trust to



make this possible, the alternatives are hardly enticing: lonely and miserable ways of ageing in the absence of proper welfare, pensions, public spaces and institutions, or the nuclear family that functions as an enclosed unit within the capitalist economy.

Neither the family where daddy goes to work, nor the one where mummy has three jobs and yet no access to benefits. The promise of transforming 'work' towards something more meaningful and self-organised than wage labour is a fruit of the network form, which we may have much more to reap from if we engage it not only from the perspective of autonomy but also of reproduction. The promise of freeing housework from its dark life-long kitchens is just as important as that of loosening the grip of the wage (and its inverse, unemployment) if we're to struggle for desirable ways of integrating life and work. Built into our practice of autonomy needs to be an understanding of heteronomy, of how we depend on each other rather than just needing to be radically 'free'. Not the family as 'infantile abandon to a fuzzy dependency, where everything is familiar, this carefree moment in the face of a world that nobody can deny is breaking down'¹⁵, but militant network-families as spaces for thinking heteronomy and autonomy together.

Endnotes

- 1. Pascale Molinier, Sandra Laugier, et al. (2009). Qu'est-ce que le care ? souci des autres, sensibilité, responsabilité. Paris, Payot. p.39. My translation
- 2. This text draws on research and interviews I recently did in the framework of my Phd thesis: Collective practices between Creativity and Care, Queen Mary University London, forthcoming. More information as well as some of the present interviews are available at futurearchive. org/static/carenetworks.html Also, in relation to movement contexts, see the research project on 'Radical Collective Care Practices' as initiated by some nanopolitics people in Vienna radical-collectivecare.blogspot.com. As well as the special show on 'Other family politics' of the 'sounds of movement' radio programme soundsofmovement.noblogs.org
- **3.** Federici, Silvia (2012), Panel Presentation at *Historical Materialism Conference*, London. Video: youtube.com/watch?v=TARD7LZouS8&feature=youtu.be
- **4.** As some groups of the 15M movement have echoed a LGBT slogan: 'la familia nuclear es radioactiva', theme of an event on 27th may 2012. See tomalafamilia.wordpress.com
- **5.** A nice article book to download and look at is this one: Raquel Mezquita and Magarita Padilla (2006), 'Penelope: Tejiendo y destejiendo la red', in: *Ciberactivismo: sobre usos politicos y sociales de la red*. Barcelona: Virus Editions. viruseditorial.net/pdf/ciberactivismo.pdf
 - 6. Interview with Marga, Madrid, October 2011 futurearchive.org/movies/59
- Maurizio Lazzarato (2011). La Fabrique de L'homme endetté, Paris: Editions Amsterdam. p.12. My translation. p.55
- **8.** Although we certainly do, and preferably through a lens of feminist economics, ecological and indigenous movements and a basic income.
- **9.** Maurizio Lazzarato (2011), *La Fabrique de L'homme endetté*, Paris: Editions Amsterdam. p.45

- 10. Interview with Nelly, London, April 2011. futurearchive.org/movies/57
- **11.** Maria Rosa dalla Costa (1992), *The door to the garden*, published online at generation-online.org http://www.generation-online.org/p/fpdallacosta.htm, translation by Arianna Bove and Pier Paolo Frassinelli.
 - 12. Interview with G., London, July 2011.
- 13. See also 'Familie zerbröckelt als Unterstützungsnetzwerk', K. Burgstaller interview with K.Haberkern in *Der Standard*, july 2012. derstandard.at/1342948017557/Soziologe-Familie-zerbroeckelt-als-Unterstuetzungsnetzwerk?seite=4#forumstart
 - 14. Interview with Nizaia, Barcelona, November 2011. futurearchive.org/movies/61
- **15.** The Invisible Committee (2008) *The Coming Insurrection.* Los Angeles: Semiotext(e) archive.org/details/TheComingInsurrectionByTheInvisibleCommittee p.26





EXERCISE

Mapping your care network - exercise for one or several people

This is a mapping exercise to visualise some of the caring relations that hold you together with the people close to you. It can be nice to do this in a group and find a way to talk about it together, but it's also interesting to do it alone. In any case, establish a respectful space and give yourself time (an hour or so).

1. Take a big piece of paper and write down 8-10 ways of relating that you think define care (as a group or alone, depending on if you're one or many). Care is very multidimensional and consists of many kinds of interactions which often overlap (this is also why care work is said to be a matter of multitasking!), so take time to discuss this also. You may want to consider many kinds of relations, for instance mutual dependency, conviviality, cohabitation, friendship, intimacy, love/eroticism, bodily care, learning together, sharing resources, lending each other money, collaborating...

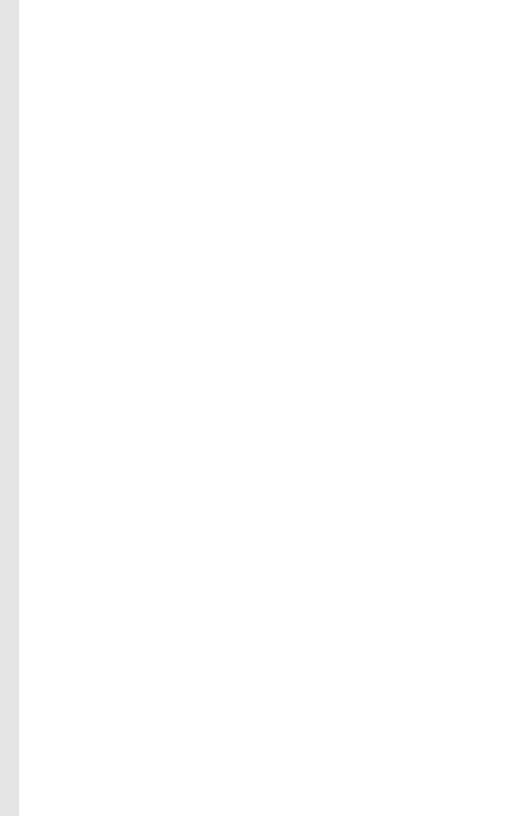
Find your 8-10 categories and assign each of these kinds of relations a colour: this will be the 'key' of your map.

- 2. Now each get yourself a big piece of paper (ideally A3) and make sure there is a pen for all the different coloured categoies available to everyone. Write the names of people that are close to you all over the map, including your own name somewhere near the middle (you can encode names, if you want them to remain secret).
- **3.** Now, for each participant on their own piece of paper, it's about tracing connections between you and your friends and family: choose the appropriate colours. If you live with someone, for example, draw 'cohabitation' line between you and them; draw the same between other people on your map who live

together. Draw a 'conviviality' line between you and those people you hang out with a lot. It's of course up to you to define what 'a lot' is: this is part of the challenge here, and useful to discuss with others. When do you consider a relation one of friendship, love, or mutual dependency, and how do you define those in relation to each other? Since you have limited knowledge about the practices of others, and since relations constantly change, the map you make will inevitably be partial: a snapshot of right now.

- **4.** You may want to draw circles around people who are in the same groups (political groups, workplaces, family...) to visualise the balance between groups.
- 5. (individually or in group) To take this beyond your immediate personal network, you may want to map relations of care and support between groups also. On the back of your sheet, make a map with names of groups you participate in. You can go beyond autonomous collectives with a proper name ('black panthers') to also include institutionally affiliated groups of people ('my students'; 'the service workers union') as well as diffuse and partly anonymous groupings ('my neighbours'). You can also include your 'family' as defined by lineage of course. This will bring out the relations of mutual support that organise the social around you.

The diagram you produce is a temporary snapshot of some relations: you are visualising your social-affective world as you perceive it right now (not what it can or will be). To imagine possible futures, identify desires and talk through them together!



The bodies of proletarian reproduction

— Bue Rübner Hansen

Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation and that is an act of political warfare.

Audre Lorde

How to stay alert in the face of politics' claims to transcendence, if we are to stop it from becoming unsustainable? What is there of life – the real one, which allows us to connect to others in equality, rather than moral superiority or the abandonment of oneself – in the politics that we make? How to go on encountering others, outlining common problems? And above all: what is the point of a politics today that doesn't think through these questions?

Precarias a la Deriva!

...what do bodies do in the crisis of the social body?

In 2008 they told us that the circulation of money and credit was freezing up. They told us that the vital organs of the social body would cease their restless activity unless stimulated. 'We are all in this [body] together', they said. And we all bear the consequences of the crisis now. But is that because their statement was false, or because it was true?

Let's accept for a minute the idea that we all belong to the same body. To be a member of a body means that one's activity is necessary for the reproduction of that body. And so our labour, our obedience, even our desires are part of the reproduction of the body of the capital and the state. There is no real outside: even if we are unemployed or migrants we play a role. Our precarious situations come with the compulsion to accept even ridiculously bad employment, while our condition is a disciplining warning to all who

are less precarious than us. Capital disciplines labour through the structural threats of unemployment and precarity. As individuals many experience that to be a *part* of the social body is to be less than a *member*, to be as expendable as a flake of skin. In the crisis it becomes all the more clear that capital turns members into expendable parts as soon as they become an impediment to accumulation. On the other hand, and this is what this text is about, both members and parts depend on the body of capital for their own reproduction. Their self-reproduction is subordinated to the reproduction of capital, materially as well as subjectively.

In the crisis this body is in feverish convulsions. This is a crisis of the narrative that we can be individual *members* of the state (through a functioning parliamentary democracy), of the economy (human capital, entrepreneurship) and of the social body (civil society organisations). The fervour with which migrants are attacked by border agencies, cops and other fascists gives us an indication of the effects of the crisis amongst the agents which police the borders and the 'health' of the social body. Migrants and unemployed folk, who have long been 'contributing' to the reproduction of this body find themselves branded and treated as parasites. What is our hope and space of maneuvre against this fascism and the crisis which sets its stage? If the social body is a metaphor for our dependence on a violent system for our reproduction, is the task then to kill, leave, dissolve this body? Or is the task to keep the interdependence of the social body, and merely rid it of its 'heads', the heads of state and capital?²

How to kill or to leave the body which is the site of one's reproduction? Or can this body live on without a head, as an acephale? One way to go is to suggest that there are no social or political bodies at all, to suggest that what appears to be a 'social body' or a 'body politic' is nothing but a heterogeneous population, engaged in a manifold of rhizomatic relations.³ Or one could suggest that the 'true' social body is that of the productive and desiring multitude, on which those abstract unifying heads (capital, state) parasitize.4 However, beyond the attachment to sovereignty as something anachronistically persistent or already overcome, common to the discourses of nomadism and exodus, multitude and species-being, we must question how the conditions of reproduction keeps us attached to the social body, as a matter of social or material life and death. In so far as we take the problem of the metaphor of 'the social body' as a problem of political theory and discourses of power, the only solution political theory can us give is imaginary, pedagogic, performative. But the problem must be related to the social constitution of our mode of production, and this is where we might look for solutions. How we deal with these questions has profound implications for our politics on all levels

(how and what we analyse, organise, strategise, and how we think of power, struggle, antagonism...), and on our becoming as bodies.

...(im)mediate struggles

Michel Foucault once suggested that 'we need [...] a political philosophy that isn't erected around the problem of sovereignty [...]. We need to cut off the king's head: in political theory that has still to be done'.5 He aimed to show that the theories of sovereignty as domination and power over life and death had already been deconstructed from the late 18th Century. Exemplified by the emergence of the regime of discipline and biopower; exemplified by the shift in forms of punishment from torture and execution to the prison-workhouse, living bodies and subjectivities became the objects of a power, this time exercised primarily over life and its productivity. The point for Foucault is to go beyond the representations of power, its imaginary unifications, its heads, bodies and symbols, and dive into the techniques of power, the ways in which power is exercised over real bodies, the ways in which real bodies are governed and individualised. With that comes also another conception of struggle, not as the struggle against 'the state' or 'capital', but against the many mechanisms of power by which capitalist exploitation and state institutions govern us, but not by any means limited thereto. In the early eighties Foucault reflected on the commonalities of the past decade of 'anti-authoritarian struggles', which he described as transversal, immanent (criticizing not the aims of power such as profit, but its effects), and "immediate"7:

In such struggles people criticize instances of power which are closest to them, those which exercise their action on individuals. They do not look for the 'chief enemy,' but for the immediate enemy. Nor do they expect to find a solution to their problem at a future date (that is, liberations, revolutions, end of class struggle).⁸

Foucault's call for a decapitation of the king is a way to simultaneously reject organicist thought. If there is no head of the body politic, there is no body politic, and no task of analysing, attacking or defending it. Foucault's polemic points beyond the preoccupation with the symbolic heads of capital and state, to the study and politics of the techniques which prop it up: a study which outlines the 'antagonism of strategies', rather than the study of grand structures and systems of domination and dependence. Instead of a metaphoristics of power rooted in biology we get one founded on physics: power is a relation between forces, which even in their relation remain external to one another.

Rather than a vocabulary of politics within (and against) a 'social body' we get one which affirms the difference of forces, and which thinks in terms of the real opposition, resistance or composition between them, rather than, in a dialectical fashion, their 'contradictory unity'.

Today, under conditions of socio-economic meltdown such immediate struggles of social and singular bodies defending their ability to reproduce and invent themselves are on the rise. This is the case when people in Spain and the US set up networks to resist evictions and to reoccupy or squat empty buildings (claiming the spaces for bodies to inhabit together), or when Greeks refuse to pay the austerity taxes levied over their electricity meters, and when they autoreduce their bills and refuse to pay bus fares (taking the energy and movement necessary for their bodies). These struggles are immediate not in the sense of being purely localistic or presentist, but in the sense of not letting theoretical knowledge of social mediation (whether that of friend or enemies) postpone action or displace it to elsewhere. And they are immediate in not letting mediators direct the energies (anger, desire, etc.) away from their immediate aims.9 Immediate struggles are struggles where one often cannot choose not to fight: either because one is under attack, or because of an existential-desiring necessity: it is when you do not make the choice, but the choice makes you.

However, when we fight the mechanisms of capital and the state 'immediately, we are still fighting mediations, and our resistances and struggles are replies to powers that are not by any means merely situational. As Isaak Rubin once noted, capitalism is 'a thick network of indirect production relations'. 10 If the central form of power under capitalism is money, it is one that is difficult to block, but easy to reroute around sites of resistance (this is a function of money being 'between' the state and capital: between market flows and calculated class politics, for instance in the messy process of competitive deregulation of banking and finance during the last decades of 'neoliberal' globalisation). This re-routing is often – given our dependency on money – the strongest form of power itself: no weapons or siege is needed for those that can induce a lack by the click of a button (reject a loan application, raise the cost of borrowing, invest where workers are not unionised, etc.). McKenzie Wark asks: 'how to occupy an abstraction'?11 The local measures taken against our bodies and to govern our individuation, are results of the flows of money and debt on a global scale, real as well as imaginary. Especially in our current crisis our immediate struggles are directly bound up with the abstract world of the globalised financial system. In this situation it becomes urgent to search for vocabularies and theoretical tools for the analysis of what it means to struggle both 'immediately' and 'mediately' within, against, and beyond

what Foucault talks about as both *individualising* and *totalising* forms of power.¹² This, Foucault proposed, would be a politics starting from the body.

...politics starting from our bodies

Capital and the state never attack us as individuals, they always attack our bodies. When they assault our bodies, they do so through recognising our individuality. When they take away our jobs, our housing, our welfare rights, when they render us precarious, these acts pass through the law, and representative institutions that recognize us as holders of rights and responsibilities, citizens, workers, juridical subjects, in short as *constituted individuals*. Force decides between equal rights, ours and theirs, and yet the outcome wears the coat of legality. Our individual struggles of whatever content, are mediated through the form of the protocols of sovereign power. Our particular protests and complaints may be recognized, our concerns addressed (more likely not), the agonism may be protracted; in any case the form of the law and our individuality are reproduced.

But our bodies are never reducible to our individuality or to their corporeality, and our bodies are never clearly demarcated. Beyond the Gestalt of the conscious, right holding, demarcated individual, the body is affect, a multiplicity, a collective life, a part of ecologies which it reproduces and which reproduce it. Any body posits itself in a complex network of relations, it consists of smaller bodies, partake in larger bodies, it is pulled along by some bodies, slowed down by others... Our resistance, refusal, and recalcitrance have their own intelligences and sensitivities, which are constantly undermined by our becoming desensitised, through saturation or deprivation, or oversensitised as we are pathologised by 'higher' rationalities. That not only the referees of normality (mental coaches, doctors, psychiatrists, social workers), but we ourselves read the signals of our bodies as sick or pathological, or as 'merely' psychosomatic and exaggerated, is one of the most insidious effect of power. It separates our bodies from what they can do and from the intelligence of their vulnerability. It demands that we translate our movements (driven by desire, resistance, impulses of flight, etc.) into the languages of power, lest they be deemed irrational or illegal. The high level of depression and loneliness among men, and the often feminised cultures of commodified and/or individualised self-care and self-help display both our need for care, and the perverted forms this can take in the absence of political practices of care: isolated suffering or individualised body obsessions, and a constant work on our souls, the strongly self-policed individualised bodies of the fitness addict and the anorexic...¹⁴ Against this - and against our own morbid silencing of our

bodies – we must develop our *common* capacity to understand when stress and depression, back pains and irregular periods are ways that our bodies refuse the excessive ambition, labour and insecurity that we, our employers or precarity submit them to.

However, over-ambition and overwork are becoming more and more stratified as the crisis is destroying the promised futures of so many of us; depressed, exhausted or explosive bodies as embodiments of broken dreams of a future that will never arrive (and such are always, in different ways, social). Instead we are cast into unemployment, while the social wage - the part of subsistence supplied by state welfare rather than wages - is cut along with our wages themselves. How reproduce one's life when capital and the state - struggling to reproduce themselves - force us all to live for less? Those who can, tend to withdraw into the comfort and tensions of individual nuclear families. But with social reproduction under pressure, even that model of surviving non-antagonistically within capitalism is becoming unsustainable. For the refusals of our bodies to become other than individual-familiar implosions, we affirm that they are collective concerns. We can do so in the form of politics of care and reproduction which will allow us to partially withdraw - or survive our ejection - from careerism, wage labour and individualisation. This happens when we establish or extend and care for existing support networks, communes, co-operatives, militant family networks.

In the crisis it seems that they are perfectly happy if more of us will take care of ourselves without making demands, even if we stop producing value for them. The conservative-communitarian idea of 'Big Society' sells the idea that we ourselves must (and must desire) to take care of ourselves: this is the class stratified and non-antagonistic answer for those that can't afford to pay for recently privatised services as well as for those that can afford taking the time to volunteer. Yet if our withdrawal becomes too much of a problem for capital and the state, the brute violence of the police or the subtle co-optive violence of the law and money will be brought down on us, to try to crush us, or put us to work; self-reproduction can become a question of self-defence, and an offensive weapon, and as such a threat to the state; think of the violent repression of the Black Panthers' survival programs. 15 So the question could be framed: survival pending revolution or pending employment?¹⁶ But today it seems impossible to reduce such questions to the right revolutionary spirit or ideology. So we ask: what modes of reproduction are possible where you, and how could they produce new collectivities in struggle rather techniques for warehousing individuals and families? What are their internal relations, dynamics, and pedagogics, what are their infrastructures and resources, or what would they be?17

So we mustn't take such minimal politics of the body or the minor politics of care and reproduction as sufficient, even if they are necessary. This is one of the ways nano- and micro-politics are folded in with macropolitics. What we learn from the current conjuncture of crisis and rebellion is that a revolutionary politics starting from our bodies consists in more than the affirmation of the sensitivity and intelligence of the body, and of dimensions of embodied collectivity and transindividuality (e.g. in affect), and more than our coming together to care for one another. However valuable, desirable and necessary this may be, we must practice them in ways that go beyond self-organised self-help. If we don't they merely help us reproduce ourselves so we can survive 'in society', i.e. continue to reproduce or be ready to reproduce the 'social body' of capital (as workers or 'job seekers') once it again finds those of us it hasn't deported useful. This is why we affirm our politics of care, body and reproduction as aspects of a general 'political warfare' on the conditions which make us sick, precarious and individualised.¹⁸

... conditions of individualisation

The question of conditions is a way to go beyond asking: 'how does power work upon our bodies', to ask: why do we let power work on us in these ways? Why do we let ourselves be individualised by work and debt, why do we submit ourselves to medical pathologisation? Here the answers come short and quick. We labour because we must, we take up debt because we must, we pay therapists and buy self-help books because we find it hard to help ourselves. Marx is still very much our contemporary when he proposes that this set of compulsions is based on a common condition, shared, but lived differently, a *proletarian* condition. It is the condition of being doubly 'free', free of property, and free to sell one's labour power – which unlike slavery proper implies that one is responsible for one's own reproduction (a slave owner has to feed his slaves as he feeds his animals and repairs his machinery). In the Grundrisse Marx writes:

It is already contained in the concept of the free labourer, that he is a pauper: a virtual pauper ... If the capitalist has no use for his surplus labour, then the worker may not perform his [sic] necessary labour.¹⁹

Necessary labour, of course, refers the labour necessary to for a wage that will reproduce the worker. Marx speaks of this condition of freedom as inherently 'precarious'. If we add to this the virtual poverty of those living under capitalism that do not fit within the terms 'he' and 'the worker', we get a sense

of this as the general condition which makes our self-reproduction dependent on our participation in reproducing capital and the social body: one must sell one's time and energy, one's body and mind, even often invest one's desire to get a wage or petty cash. One most take up loans if that wage is not enough to live, the debt to the state entailed in benefits, or one must become a dependent on someone who can access wages or loans – as housewife, servant, unpaid domestic worker.²¹ When wages, welfare or employment are cut, the means of reproduction shrink, and the labour of reproduction increases: this labour still mostly falls on women.²²

But we can also speak of proletarianisation in the sense of Bernard Stiegler, who usefully theorizes it as the loss of ability to do and make [savoir-faire] and to live [savoir-vivre].23 To focus on merely the field of health, the process of proletarianisation, as Silvia Federici has shown, proceeds through sustained attacks on the practices and knowledges of reproductive health and traditional medicine that were mostly the remits of the women who came to be prosecuted, and killed in genocidal numbers, as witches.²⁴ Today similar processes are ongoing with attacks on indigenous communities around the globe, as well as in the ongoing witch-hunts in many African countries (e.g. South Africa, Kenya, Zimbabwe²⁵). The violence of the attacks on indigenous European healers and midwives is the historical basis for the strong separation between health experts (doctors, scientists, heath practitioners) and the rest of us, a separation which is constantly reproduced. This destruction of traditional communal forms of health provision thus produced the historical conditions under which state and charity provision of health services became ever more needed, and basis for the individualising procedures of modern medicine. To understand biopower and governmentality not just through the construction of discourses of the body and the health of populations, but as the destruction of other modes of health provision forces us to read Foucault's analysis of modern medicine in a different light, that of deeply gendered and racialized processes of and struggles against proletarianisation.²⁶ In the field of health the development of popular controlled health centres, alternative medicine, self-help literature, online self-diagnosis websites, and the movements to reclaim sexual knowledge and science (e.g. Act Up) - often in conflict with the institutions of mainstream medicine (pharmaceutical companies, national heath ministries, doctors associations) - can be understood both as necessitated by proletarianisation, and as limited processes of deproletarianisation (subject to pressures of commercialisation and professionalised, or risks of esoteric withdrawal). At their best, initiatives of the former kind combat the powers that attempt to sustain our individualisation and the proletarian condition, which sustain our dependence upon those powers.



Stiegler distinguishes proletarianisation from pauperisation, expropriation and the working class, insisting that proletarianisation does not relate to material or labour conditions, but to the 'externalisation' of gesture, desire and affect in industrial machines, mass media and advertisement.²⁷ However, the connection between these two forms of proletarianisation cannot be overlooked, especially if we take seriously the notion of the proletarian not as a pauper pure and simple, but as a 'virtual pauper' who has to inscribe her/his body in specialised alienating social arrangement in order to reproduce him/ herself. Therefore the question of overcoming proletarianization is not just one of creating other models of reproduction and care, but of appropriating the means to do so: time, space, resources, in short, the material means of autonomy and of the refusal of labour, which are also the means of self-defence against the powers of the state and the encroachment of private property on the commons. This is a struggle for commoning modes of care and (re)production, against the conditions that reproduce individualisation. Occupying and reappropriating the means of re/production is a way of caring for our capacity to care, as is the deproletarianisation inherent in the development of nanopolitical sensitivities.

...proletarian conditions of totalisation

The proletarian condition, if defined in contrast with subsistence farming, is the condition of being unable to sustain one's body without selling or submitting it. This condition was produced through violence, whether unimaginably atrocious or normalised and 'legal'. It proceeded and still proceeds, as Arundhati Roy's conveys so vividly in Broken Republic, through dispossession, expropriation, enclosures of commons and displacement of people, and through the destruction and repression of the communities, customs and knowledges that had allowed people to reproduce themselves.²⁸ It does so through the means of weapons, taxes, law, money and development schemes. Communities being broken up, people being separated from each other and from the material conditions of life (land, housing...), drives them to sell their labour power, move to the cities, become dependants of the state or NGOs... For capital this violent process is its mode of 'primitive accumulation' – it is the accumulation of wealth on one side, and of 'free' labourers on the other which is the basis of capitalism: the relation between capital and labour, but also of the tendency to transform all social relationships into that of the relation between creditor and debtor.29

We have touched on how the existence of individuals is not a simple fact, but produced and reproduced through violence and totalising forms of power:

the individual as *homo economicus*, citizen, juridical subject is produced by the market and capital, taxation, sovereign power, border regimes, welfare apparatuses, censuses, the legal system... But it also works the other way around: the fact of individualisation, which is based on the separation of bodies through the destruction of communal and traditional ties in the processes of primitive accumulation, has allowed for the extension and development of totalising powers. To understand how we arrive at today's highly mediated society (integrated yet divided, totalising, individualising) we must understand how processes of dispossession and enclosure make possible a new mode of social integration, which reproduces separation as it abolishes its most brute existence.

The separation brought about by the violence of dispossession and displacement, destroys social bonds of trusts, throws people into abject poverty and mi/vagrancy. Many have to steal to live. The destruction of communities of custom and morality means that the state and churches take on the task of imposing new customs and laws on the scattered individuals from without. The 'modern epoch' in Europe began with a dismembering of feudal society which produced the 'necessity' of totalising bodies, the re-joining of the broken limbs into something which was always considered monstrous, even by its ideologues, for instance Thomas Hobbes. Processes of primitive accumulation are at once political and economic, or rather they precede and create the conditions for the separation between politics and economics: *politics* as the ordered mediation of conflicts within an *economy* which is the normalisation of the relation between the dispossessed, virtual paupers and capitalists.

Primitive accumulation forces people into towns and cities, to engage in relations with the urban bourgeoisie whose existence was hitherto relatively irrelevant to the everyday of the peasants. At first the relation between these groups is one of real opposition between the propertied town dwellers and the new migrants: the dispossessed poor steal and engage in illicit business, and increasingly have to rely on traditional rights and the commons.³⁰ And just as fast as this happens new and harsher penalties for old crimes are introduced, while new legal prohibitions and hence new crimes are invented.³¹ As day labourers the paupers engage in brief relations with the wealthy town folks, mediated by money. Bringing together the surplus wealth of the expropriators and the 'free labour power' of the paupers capitalism as a social mode of production can and does arise. Money becomes the general condition for participation in society: If you don't have it you are compelled to obtain it, be it by working, stealing, or selling:

If money is the bond which ties me to human life and society to me, which links me to nature and to man, is money not the bond of all

bonds? Can it not bind and loosen all bonds? Is it therefore not the universal means of separation? It is the true agent of separation and the true cementing agent, it is the chemical power of society.³²

Slowly this mediation is stabilized and generalised as a relation between working poor and employers; the wage becomes a mediation holding together labourers and capital (and leaves many women as dependants on either side: as maids of the bourgeoisie or wives of workers). In these processes the relations of externality between different individuals and groups of people owners, paupers etc. – are stabilized into a functioning and crisis ridden system. As the opposed forces produced by primitive accumulation become ever more integrated, it becomes more and more difficult to imagine their reproduction autonomously of one another: real oppositions are mediated to become contradictions in a system very different from the monarchical system preceding it. If the social body of Hobbes' Leviathan is a mechanistic body consisting of competing and warring forces united under the will of the king, the new body is organic, self-organised, and functionally integrated. We can thus read Foucault's analysis of the passage from sovereign power to biopower in terms of a transition between two ways of dealing with the proletarianized masses: from the penal state to the bourgeois state. Arguably, Hegel's dialectic - where contradiction is central to development - is a perfect representation of the way capital and the bourgeois state makes conflict productive, i.e. an element of the augmentation, development of the system itself, and how it transforms external opposition into a dynamic organic unity.

Money and the law are ways the opposing forces of the poor and the wealthy become 'passively' combined. Then, within the mediation of state and capital, the opposition between these forces is subsumed but not abolished, in a productive and uneasy mutual dependence, in a contradictory unity rather than an real opposition. When money functions as capital its relation to the workers becomes active, teleological: the telos is the increment of capital, valorisation. A systemic antagonism is formed. The secret of the relation is its asymmetry: capital cannot survive without the proletariat (and the state without its subjects...), the proletariat can – if it abolishes the proletarian condition, i.e. itself - survive without capital and the state. Still capital and the state are in control as long as the proletarians are dispersed and individualised, competing, hostile, fearful... This gives us the obverse of the asymmetry before: the body of a proletarianised individual cannot survive without capital, while capital can survive without any contingent body individual, it can and does cast people off in great numbers as unemployed, and slum-dwellers.³³ It is through the collective organisation and struggle of proletarians that the resistances of individual bodies described above become forms of collective antagonism whereby state institutions, factories and corporations become contested terrains.

The most important product of capital is, as is often stated by Marxists, the reproduction of the class relation between capital and the working class³⁴; this is not just the reproduction of the relation between classes, but also of the separation between individuals, which makes possible and necessary their continued participation in the reproduction of the class relation. The more capital has expropriated the means of (re)production and self-valorisation³⁵ the less do the workers have the means necessary for struggling for wages as well as self-organising, commoning and refusing work. Maurizio Lazzarato writes:

Capitalism is not only a system that continually expands its limits, it is also an apparatus that infinitely reproduces, independently of the level of wealth achieved, conditions of exploitation and dominations, that is, conditions of "lack" ³⁶

This constantly reproduced lack (of necessities of life, advertised luxury items, and promised careers, but also of opportunities to learn and express oneself, and the time to maintain and establish desirable social relationships) it is a means of discipline, control and the capture of desire in the face of the possibility of antagonism.

...capital as an inorganic organism

So in what sense can we speak of capital as a body, without falling into conservative or corporatist organicism and ideas of a 'harmonious society'? Foucault's concept of totalisation points to a logic of social integration, which never abolishes the power struggles and the resistances of bodies. With Marx we get a sense of how such a social body does not merely subsume and individualise what is different from it, but strives to determine the conditions under which the different can be reproduced: we are not reducible to labour-power yet we rely on state or capital, work or benefits to reproduce this difference. We are not just empirical bodies who are external to one another, governed and individualised by state and capital. Rather, in being governed and individualised we are integrated as *individuals* in social bodies, i.e. our individuality is *reproduced* and *more than individual* by being functionally integrated in self-reproducing 'organisms' as its 'organs' and 'members'. Following Hegel's useful distinction between different branches of science according to the types of relations proper to their objects, it is not merely a

question of 'composition' between forces which remain external to one another (as in physics) or of 'combination' between elements who become one (as in chemistry). Rather it is a question of 'teleologies', of self-reproducing processes (as in biology).³⁸ This is different from seamless harmonious organicism in at least two sense: For Hegel chemistry and biology do not abolish physics, but merely harness its forces by suspending their opposition, while organisms themselves are *contradictory* processes, which are dynamic and 'alive' precisely in so far as they never coincide with themselves, are never whole. This means that even within Hegel we find space for talking about something like a 'micro-physics of power' which resists and subtends any teleological process of totalisation, while such a process itself must be thought of as contradictory, prone to crisis and antagonism.³⁹

However, the body of capital is no ordinary organic body, a self-reproducing life sustaining itself in an ecology. Capital's teleology is not concrete and biological but historical and abstract. In Kantian terms capital does not operate as a 'self-organised being' according to its own 'intrinsic' or 'natural' telos, but according to an extrinsic or final goal.⁴⁰ It is centred and driven by a final end: its teleological mission is its expanded self-reproduction - M-C-M', or money makes more money! - which requires the exploitation of bodies, and the violent conversion of any ecology into an objectified environment, either an externality or a resource. 41 Capital's subsumption of our bodies displays an abstract striving, a super-sensible and thus insatiable hunger, which demands the blood and the flesh of our bodies, the lives and materials of the world. Capital is thus an inorganic teleology pursuing its goal at any cost to our earthly lives and measuring everything according to its abstract credo. Capital, in these abstract terms, is an automaton positing itself in total disregard for any intrinsic telos (any life, project or desire⁴²) it cannot render productive for itself, of any ecology it cannot carve up and commodify, colonise and privatise. But as the crisis has shown, it is a curious automaton, reliant on the support of central banks, police forces and scaremongering media to prop it up.

...the debt economy and 'self-organisation'

In recent decades, with the help of human reasource management and debt, capital has multiplied its ways of subsuming and simulating 'intrinsic teloses' (or desires, projects, and aims) in ways where the proletarian compulsion to work comes to appear as a voluntary choice of self-realisation against boring wage-labour – in self-employment, freelancing, entrepreneurship.⁴³ Rather than a direct 'total real subsumption' of labour this round of subsumption

happens by way of a *new externalisation of labour by capital*; with the freelancer capital is not interested in the working day or the labour process, but simply in the product. Marx spoke of formal subsumption as capital subsuming existing modes of production (manufacture, crafts, traditional agriculture, etc.) while

leaving their techniques and labour processes intact.

Today, however, it is not pre-existing technologies and labour processes, but labourers working with means produced by capital, engaging in processes that are based on capitalist principles and forms of organisation and subjectivity...⁴⁴ If we can speak of real subsumption in this case it is not immediate in the sense it is in industry (capital *organising* production and co-operation, controlling the working day directly), but mediate, working through the subjectivity of the entrepreneurs, and enforced by the need to pay rent, make a living, report to funders and most crucially repay the debt incurred to set up shop. This means that while the self-employed habitually practice networked self-organisation and self-management this activity is immediately faced with the problematic of formal subsumption or 'mediate' real subsumption.

So, contrary to the discourses of information and knowledge societies, the proliferation of so-called 'self-organised' teams and entrepreneurs do not mean we are beyond proletarianisation, but that capital has found ways – as Boltanski and Chiapello show – to subsume the 'intrinsic teleologies', the goals and desires of workers, by rendering them productive of value...



to live within rather than against and beyond our virtual poverty, our proletarian condition.

Today, after the burst of the bubble of debt-inflated dreams of progress, the blatant value-destruction and 'anti-production' of capital means that the narratives of entrepreneurialism are fading in attraction. Decades of falling or stagnant wages in Europe and the US meant that workers could no longer reproduce themselves at their level of need and desire, but had to take on debt to do so. 45 In 2007-8 this social crisis became a crisis for capital, which soon displaced the burden to the state, which is now making us all pay through cuts to the social wage.46 Whether it squeezes the conditions of its workers, swaps them for cheaper and more compliant ones, or replaces workers with labour-saving machinery (or expensive machinery with cheaper workers), it is clear that capital cares only for reproducing its parts as long as it is profitable. When I speak of the teleology of capital it is another way of saying that the reproduction of the capital body is really about sustaining its principle of growth: the process of valorisation and accumulation of capital. After years of reproducing ourselves on insufficient wages supplemented by debt and welfare, the crisis makes it clear that capital and the state are not just sites of our material re- production, but of our non-reproduction. In other words, we are forced to take on more 'responsibility' for our own reproduction. But how we do that remains a choice: do we do so in a way that keeps us dependent on capital and state (lowering expectations, making 'sacrifices'), or in a way where we become more combative, more autonomous? The call of recent movements is to join the many that continue and renew the old struggle of taking what we need collectively, rather than asking for it individually. Political self-organisation today increasingly has to learn what capital has always known: how to pursue one's goals through fraud, creative accountancy, funds divergence and bankruptcy, and how to appropriate what we need for our self-reproduction and self-organisation. In short: how to operate without having our activities overdetermined by debt and wage labour?

...today in movement

When people and media mobilized around the occupation of a symbolic centre of power (Tahrir, Zuccotti, Puerta del Sol) in some sense they *did* 'occupy an abstraction', the symbolic heart of the capital. Other occupations were more direct: Occupy Oakland blocked the harbour, and when workers in the textile factories of the Nile Delta went on strike, they managed locally and temporarily to stop the practices of real abstraction inherent in capitalist production and exchange.

If we look for a slogan that can describe the practices of the movements of recent years, in North Africa, Wisconsin, the squares of Madrid, Athens, New York⁴⁷ we find and fall in love with 'strike, occupy!' This slogan stands for more than a vague and rather undifferentiated notion of who we are (99%!), or of what we are (outraged, indignados, workers, disaffected citizens) or of what we want (stop the cuts, real democracy etc.). It speaks to what we do (as does 'real democracy now!'), both as a mode of refusal, and as a mode of re-appropriation. It is tactical and strategic, and speaking to the immediate creation of the world we want: a world where we occupy the wealth and a world where we do not have to give up our time and energy for a wage (and where we are not screwed if we don't or can't). Occupation of a space – or liberation as the UK Gaza solidarity movement taught us48 - is never a mere act of being there to demonstrate our numbers and capacity to mobilize ourselves. It is the taking of a space against its owners and the state. But it is no passive occupancy, it is the creation of a space and a time for encounters, for discussion and collective investigation into the crisis that is violently reshaping or destroying our lives and hopes. 49 And it is always also the self-organisation of that space to try to make it defensible, safe, sustainable, capable of flowing beyond itself, into the neighbourhoods and workplaces. The perhaps most important practical lesson these struggles draw on and confirm is the importance of such spaces of transversal self-organisation, in a situation in which past generations' institutions of politics are still more sclerotic, co-opted, or mere forms of the management of dissent. However, the rejection of unions and parties is no longer what it was when they were hegemonic forces; scepticism and the knowledge of their ambivalence is today accompanied with new experiments with parties and institutions. The debate remains open and unresolved, for what it's worth its clear that the movements in the current and past forms remain insufficient to what we want to do.

The new movements have just begun to reinvent for a very different age what the early workers movement was before it was separated off from society as a means to manage class antagonism. At a time of proletarian non-reproduction, i.e. insufficient social and work wages, mutual aid, not-for-profit cultural activities, sharing and community organising again become important.⁵⁰ Such spaces also have their own temporalities and modes of being and doing together, they give us a politics that goes beyond the professionalised and subcultural modes of organisation based on meetings and friendship or membership. In so far as these are spaces of sharing and commoning (with its people's kitchens, support networks and assemblies), and in so far as they are in antagonistic movement, becoming generalised against the powers of state and capital ('abolishing/sublating the present state of things'), we can speak of minor, perhaps

very minor, communist movements. They gives us, temporarily and situationally, some experience in the practices and pedagogics of deproletarianisation.⁵¹

We find other such 'communist movements' in aspects of the landless movements of Latin America and elsewhere, where dispossessed peasants and dejected urban dwellers come together to occupy and squat privatized lands.⁵² They do so on the background of their shared proletarian condition and their desire to abolish it. The proletarian politics of un/occupation is one that affirms a common struggle, a condition shared differentially, over a common identity. The goal or desire of this struggle is not just a solution to a problem shared by a set of individuals, but the common solution of a common problem. The solution, in so far as the problem is the proletarian condition, is a movement of re-appropriation of the means of reproduction and production, and the creation of the relations of care and self-organisation which makes re-appropriation more than just a taking of things and land, but a mode of common (re)production and a development of our ability to do, make and live. We also find more partial struggles of deproletarianisation that will give us greater reproductive autonomy and capacity for antagonism, for instance those that demand a guaranteed income, to decouple our lives and reproduction from the discipline of the wage.⁵³ From creating our own popular heath centres to taking over the hospitals, from starting our own cooperative production to taking over and reshaping industries and agriculture: deproletarianisation is a complex and rich process. Our proletarian condition is the ground for fear and dependency, the search for security and wages, and for 'social bodies and heads' of capital and state. However, the abolition of our proletarian condition does not abolish our interdependency on others and the earth for our reproduction. Here questions of commons and the earth, of ecologies and care come up, as necessary aspects of any communist movement.

Mostly struggles only become perceptible to outsiders when they come together under common slogans and names. However, they do not start there, but from our bodies – from our changing singular and collective bodies irreducible to the modes of their individualisation. These are embodied forms of resistance and of struggle, organising themselves and aiming at their own sustainability and multiplication. The sensitivities and relations developed in nanopolitical practices open a way to practice our self-reproduction not as that of enclosed organisms, individuals, but collective processes of becoming as part of multiple ecologies. This allows us to tune in to the micro-powers at work between and within us, the broad social antagonisms defining our times, and to what we are and can become. Nanopolitics is one way to strive for deproletarianisation, enhancing and enhanced by our other struggles to abolish the proletarian condition.

Endnotes

- Precarias a la Deriva. "Political Bodies Vs. Bodies Politic." Turbulence, issue 5 turbulence. org.uk/turbulence-5/t-10/bodies
- **2.** Imprinted on Roman coins was the head, the *caput*, of the Caesar. The citizens of the republic count not as bodies, but as heads: hence 'per capita'. The chief city, the centre of the mint and seat of the sovereign is the *capital*. This is also where those that counterfeited money would suffer their *capital punishment*. As will, at times chaotically fortuitous to the bodies in the street, the head of state himself. However, the guillotine does not push us beyond the logic of the caput, it only shows the contingent relation between the place of the caput and the empirical place holder. The problem is not to kill the king, but to kill the place or function of the king.
- **3.** Here we can think of Foucault's characterisation of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* as an 'Introduction to the Non-Fascist Life'.
- **4.** This seems to be the direction taken by Hardt and Negri in their trilogy consisting of *Empire*, *Multitude and Commonwealth*.
- **5.** Michel Foucault (1984), 'Truth and Power' in *The Foucault Reader*, edited by Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon Books, p. 63.
- **6.** Michel Foucault (1998 [orig. 1976]), 'Right of Death and Power over Life', part five of *The Will to Knowledge The History of Sexuality: vol. 1.* London: Penguin Books.
- 7. Foucault's scarecrows. Michel Foucault (1982), 'The Body of the Condemned' in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, edited by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
 - 8. Ibid., p.211.
- **9.** Liz Mason-Deese's article on the Argentinian *piquetero* movement gives a good sense of what the practices and ideas of such immediate struggles might be. 'The Neighboorhood is the New Factory', in *Viewpoint Magazine*, september 2012, viewpointmag.com/the-neighborhood-is-the-new-factory
- 10. Isaak Rubin (2008 [orig.1928]), Essays on Marx's Theory of Value. Delhi: Akaar Books, p.8.
- 11. McKenzie Wark (2012), 'Preoccupying: McKenzie Wark' in *The Occupied Times*, August 2, 2012. theoccupiedtimes.co.uk/?p=6451
- 12. Michel Foucault (1982), 'The Body of the Condemned' in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, edited by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.213. Foucault talks of political powers, the power of the state. Here its intertwinement with the 'economic' powers is central.
- 13. Foucault writes: '... a power relationship can only be articulated on the basis of two elements which are each indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: that "the other" (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts'. Ibid., p.220.
- **14.** Franco "Bifo" Berardi (2009), *The Soul at Work*, Trans. by Francesca Cadel and Guiseppina Mecchia. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).
- **15.** JoNina M. Abron (1998), "Serving the People': The Survival Programs of the Black Panther Party." In *Black Panther Party Reconsidered: Reflections and Scholarship*, edited by Charles Earl Jones, pp.177–192. Baltimore: Black Classic Press.
- 16. Huey P. Newton's assessment in his doctoral dissertation is helpful in mapping out the question, but also in measuring a historical and theoretical distance, and the need to undertake different experiments under different circumstances: 'While the FBI rationalized that it took these neutralizing steps against the Black Panther Party in order to curb its violent propensities, the truth is that what the bureau felt most threatening were survival programs providing free breakfasts to school children and other constructive services. No single feature of the Panthers made them so feared or disliked by the government; many organizations possessed either a revolutionary ideology, community service, or a willingness to engage in legal struggle to achieve

their goals. It was the combination of all of these features, pitched to a group that had been historically and systematically excluded from full participation in democratic capitalist America, that made the Party different, and dangerously so.' Huey P. Newton (1980), *War Against The Panthers: A Study Of Repression In America – Doctoral Dissertation*. Santa Cruz, CA: UC Santa Cruz.

- 17. What do we do today with the fact that the Panthers did not draw a clear distinction between the pedagogics of the breakfast programmes and the politics community self-reproduction on the one hand, and the idea of revolutionary 'consciousness' on the other? For instance, Bobby Seale writes: 'A revolutionary program is one set forth by revolutionaries, by those who want to change the existing system to a better system. A reform program is set up by the existing exploitative system as an appeasing handout to fool the people and keep them quiet ... The revolutionary struggle becomes bloody when the pig power structure attacks organizations and groups of people who go forward with these programs'. Bobby Seale (1991), Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton. Black Classic Press. p.141.
- 18. Practically speaking it makes sense to separate spaces of care and nanopolitics from spaces of antagonistic political organising. Both because it is important to create safe spaces, but also to allow different constellations of people to compose in different activities, rather than to create set groups which together have to have a politics of 'everything'. However, nanopolitics is not just the name of a set of practices and the proper space of those, but a dimension which is always there in other forms of politics, and which is ignored at our peril. We learn from feminism to set up autonomous spaces, while aiming to break down the separations that make such autonomy necessary in the first place.
- **19.** Karl Marx (1973 [orig. 1857-58]), *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (rough Draft)*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, p.604. My emphasis
- **20.** Karl Marx (1973 [orig. 1867]), *Capital: Volume I.* Translated by Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin Books, p.798.
- 21. Michael Denning's 'Wageless Life' in *New Left Review* 66, November-December 2010, contains a good reading of the ways Marx raise the problems of the constitutive precarity characterising proletarianistion. However, it does little to learn from the feminist critique of Marx's failure to theorise the reproduction of labour power in terms of the reproductive and caring work of (mostly) women, which reproduces the conditions of the production of value, by reproducing labour power. See Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James (1972), 'The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community' at *Libcom* libcom.org/library/power-women-subversion-community-della-costa-selma-james
- **22.** Leopoldina Fortunati (1995[orig. 1981]), *The Arcane of Reproduction: Housework, Prostitution, Labor and Capital.* Autonomedia.
 - 23. Bernard Stiegler (2010), For a New Critique of Political Economy. Pluto Press, p.40-44
 - 24. Silvia Federici (2004), Caliban and the Witch. New York: Autonomedia
- 25. Gendercide Watch (2012), 'European Witch-Hunts' at Gendercide.org, gendercide.org/case_witchhunts.html
- **26.** '...the medical profession is critizised primarily ... because it exercises an uncontrolled power over people's bodies, their health and their life and death.' Michel Foucault (1982), 'The Subject and Power' in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, edited by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.211.
 - 27. Bernard Stiegler (2010), For a New Critique of Political Economy. Pluto Press, p.60
- 28. Arundhati Roy (2011), *Broken Republic: Three Essays.* London: Hamish Hamilton. In the eight part of the first volume of Capital, Marx describes primitive accumulation as the historical epoch prior to the social reproduction in the form of capital: it produces the separation on which the capital-labour relation is founded. However, the social reproduction of capital is crisis-ridden and always threatened by its non-reproduction. This tendency to non-reproduction necessitates the continuation of primitive accumulation or what David Harvey calls 'accumulation by dispossession', a concept which he extends to neoliberal privitisations and commodifications of public goods. David Harvey (2006), *Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development.* London: Verso Books, p.43. See also Werner Bonefeld (1988), 'Class Struggle

and the Permanence of Primitive Accumulation' in Common Sense no. 6

- **29.** Maurizio Lazzarato (2012), *The Making of the Indebted Man: Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*. Cambridge MA: Semiotext(e)/MIT Press.
- **30.** 'The propertyless are more inclined to become vagabonds and robbers and beggars than workers'. Marx, *Grundrisse*, p.736.. This was the occasion for the so-called 'bloody legislation': 'Hence at the end of the fifteenth and during the whole of the sixteenth centuries, a bloody legislation against vagabondage was enforced throughout Western Europe. The fathers [and mothers!] of the present working class were chastised for their enforced transformation into vagabonds and paupers. Legislation treated them as "voluntary" criminals, and assumed that it was entirely within their powers to go on working under the old conditions which in fact no longer existed'. (Marx, *Capital: Volume I*, p.896.)
- **31.** This is the theme of Peter Linebaugh's fantastic *The London Hanged*. New ed. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, (1992)
- **32.** Karl Marx (1974 [orig. 1844]), 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts' in *Early Writings*. 1st ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin, p.377.
- **33.** On capital's tendency to produce a so-called surplus-population, see Endnotes Collective (2010), 'Crisis in the Class Relation' in *Endnotes* n° 2 endnotes.org.uk/articles/2 p.15-19
- **34.** See Chapter 23 in Karl Marx (1973 [orig. 1867]), *Capital: Volume I*. Translated by Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin Books
 - **35.** Here we are speaking of a profoundly different concept of value than that of capital.
- **36.** Maurizio Lazzarato (2012), *The Making of the Indebted Man: Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*. Cambridge MA: Semiotext(e)/MIT Press
- **37.** "...the members and organs of a living body should not be considered merely as parts of it, for they are what they are only in their unity and are not indifferent to that unity at all. The members and organs become mere "parts" only under the hands of the anatomist; but for that reason he is dealing with corpses rather than with living bodies. G. W. F. Hegel (1992 [orig.1830]), *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part I of the "Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences" with the Zusätze: Part 1*. Edited by Theodore Geraets and et al. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co, 204, §135.
 - 38. Ibid., §194-212
- **39.** Hegel, as Marx, was of course madly obsessed with tracing the continuity and expansion of the system through its contradictions. A political reading of Hegel is one that reads him as one should read *Capital*: as a catalogue of possible points of crisis and rupture, and therefore of sites of antagonistic intervention, but also as a set of warnings of possible and actual modes of recuperation and mediation.
- **40.** Tellingly Kant chooses the logic of rent/profit and investment/speculation to exemplify such teleology: '... a house is certainly the cause of the money that is received as rent, but yet, conversely, the representation of this possible income was the cause of the building of the house. A causal nexus of this kind is termed that of final causes (nexus finalis)'. Immanuel Kant (2007 [orig. 1790], Critique of Judgement. Oxford: Oxford University Press, §63, p.196 and §65, p.200.
 - 41. As Marx noted, history as world history is a historical product. Grundrisse, p.109
- **42.** This sketch glosses over the important difference between unconscious desire and conscious goals, to put it in traditional terms.
 - 43. Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello (2007). The New Spirit of Capitalism. London: Verso.
- **44.** While *real subsumption* in the broadest sense refers to the organisation of a company or institution according to the logic of capital (efficiency, productivity, profit) by capital (as owner, investor, creditor), *imaginary* or *'ideal' subsumption* refers to all the cases where people (bureaucrats, politicians, NGOs) organise their institutions according to the logic of capital, but without the actual investment of capitalist money-power, preemptively as it were (anticipating and fearing the judgement of capital or believing in the rationality of capitalist logics). Patrick Murray, (2000), 'Marxs Truly Social Labour Theory of Value: Part I, Abstract Labour in Marxian Value Theory' in *Historical Materialism* 6, no. 1 (2000), p.30
- **45.** Loren Goldner (n.a., 2000s), 'Social Reproduction for Beginners: Bringing the Real World Back In' at *Break Their Haughty Power*, home.earthlink.net/~lrgoldner/socreprod.html.

And Robert Brenner (2009), 'What is Good for Goldman Sachs is Good for America – The Origins of the Current Crisis', *Center for Social Theory and Comparative History, UC Los Angeles.*

- **46.** Camille Barbagallo and Nicholas Beuret (2012), 'Starting From the Social Wage' in *The Commoner* 15, Winter 2012
- **47.** ...and in hundreds of smaller towns, and in so many universities, schools, mines, ports, factories...
- **48.** In the US black and first nation activists suggested that decolonial notion of 'un-occupy' should take the place of 'occupy'.
- **49.** For a recent reflection on a 'politics of the encounter' (another conceptuality drawing on physics rather than a biology) in relation to the Occupy Movement, see Andy Merrifield (2011), 'Crowd Politics, Or, 'Here Comes Everybuddy' in *New Left Review* 71, September-October
- **50.** The parties that came out of and helped sustain such a social basis were very different from the professional parties we know today. But while the distance between workers and bureacrats, connected by a very active middle layer of activists and shop stewards, was smaller then, party organisation was as it is now much a mirror image of the forms of capitalist organisation of the time: hierarchical and disciplined.
- **51.** Any movement more than minorly communist must have strategies and practices to prevent the state and capital from violently taking our corruptive co-opting what we inhabit and what we have occupied.
- **52.** The fact that most people are surprised to hear of the trans-European movement of landless peasants testifies to the fact that primitive accumulation is seen in Europe as a historical fait accompli, or its results as a fact of nature. The landless propose that we show how the open wound of the proletariat is a product of the earlier cut of primitive accumulation.
- **53.** ...if not from capital and the state in general, given that money under capitalism is always in the last instance capital money, and given that the guaranteed income requires the redistributive activity of the state. See Kathi Weeks' recent book for an argument for the guaranteed income as a form of strategic contestation within and against state and capital. Kathi Weeks (2011), *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries*. Durham NC: Duke University Press





EXERCISE

An exercise in deproletarianisation

Money commands our time and energies. Most of us don't control the factories, technologies, land and resources we need to produce the necessities of life. So we have to work for those that do, or become housewives, criminals or charity recipients. Work is pretty exhausting, especially if you really throw yourself into it. The body usually resists the most committed mind. So, we spend most of our time working, resting after work or preparing for work. When we work, we produce not for our common needs, but for the owners, according to their priorities: More and more. That's why they pay us, and also why they sometimes "have to let us go." In short, we produce all that puts us to work or out of work. Faster and faster.

Some call this condition proletarian, and surely most of us live it, always differently. And we find ways to make it not-shit, "not too bad," "ok" and "fine," a lot of the time. If we can do that we can do more. Let's try once more to abolish this silly condition.

One way to begin that movement is to begin what we want and what we can do. So ask yourselves these questions, or better yet, talk them through with friends, lovers and comrades.

HOW DO YOU WANT TO LIVE?

How can you find the time and mindspace – alone or with others – to figure out how you want to live? Social spaces always produce or close down certain tastes, desires and sensitivities; what kinds of social spaces do you want to

engage with or (re)create? Write down some notes on how you would like to live and enjoy. How can you become able to live that way? Who could your allies be? Remember to consider people you don't know. What would be the new speed of life, what qualities and pleasures are available outside consumer culture? What enjoyments and life-desires keep you stuck in being a proletarian, in work, debt, and consumerism?

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO AND MAKE?

Make a list of things you would like to be able to do or make. Where can you learn this, from what situations or whom? And what skills and knowledges can you teach and share? Many or most really great things you can only do with others, so how to find and take time and space for that? Of course we need to learn skills we can sell for a wage, but some pedagogies and skills are designed to lead only towards that: can you hack into or avoid those? What processes of learning and what knowledges and know-how will help you pursue the life you want to live, the relations you want to make, and resources you want to have?

WHAT RELATIONS OF LIVING AND MAKING DO YOU WANT TO CREATE WITH OTHERS?

What ways of relating would be conductive for you developing your life and abilities with others? How can you build trust, solidarity and cooperation around learning, living, and the doing of what you want to do with others? What relations would you have to change or break out of? How would your collectives or communities stay open to the world, and how would you avoid becoming functional to the economy, as a charity, and NGO, a harmless community project? What interests, habits and institutions will slow you in your common projects, and how can you dodge, change or destroy them?

WHAT RESOURCES DO YOU NEED TO DO THAT?

Given how you would like to live and make, what means, buildings, resources, technologies, lands would you need to be able to do so? How would you gain access to those things? Pooling together, building, buying, squatting, occupying, stealing, taking by force? What kind of collective, movement, networks or organisations would you need to be able to do that, and to defend and extend your gains? Think big, and think through social inter-connections and interdependencies. But remember that abolishing our basic condition means embarking upon the unknown, in an inventive collective process full of struggles and joys.

No time for the sad passions

- Amit S. Rai

I was grappling with a momentary depression when I participated in two of the nanopolitics sessions. For some time, I had felt disembodied in London, having moved from the deep southeast of the USA, from a fairly depoliticized noise music scene, even though at the time I felt the noise as politics as such. Constructing coordinates for a map without territory, I initially registered my new political contexts only in the idioms of past struggles, my ready made map of Marx, Deleuze-Guattari, black and queer feminisms, postcolonial anti-imperialist movements and research, and an academicized anarchy. I wasn't immediately able to see that some new practices of life and its reproduction were being experimented with in these post-austerity movements. I was surprised by nanopolitics, and today I consider the set of practices/machines (machine: think of a series of little cutting edges opening an assemblage to its virtual and actual becomings) as crucially important for radical politics. What are the implications of the set of practices brought together in the intensive spaces of nanopolitics? I begin with a declaration of depression, not to excuse my at times paralyzing inability to sense affective rhythms, but as a way of acknowledging that the Sad Passions haunt radical practice. But this haunting can be turned toward an affirmation of the body's becoming, through conceptual and practical experiments in affect, sensation, value, care, and resonance, which is what I hailed in the nanopolitics spaces. This is what nanopolitics was for me, in/through a time that was multiplicious, cruel, and open.

I think of these times along with the writers who I enjoy reading. Dosse describes the different temporalities between Deleuze (who took months to wrestle with a thought) and Guattari (who had three thoughts a minute); it would take him quite a long time to say anything of interest to Felix's daily letters. How did their timescales become embedded over the years despite (or

because of?) this temporal disjuncture? Why, as Franco Berardi claims, did both of them have difficulty in acknowledging the depressions that wracked Guattari, and affected Deleuze, and that continue to haunt militant practices today?² But isn't the entire discourse on suicidal deterritorializations in *A Thousand Plateaus* not only an acknowledgment but a method of becoming active within such depressive movements?³ Is it disjuncture that gives rise to the sad passions, to debilitating depressions? Or are depressions merely an effect of the becoming-reactive of disjuncture?

I begin this meditation on what nanopolitics can do with some thoughts on friendship and disjuncture. Nanopolitics to me, for me has been an experiment with different resonances. The construction of affective states that delve into the political through the durations and intensities of the body, and not a universal body...but the raced, classed, gendered, and (differently-)abled body of the participants potentialized in the practices of these spaces, texts, digital media, networks. (I hesitate to write we – because I only attended two of the sessions, yet have been conversing with some of the participants for some time before and since).

How do we compose commoning assemblages of care, barter, trust, communalisation, joy, delirium, solidarity, hacker media, nomad science, and radical aesthetic practices? This points to an Untimely affirmation of a postcolonial, feminist autonomy, a permanent mutiny from the system of neoliberal value shamelessly sold to all who will buy as destiny itself: We invaded Iraq so you could shop there, said Bob Kerry, then president of the New School for Social Research in 2002. When we in the anti-war movement heard that, we realized a little better what we were up against, especially from so-called liberals. In that period building up to the final invasion of Iraq, a time of intense agitation throughout New York, and especially the New School, we had our own nanopolitics, we were militants, Marxists, minorities, migrants, feminists, queers, and anti-imperialists, and the impulse of following a vector of absolute deterritorialization became an angry refusal of the intolerable constitution of an authoritarian homeland. But without a constantly renewed practice and an honest appraisal of failure (one continuous failure, is another name for Zen practice, says Suzuki), anger becomes the ressentiment of a representative identity calculating on power,4 closing down the possibility of disjunctive conjunctures and revolutionary situations.⁵

Marx gives a historical sense of this Untimely affirmation of revolutionary practice.

Bourgeois revolutions, like those of the eighteenth century, storm more swiftly from success to success, their dramatic effects outdo each other,

men and things seem set in sparkling diamonds, ecstasy is the order of the day – but they are short-lived, soon they have reached their zenith, and a long Katzenjammer takes hold of society before it learns to assimilate the results of its storm-and-stress period soberly. On the other hand, proletarian revolutions, like those of the nineteenth century, constantly criticize themselves, constantly interrupt themselves in their own course, return to the apparently accomplished, in order to begin anew; they deride with cruel thoroughness the half-measures, weaknesses, and paltriness of their first attempts, seem to throw down their opponents only so the latter may draw new strength from the earth and rise before them again more gigantic than ever, recoil constantly from the indefinite colossalness of their own goals – until a situation is created which makes all turning back impossible, and the conditions themselves call out: Hic Rhodus, hic salta!⁶

Is nanopolitics in its practices – experiments, movements, discourses – the affirmative construction of such situations of revolutionary becoming? What kind of situations would these be? Nanopolitics creates connections, conjunctions (a disjunctive logic of the "...and...") 'to the politics of affect, the politics of intuition, of being attentive to oneself, how we feel, our emotions on the one hand, how we carry, hold, experience, live, avoid our bodies on the other.'

For me, and the communities I affirm solidarities with, Marx remains central to understanding the contemporary crisis and developing strategies of creating zones of autonomous practice within the neoliberal value regime. Yet the ontological turn toward material practices of creating situations, durations, capacities, ecologies tending explicitly, if sometimes ironically toward communisation requires also an assemblage-diagram of the human body and its machines of conjunction, rhythmed in their co-evolution. I have found nanopolitics takes me in a non-human direction, not through the death of (White) Man (there's discourse enough on that), but through the conjunctions of bodies, machines, and affects becoming indiscernible, in experiences of resonance and folding, there is always both a becoming minor and a becoming woman in revolutions. The quantum body, its telepresencing, its anomalous conjunctions, names a fuzzy set. This brought me to the shock of what ecology I was habituated to and co-evolving with. Through these experiments in the organization of an affective commons, varying the intensity and duration of their ingredients, a method develops of intuiting qualitatively different multiplicities, and the practical construction of a smooth and increasingly consistent matter of indiscernibles and intensities. This is the very ontology of revolutionary becoming.

Too vitalist? The very ontology of revolutionary becoming is also a marketing ploy, we know, as always open to fascist, or more subtly "empowering" reterritorializations. What then does holding on to this abstract diagram of a quantum nanopolitics do for radical practice?

The social factory under cognitive capitalism has dispersed its dispositifs, concentrating accumulation in fewer and fewer hands. Around the world we witness not only the consolidation of corporate capitalist power drowning in record profits, nor merely new media marketing strategies of value capture through the creativity of social networks, but as well emergent techniques for modulating and measuring the embodied capacity to sense and affect. Yet the vast majority of the earth's populace keeps laboring intensively as well. Indeed, the social network is parasitical on affect and obscured labor. Effectively, the real subsumption of living labour under capital - the real and practical folding in/of affective and labouring capacity - as both tendency and variable – into the workings of many aspects of everyday neo-liberal life is legible in the unending modulations of human capital (the University, as Alberto Toscano says cogently, is the perfect laboratory for the training of commodities training commodities⁷). The perpetual entrepreneur we are invited to become gives the lie to the creative economy. It is not autonomous creativity but competition for innovative capture and individualism as value that is the dominant mode of autonomy in our time.

Can one intuit a way out of this capitalist vice? 'Someone said once that intuition is the sum total of internalised experiences that have become habit, writes Paolo. Nanopolitics in its synaesthetic, transensory experiments encourages a method of intuition that follows the variability or real articulations of social, economic, bodily, ecological processes. In that sense, intuition and habit are directly opposed, habit and habituation would be reactive modes of becoming, separating intuition from what it can do (revolutionary becoming). 'And let goooo..., it's ok, it's ok not to know, it's ok not to know what's going to happen, not to know how should I do it, not to know about myself... this is what Merav repeats to us...' (Paolo). Artist Tarek Salhany's etching practice is also explicitly a giving up of mastery; the range of the chemical processes are parameters that one finds a zone of proximity through, so that through a chemical process of eating away at an image-substance lines, shadow, textures emerge. There is a wager, a risk, a throw of the dice, a letting go, repeated through a method of intuition that opens the embodied mind to conjunction and resonance. The testimonies from the nanopolitics sessions suggest that to me, sometimes in a practice that follows it explicitly: 'This is the most difficult task of all: moving while talking. It is, most essentially, a stream of consciousness, of overlapping messy collective voices in the movement. And it may be

that radicality (the radicals playing with rules, reinventing them) emerges exactly there, from this uncontrollability of words bodies and emotions. There is no clear intentionality, no conclusion, no solution, *but we are sharing a lot*, even understanding something may be' (Gabriella Alberti).

And in the notes to Hagit's voice-session, we read: 'The first one was an exercise where we had to start on the floor and slowly go to a standing position moving in whatever way we wanted. At the same time, as we were doing this Hagit asked us to sing a song we knew from our youth and start on the floor singing in our lowest voice and as we slowly stood up we were to increase the pitch of our voice. It was very interesting to experience the whole range of notes that we could go through although I have to say that I felt very self-conscious and didn't really let myself go.' I strongly resonated with this experience in the session I attended. We saw a movie and touched and pulled and pushed our skins, and closed our eyes, and moved in unison and apart, we discussed the privilege of the space, but also spoke of the necessity of constructing it, that without such experimentations in movement, sensation, and politics we would know less well what we as a revolutionary movement, and as individual-collective bodies can do.

In different ways, nanopolitics experimented with creating haptic spaces of sonorous intensities. Deleuze and Guattari write of smooth space filled by events or haecceities, far more than by formed and perceived things. A space of affects, more than one of properties; in it a haptic, synaesthetic rather than optical perception is necessarily active. A space of emergent forms, or morphogenesis, nanospaces diagram material forces. A monstrous logic of the 'and'. 'It is an intensive rather than extensive space, one of distances, not of measures and properties. Intense Spatium instead of Extensio. A Body without Organs instead of an organism and organization.'8 In such spaces of experimentation perception is based on symptoms and evaluations rather than measures and properties; its topological surface occupied by nothing but intensities, 'wind and noise, forces, and sonorous and tactile qualities, as in the desert, steppe, or ice. The creaking of ice and the song of the sands. Striated space, on the contrary, is canopied by the sky as measure and by the measurable visual qualities deriving from it. For me the incident between our group (some of whom were white, some not) and the security guard who was of color and non-elite, brought me to the complex striation of our common space and its attendant habituations, constantly impinging on our practices and desires for autonomous conjunctions. This did not diminish the experiment for me, but rather urged in me a sensibility of complexity and overdetermination in a moment both enabled and modulated by a corporate, digitized institution such as the neoliberal university.

Can we, through the affective practices of nanopolitics, act in solidarity with times to come? If so, we will have been in conjunctive spaces, developing "and" practices, crackling with the intensities of capacities returning to what they can do, but not intent on the knowledge or consciousness of them, we will have 'let go' repeatedly, interrupting ourselves in our course, producing a stammer in being, abducting the future: nanopolitics poses well what a body can do. I want to connect the method of intuition in nanopolitics very explicitly to two affirmations: the feminist affirmation of embodiment as a line of flight from neoliberal regimes of value; and the affirmation that revolutionary becoming is a counteractualization of all the sad passions sold by capital as human destiny (human nature, human resources, 'business ecologies,' psychotherapy, etc.).

Feminist ssuch as Patricia Clough, Jasbir Puar, Luciana Parisi, and others have focused on the affirmation of a body politics as a way of both critiquing and ontologizing modes of consumption, security, and production in neoliberalism. They show that neoliberal strategies of accumulation in the affective mode provoke a thought of virtuality even as it is returned to a revitalized materialism. Nanopolitics takes this critique and situates ontology squarely within the realm of self-organising practice. It is in the interval between things – breaths, people, flesh, desires, fluxes--their durational passage – that potential conjunctions of two or more series become possible. Virtuality must be intuited as the condition of qualitative change wrought through these intervals and conjunctions: and...and...and...and... Capital 'knows' this in the sense that contemporary media technologies of measure directly modulate the actual and possible conjunctions of the habituated body itself (neuromarketing, ambient and experiential marketing, the Wii and Xbox 360 consoles, etc.)

It is in the face of this affect capture machine, and by pushing perception to the limits of what it habitually does, that nanopolitics opens experience to haptic sensations and conjunctive series (the fuzzy logic of an incalculable 'and'). Sensation allows a passage to affect itself. Bergson writes (and let us keep in mind affection here blurs any distinction between internal sensation and the capacity to affect and be affected):

... we have considered the living body as a kind of centre whence is reflected on the surrounding objects the action which these objects exercise upon it: in that reflection external perception consists. But this centre is not a mathematical point; it is a body, exposed, like all natural bodies, to the action of external causes which threaten to disintegrate it. We have just seen that it resists the influence of these causes. It does not

merely reflect action received from without; it struggles, and thus absorbs some part of this action. Here is the source of affection. We might therefore say, metaphorically, that while perception measures the reflecting power of the body, affection measures its power to absorb. But this is only a metaphor. We must consider the matter more carefully, in order to understand clearly that the necessity of affection follows from the very existence of perception. Perception, understood as we understand it, measures our possible action upon things, and thereby, inversely, the possible action of things upon us. The greater the body's power of action (symbolized by a higher degree of complexity in the nervous system), the wider is the field that perception embraces. The distance which separates our body from an object perceived really measures, therefore, the greater or less imminence of a danger, the nearer or more remote fulfillment of a promise. And, consequently, our perception of an object distinct from our body, separated from our body by an interval, never expresses anything but a virtual action. But the more the distance decreases between this object and our body (the more, in other words, the danger becomes urgent or the promise immediate), the more does virtual action tend to pass into real action.¹¹

Keep in mind that Bergson here does not mean measure in terms of metrical space but rather in terms of the contractions of innumberable vibration necessary to take a flux or refrain beyond a critical threshold. In other words, if perception is continuous with matter, creating material assemblages (live art practices, yoga and some of its offshoots, a thousand BMCs body forth a thousand protests and occupations, tactical media collectives, networks of care and reproduction, urban guerilla gardening and common allotments, peer to peer hacker, jugaad [Hindi for savvy trick or con job] as savoir faire, and DIY networks, etc.) involves producing intensive intervals between perception and matter, resonant affects between two multiplicities. As Dosse notes of Deleuze's practice of conjunction, the "important thing was to transform the 'is' (est) into 'and' (et) not in the sense of any particular, purely conjunctive relationship but rather in the sense of becoming implicated in a whole series of relationships. The 'and' was assigned the possibility of creation, to the creative stuttering, to multiplicity". 12 Dosse quotes Deleuze who in an interview reminds us that "and" is neither one thing nor the other, 'it's always in-between, between two things; it's the borderline, there's always a border, a line of flight or of flow, only we don't see it because it's the least perceptible of things'. Yet its precisely along this line of flight that 'things come to pass, becomings evolve, revolutions take shape?13 One way of involving oneself in the creation of such conjunctions and resonances is by creating common notions that function like durational diagrams linking two ecologies, or multiplicities together.

This line of flight is lived through the revolutionary, interruptive situations Marx noted in regards to proletarian revolutions of the nineteenth century – not the same situations but a situation of deterritorialization as such. The virtual strata of revolutionary becoming. The permanent molecular revolution of becoming must create material assemblages that traverse this border, creating interzones of haptic (or smooth, conjunctive, synaesthetic) space immanent to collective ecologies of sensation. If sensation and its ecologies has become the moving target of value capture within cognitive capital ("business ecologies") what space is left for the autonomy of living labour?

Certainly the Italian post-operaist tradition affirms the potentiality of labour to create, refuse, sabotage, hack, flee, exit, and on occasion to precipitate a general crisis in accumulation (e.g. globalization as a result of workers in the core countries and the colonies refusing work and racialized and sexualized servitude). Alberto Toscano warns against a too easy adoption of such a 'vitalist' position considering that 'if all value stems from the autonomous, proto-communist interactions of 'singularities' of living labour, what of the contradictions faced by a capital that both needs creativity and is obliged, politically, to stifle it?' What, or better which type of forces can stifle this creativity? Is the metaphor of asphyxiation common to the multiplicity that conjoins value and creativity? Two senses of the word autonomy must be distinguished Toscano urges; indeed 'between a substantial autonomy (of the kind we might equate with emancipation) and the formal autonomy of much outsourced, self-employed or precarious labour, there is no transition, just homonymy.'14 For Toscano, while there are realities 'antagonistic to the capital-relation, there are no forms of life or knowledge simply autonomous from it.¹¹5 As he argues:

[W]e should ask which labour-power has become ever more autonomous because of the predominance of communicative knowledge and affective relations as sources of value under contemporary capitalism. In my view, by and large – that is to say outside of enclaves or forms of emancipated commonality stolen from the rhythms and imperatives of capitalist valorization – what we face is an autonomy-within-heteronomy. This is the autonomy of the consumer and social entrepreneur, whose desire and creativity is by definition competitive. 16

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of this warning: which and whose autonomy are we referring to? The autonomy of the entrepreneur

to capture value, or the autonomy of a precariat to create the conditions of their own emancipation? But perhaps there is a category confusion afoot in Toscano's formulations? Perhaps the life of autonomous living labour, in its qualitative difference from the entrepreneur's mode of capture, is lived in a non-dialectical difference that does not go all the way up to contradiction or even antagonism (no doubt sometimes it is necessary for revolutionary movements to take up and go beyond contradictions, inseparable from a becoming reactive of a subsumption of intensity into discourse). Perhaps autonomia's political force, sense, and value lies in its lines of flight that create conjunctions between radical practices of communisation or reproduction¹⁷ - potentializing, anomalous, immeasurable, and experimental forms of life that are no longer subsumable within capital's relations of measure. How to make an affirmation of becoming itself, even as all around us, within us and between us, measure extracts value. I think I have experienced something of that agonistic affirmation in nanopolitics, not as an achievement of the revolution, but as a methodological search into revolutionary capacities, radical care networks as practices of becoming.

Deleuze, through his study of Bergson, posed the question of qualitative, continuous multiplicity in relation to the sphere of duration. In this way, for Deleuze's Bergsonism, duration was not simply the indivisible, nor was it the nonmeasurable. 'Rather, it was that which divided only by changing in kind, that which was susceptible to measurement only by varying its metrical principle at each stage of the division'. Instead of merely opposing a philosophical vision of duration (or a neoliberal version of autonomy) to a scientific conception of space (or a real politic view of contemporary capital) Bergsonism takes the problem into the sphere of the two kinds of multiplicity, qualitative and quantitative. ¹⁸ In this way, Deleuze brings out the variable durations in things, for instance a cube of sugar dissolving in hot tea, or the duration of a nanopolitics encounter within the timescale of an affirmation of becoming.

Perhaps the two multiplcities can help us distinguish the actualized present of a people from the virtual capacities and tendencies of their line of flight, their emergence in a revolutionary becoming? Is becoming a real thing? Insofar as becoming is real what constitutes that reality? Or is becoming too uncertain a thing for it to have a definite reality, and instead gradients of belonging to the real give us the critical thresholds of a multiplicity's vectors, its virtual map of intensities and their actualizations? At its border, in the inter-contact-zone an indiscernible difference becomes catalytic and affirmative in the affect/passage between an historical people and its becoming Other, each implicated in different conjunctive series of thought, practice, sensation, perception, habit, and...and? What if the smooth spaces of

nanopolitics had brought together a set of vectors affirming revolutionary becoming in the face of an intolerable neoliberal measure machine? At stake, as Toscano explicitly points out, is the relationship between the time of capital accumulation and the time of politics (and indeed what Toscano himself means by a 'substantive' autonomy). But we shouldn't subsume the time of autonomy within a presentist temporal disposition. Through experiments such as nanopolitics, we can open practice to other durations in the interests of a time to come, resonant with the poetry of the future (Bue), and affirming a line of flight from our habitual refrains.

Becoming isn't part of history; history amounts [to] only the set of preconditions, however recent, that one leaves behind in order to 'become,' that is, to create something new. This is precisely what Nietzsche calls the Untimely... They say revolutions turn out badly. But they're constantly confusing two different things, the way revolutions turn out historically and people's revolutionary becoming. These relate to two different sets of people. Men's [sic] only hope lies in a revolutionary becoming: the only way of casting off their shame or responding to what is intolerable. 19

Nurturing an Untimely relation to our present, Deleuze presents a veritable program for becoming active: create conjunctive relations that exceed macropolitical control as well as its History. Within History all you have to know is how to win or obtain a majority (the individualising autonomy Toscano rightly warns against). To make an affirmation of becoming, to avoid ending up a fascist there is no other choice but to become-black, become-women, become-child. Unlike history, untimely becoming 'cannot be conceptualized in terms of past and future. For Deleuze and Guattari becoming-revolutionary remains 'indifferent to questions of a future and a past of the revolution; it passes between the two. Every becoming is a block of coexistence, a haecciety. As a collective, self-organizing practice, nanopolitics is not content to reproduce "immutable models" nor is it governed by a fixed structure, instead the focus has been on creating a sociality of becoming, 20 or an ontology of reproduction. An experimental method counter-actualizing sensation, habit, and memory, returning capacities to what they can do, nanopolitics will have been an Untimely affirmation of becoming itself.

Endnotes

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- **3.** Cf. Chapter Six: 'How to Make Oneself a Body Without Organs', Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987), *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
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 - 9 Ibid
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- **14.** Toscano, Alberto (2011) "The limits of Autonomy" in Eds. Peters, M. and E. Bulut, Cognitive Capitalism, Education and Digital Labor. Oxford: Peter Lang Publishing. p.263
 - 15. Ibid. 268
 - 16. Ibid. 263-4
- 17. Silvia Federici and Camille Barbagallo (2012), 'Introduction' to the issue on Carework and the Commons. *The Commoner*, No. 15, Winter 2012.
- **18.** Gilles Deleuze (1991 [orig. 1966]), *Bergsonism*, trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam, New York, Zone Books.
- **19.** Gilles Deleuze (1995) "Control and Becoming." In G. Deleuze, *Negotiations*, trans. Joghin, Martin. New York: Columbia University Press. pp.170-171
 - 20. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987), A Thousand Plateaus, p. 292



EXERCISE A practice of walking

Develop a practice of walking. Like a crab, become a crab in walking assemblages; stop. Walk. Go the Meseglise way and let the durations infect the Guermantes route. Do this by attending to your rhythms very minutely, heart beat, breathing, step-in-time, the sounds of dog barking, the smells, the refrains of traffic, car horns, and bicycles, do your thoughts beat out a rhythm? In walking don't forget that every technology assembles with your perception at specific speeds, scales, and patterns of interaction. To have a virtual-actual diagram of the tendencies and capacities of the assemblages you are intimate with: walk your rhythms, let them be affected by the sounds and smells of racially and ethnically diverse neighborhoods of the rich and poor.

Keep walking. Turn around, breathe deeply, and again, and again. Touch the person next to you, touch yourself. Keep walking, keeping more or less the same distance with your partner (s). Smell your surroundings, give it a color and taste, sense the sound waves giving certain spaces a boundedness and a border, find the borders of sound and smell blocs, taste them, hear their overlaps, notice how value and security is managed in the phase transitions from space to space, from bloc of sensation to bloc of sensation, retrace how urban space striates flows of pedestrians, cycles, cars, buses, but also of races and ethnicities, sexualities and capacities. Keep walking alone or with others, experiment with pace and breathing, modulate your own sense of your body's movements, walk sideways, with an exaggerated gait, bounce on your toes while walking. Find a bench, sit down, stretch gently. Notice where the closest camera is, stick your tongue out at it. Get up, keep walking down streets you don't know.

Towards a careful listening

- Anja Kanngieser

At the time, it didn't seem like something worth talking about. We were sitting together in a hangar-like room in a warehouse. It was blustery outside and cold inside. We were at a meeting of a new collective to organise an upcoming demonstration, launching a campaign with casual service workers. The chairs were set up in a ring, you could see the faces of everyone around you – some you knew, others were unfamiliar. Everyone was sizing each another up. One by one, people began to introduce themselves. One by one the voices echoed around our ears. Some of them were confident, full of pep and verve, words tumbling all over themselves with enthusiasm. Some stuttered into the air, pausing and racing, staccato, nervous. Others were drawn out and understated. Some filled the space while others seemed swallowed up by it. And then, suddenly, it stopped. One person said nothing at all. A pause. Waiting. Nothing. And in that moment the room reconfigured itself around the memory of our voices, and the silence.

Introduction

♣ Recording 1. *

The experience in the room that day, an experience that I have had in some form or another in many rooms and in many meetings, shows both the way in which how we speak and listen is political, and the way in which voice and space co-create one another. The voice, or lack thereof, is the most immediate

^{*} This article refers to many recordings. All of them are available here: soundcloud.com/anja_k/sets/a-sonic-geography-of-voice

means of expression; indeed, 'affective and ethico-political forces are firstly expressed by the voice.' The voice, in its expression of affective and ethico-political forces, creates worlds. The utterances of speakers open up spaces for different ways of being through dialogue: through their anticipation of a response. The ways that voices are shaped by, and shape, worlds and spaces, reveals the creative and constitutive operations of speech and language. This understanding looks to the voice, and speech, as more than a conduit for the transfer of information. Emphasised from this view is not only the reciprocal and active process of creating worlds and meanings, but also the extralinguistic elements of communication: the soundings, gestures and affective transmissions that make up our different relations.

By tuning into these affective and auditory elements, we may imagine an acoustic politics of the voice, whereby sound helps us to engage in, and elaborate upon, contemporary globalised political landscapes. Such a politics might help us to become more attuned to the ways in which voices are produced by, and productive of, relations, geographies and subjectivities. These are tied to projections and positions of class, race, education, culture, social value, sexuality and so forth. Unlike ideas of communication that see the speaker as active, and the listener as passive, we come to understand that as listeners we actively contribute to the spaces that utterances compel. We further see how such aspects play out in the sonic inflections of the voice, not only in their linguistic content, through paying particular attention to pace, accent and dialect, intonation, frequency, amplitude, and silence. The ways that these play out affect our capacity to listen and to respond to one another. If we are seeking to build relations alternative to those typical of capitalism, developing sensitivities to how we might speak and listen differently is crucial because they can help us to find ways to relate to ourselves and others differently, with care and with generosity.

Several recordings accompany this piece and you are invited to listen to them as you read the text; they are available here: soundcloud.com/anja_k/sets/a-sonic-geography-of-voice. By bringing these different voices into relation, I extend a desire for more convivial and caring practices of listening.³ Two kinds of sound recording are heard: firstly, recordings of speech and sound phenomena taken from a variety of archives that directly illustrate the sonic qualities spoken about. The second of each recording is a compilation of short recordings with friends involved in radical political organising, coming from campaigns around feminism, migration, labour, gender and queer politics, permaculture and education struggles in the UK, Germany and Australia. Within much of this kind of organisation there is some awareness of how we speak to each other, the vocabularies we use and the articulations of

privilege that underlie our speech. The recordings of friends involved in such organisations all address the question: in a collective meeting how does pace/accent/ intonation/ frequency and pitch/ volume and silence affect your own capacity to listen and to respond?

Like a refrain, these reflections invite us to return to different perspectives around speaking and listening; through their sensual operation they add a further layer of sonic experience reminding us to be attentive to the qualities of the speaking voices themselves, and to think about our own responses in this process.

The utterance and sound

We might begin to consider how voices, and how we listen to them, reconfigure our relationships to each other and to our shared worlds by turning to the writing of Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin's theory of enunciation allows us to engage the voice and utterances. On the one hand, Bakhtin reinvests the word and the production of meaning with a political and social capacity for action. On the other, he offers a way of thinking about the processes of subjectivation – that is, how we become subjects. For Bakhtin, rather than being originally called into being as linguistic or psychological subjects, speakers *act* as possible worlds. The communicational and world making capacities of voices exceed their capture by the words and meanings they articulate. The acoustic qualities and inflections of voices impact on how we speak and listen to one another; the voice, and how we hear it, is produced by, and reproduces, codings of power, class, gender and race.

In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt⁴ writes that speech is a privileged means by which speakers identify themselves to others, demarcating themselves as particular political subjects. This is a position compatible with Bakhtin's, who rejects ideas of speaking as active and listening and understanding as passive. He argues that all listening is in anticipation of response. That is to say, whenever we speak to someone, we expect some kind of response, and we are also always responding to something else to some degree. This, though, varies greatly. A responsive understanding may be realised immediately or may be delayed. For Bakhtin this is the prerogative of listening and understanding – as preparing for a response-reaction.⁵ From this we may gauge how the words we use are contingent upon others – other people, contexts, situations, events and experiences.

Bakhtin's perspective is politically interesting on two fronts. Firstly, through his emphasis on the constant interplay between the speaker and listener. Secondly, through his attention to extra-linguistic elements. Bakhtin

defines an utterance as a bringing together words, propositions and grammar – what may be referred to as 'technical signs' – and extra-linguistic 'dialogic' elements – in part, the soundings, gestures and affective exchanges expressed through language and signs, again the tones, paces, accents and so forth of how we speak. These demarcate various alliances, convivialities, enmities, sympathies and antipathies for Bakhtin. The affective and desiring aspects within the utterance and its expression can form new lines of collaboration and collusion, or reinstate and establish patterns of domination between people. Because of this, the relations set up through these processes have a profoundly political significance. These processes are sounded out by the qualities of voices, which are often neglected in discussions of communication. These qualities, however, can reveal much of socio-political conditions and contexts, and can be very useful in helping us to create more careful practices of relating to one another.

Vocal inflections

I. Pace

In a talk given in New York in 2009, Franco 'Bifo' Berardi recounted a story about the coincidental changes in speed of speech and forms of power through capitalism⁶, based on the findings of Richard Robin on language learning. Robin travelled to the Soviet Union in 1987 and 1993 to record the rate of syllables emitted per second of speech by television presenters. What Robin⁷ discovered was that the pace of speech in 1987 was considerably slower than that in 1993, three syllables per second in the former compared to six syllables per second in the latter. This was found to be the same in China and in the Middle East.

4 Recording 2. Pace Russian

For Berardi⁸ this reflected something of the shift in ideological governance, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of capitalist Russia. Prior to the fall of socialism, the presenter had only to reassure her audience through her assertion of the communist state, but with the introduction of capitalism, competition and advertising proliferated. This, argued Berardi, illustrated the difference between the modern consensus based power, founded on the sharing and persuasion of a common ideological framework, goal and truth, and the more contemporary forms, involving the saturation of the communicative and receiving faculties. In other words, it marked a shift from

consensus based to saturation-based forms of power and governance. The doubling of the pace of speech, then, became an everyday, auditory enaction of changed socio-political conditions, and their playing out through corporeal and communicative rhythms.

Recording 3. Pace

II. Accent

Not only the speed of speech but also its accent and regional dialect illuminates micro- and macro- political conditions. Mladen Dolar notes that 'the official language is deeply wrought by the class division; there is a constant 'linguistic class struggle' which underlies its constitution.'9 What is heard as accent or dialect is imbued with socio-political connotations – the normative accent and dialect becomes inaudible and 'loses' its alien timbre, while the foreign accent or dialect draws attention to the materiality of the speaker, her geographical background, class, race, nationality and education for instance.

This was apparent during the 2010 Australian Federal Election when political commentators began to question the motivation behind perceived changes in the voice of Labor leader Julia Gillard. As Janet Albrechtsen from the conservative newspaper *The Australian* put it:

Start with something so basic it barely gets a mention. That voice. Gillard's accent is curious. Especially if, like her, you grew up in Adelaide, had a working-class background and went to public schools. I'm often asked why I don't sound like Gillard. Easy. No one in Adelaide sounds like Gillard...Could she have manufactured those broad nasal vowels, so different even from her Adelaide-accented sister, to fit her political emergence within Labor's left-wing factions? You feel so cynical even suggesting it. Yet, The Australian's Helen Trinca remembers speaking to Gillard in the early 1980s when, as a student leader, she sounded "middle class and well spoken.¹⁰

Albrechtsen was not alone in her observation. Aidan Wilson from the leftist publication Crikey wryly commented that 'its lucky for us that...the NSW Labor Party's Right-wing faction have gifted us with a new PM whose voice serves as a linguistic discussion point.' Like or dislike of voice aside, what is significant are the implications drawn from the accent.

Of course Gillard is not the only politician to have her vocal tendencies challenged in the public realm, where the implications of socio-linguistic phenomena have come to represent wider political dissonance. During the 2008 American presidential elections President Barack Obama was criticised for adopting a 'black' dialect in his addresses to predominantly black constituencies at the same time that Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid was accusing him in private of speaking 'white'. As Gillard's did for class, Obama's phonological identity functioned to reinstate racial signification when the plane of the visual had lost some of its novelty.

Necording 4. Accent Gillard and Obama

The line of attention given to the accent and dialect might prompt us to wonder what this suggests of the reality of parliamentary politics? Is it symptomatic of a condition in which 'individuals are elected primarily on the basis of their personality, voice and any other factors as opposed to a party being elected in the basis of policy'?¹² Potentially, yes, at least more so than we might care to admit, especially at a time when more and more ideological and political effects are being produced by non-ideological and affective means, that is to say through a capitalisation of expression, creativity and emotion.

The breaks and disruptions that the accent or dialect provides within an affective economy can be argued for in the same way. Whether interpreted as artificial or not, the accent or dialect can act as a distraction that modulates and arrests the flow of information and intervenes in the mode of listening, in the same way that a phonological mispronunciation, a lisp or stutter can cause a double take or confusion in a conversation. At the same time, the rogue accent is codified, it becomes the basis for various prejudices and narratives of identity, as seen in the instances above. In radical political organisation, this can both act to elevate or degrade the speaker through her exoticisation or connection to an imagined authentic subject position, with both positive and negative associations depending on her presumed origin and background, and the relation of this background to the political context she is participative of.

Recording 5. Accent

III. Intonation and Pitch

Intonation works in a similar manner to make the sonic qualities of the voice present, 'for the particular tone of the voice, its particular melody and modulation, its cadence and inflection, can decide the meaning.' The shades of intonation, the affective resonances that tone can transmit, can derail the

easy reception of linguistic content. Tone is a trickster gesture of speech; the intervention of intonation that may contradict or subvert the words spoken, it can express unexpected or seemingly unwarranted sarcasm, humour, irony, irritation, joy. Like accent, intonation can be codified, its contribution to the meaning of what is said can be picked up by the listener and absorbed into the dialogic exchange. The intonation of the utterance can act powerfully to shape the rhythm of communication, and the relations of cooperation, power and alliance between speakers.

Simultaneously the fundamental frequency or pitch, and volume of the voice, effects relations between speakers. Higher pitched and softer voices are usually perceived as more feminine than lower pitched louder voices. This has consequences for assumptions on sexuality (for instance the male with the higher pitched voice is stereotyped as effeminate and passive) and attractiveness, as was made evident in an article published by the *New York Times* examining the recent phenomenon of GPS love, where GPS users develop feelings for their automatic vocal guides. The conclusion of the article was partially drawn from an increase in lewd commentary posted by fans to sites like gpspassion.com and pdastreet.com on their favourite voices, Australian Karen say, or American Jill, voices that Garry Maddox dubbed as 'the other women'. This went far beyond the rhetorical, as shown by the anecdote of an incident where a television actor was caught out by his wife alone in his car pleasuring himself to 'the dulcet tones of the automated voice system'.

Recording 6. Tone GPS

The popularity and allure of these GPS voices reveal more than crass humour, especially on the level of the techno-political. According to Professor Clifford I. Nass, a communications expert and commercial consultant, the implementation of female over male voices signals a rising confidence in such technologies. When the device first appeared in cars, manufacturers preferred male voices, because these seemingly commanded more respect. 'When the key dimension is competence, the male voice is better', explained Nass, 'when the key dimension is likeability, the female voice is better'. What this reveals are the economies around technological innovation and dissemination, especially their correlation to particularly gendered modes of labour. It shows the presence of 'soft' skills critical to contemporary communicative work, friend-liness being one of the key indicators of emotional and interpersonal intelligence harvested by managerial and entrepreneurial capitalism.

Recording 7. Tone

4 Recording 8. Pitch

IV. Volume

As already mentioned, the amplitude of the voice works together with pitch to articulate affective and socio-political velocities. The vibrational frequency of the voice has undeniable effects. Take, for example, the voice of Adolf Hitler. Hitler himself remarked that his conquering of Germany was crucially aided by the use of the loudspeaker and his voice was a treasured property of the Nazi Party. According to one speech expert, Hitler's voice registered at 228 vibrations (the frequency of an expression of anger vibrating at around 220) – his voice was literally a sonic stun, somewhat like the state produced by an air-horn or unexpected alarm. As Leni Riefenstahl described, on hearing, his voice inspired in her an 'almost apocalyptic vision' (ibid: 86). The capacity of volume to drive such a response requires us to take seriously the effects that acoustic emissions can engender, and to consider 'the acoustical thrust of speaking' as capable of performing acts of threat or violence.

Recording 9. Hitler 1933

◀ Recording 10. Volume

V. Silence

In the same way that the sonic waves emitted by a loud voice may colonise space, a quiet voice may recede and get lost in the room. Indeed quiet, or at the most extreme, silence can be a virulent political expression of refusal. Silence has historically functioned as an inspirational and creative force. 'It's better to be silent and to be rather than speak and not to be, proclaimed Bishop Ignatius in Language in the Confessions of Augustine.²⁰ The choice to be silent rather than having no coherent 'being' was made by Achilles in Homer's epic Iliad. Silence operated as a counterattack, a stance against a perceived encroaching authority; it presented a condition rather than an action. Achilles, slighted by Agamemnon, retaliated by refusing to speak and withdrew from battle with his comrades in the Achaean army. Against the impotence and powerlessness of silence attributed in the Homeric epic, the silence of the Aeschylean Achilles was a stratagem, a weapon against the imposition of will from outside influences. It was a refusal to participate and perform – it functioned as a conscious provocation against what is expected and demanded. But it was also indicative of an incapacity to find words capable of expressing internal turmoil.

It is apparent that the refusal to reciprocate or participate through a refusal to speak does not need to indicate a passive lack of voice, a disconnection or disassociation, but can be an active stance of negation. Silence, as John Cage demonstrated in his piece 4'33", is anything but devoid. In his three-movement composition, rather than playing their instruments the orchestra was instructed by Cage to remain still; in recordings what is then heard are the sounds made by the orchestra moving about, the audience shuffling, coughing, laughing at times, even the echoes of the recording devices themselves. What Cage confronted was the impossibility of ever attaining silence by demonstrating that even in the absence of noise or music, a soundscape is nonetheless present.

◄ Recording 11. Silence 4'33"

A deliberate silence, then, like that of Achilles, overflows with an excess of what could be said, but which the speaker will not grant sound to. It explodes with possible thoughts and positions, remaining always in suspense. Silence does not leave a space to be filled but rather it fills space, it impregnates the room, which vibrates in anticipation. It can prompt the most intense of responses, and can profoundly derail the dialogic rhythm. Paolo Virno²¹ distinguishes the systems of contemporary capitalist labour as being contingent on the communicative and mental faculties. At a time of 'cognitive' capitalism when, 'the mind is at work in so many innovations, languages and communicative relations, 22 silence can be a refusal of labour, in the sense spoken about here, it can be a denial to participate in the social reproduction on which political self-organisation relies. Silence, thus, can be a refusal to participate, to work and to engage. It can be a strategy for a perceived flight from the human realm of language. It can also, though, mark the impossibility of translation and the limitations of language, masking confusion, fear, introversion, exhaustion, and sadness, the vocalisation of which becomes blocked and prohibited by the speaker from release into the sphere of the collective.

Recording 12. Silence

Voices and the making of worlds, spaces and places

If there is no possibility for silence, then we are always already inhabiting soundscapes and shared fields of auditory interaction, and vocal inflections correspond to the creation of new worlds and public realms. As introduced earlier, for Bakhtin our entrance into dialogic spaces is tied to the utterance.

The timbres, intonations, paces and frequencies of voices underpin the creation and expression of the affective and socio-political forces that mobilise the utterance. Unlike many other theories of speech acts, Bakhtin posits the receiver of the utterance as crucially engaged through her comprehension and response-reaction to what is said. This active role of the listener is why, for Bakhtin, 'the speech act is an action on the possible action of others that starts from the ethico-political dimension and the affective dimension of the relation with the other'. This is seen as an agonistic position, as the utterance operates as a struggle between those participating in it, structuring the field of action of others.

The spaces that produce, and are produced through, the utterance are public, as it happens in a field of relations with others. As we have seen, vocal inflections, as much as vocabularies, are imprinted with, and can intervene in, the circuits and flows of power in these public spaces. These dynamics of domination and cooperation, 'modulate and influence...modes of expression', that is to say the voice is deployed in complicity, sympathy, antagonism or defiance. This echoes what Jean-Luc Nancy ascribes to listening and sound in the formation of subjects and spaces, when he proposes that to listen is to enter that spatiality by which, *at the same time*, I am penetrated, for it opens up in me as well as around me: it opens up inside me as well as outside and it is through such a double, quadruple, or sextuple opening that a 'self' can take place.²⁴

Bakhtin understands voices and utterances as creating, unmaking and recreating worlds precisely because the composition of the utterance occurs through dialogue, it is event-based and simultaneously informed by the conditions of both the speaker and the recipient. Utterances are deeply infused with social, political, cultural and economic histories and contexts. To think of the spaces and worlds that the soundings of voices make and are made by, we must consider at least two planes, the spatial-material and the relational.

On the material level it is useful to address what Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter refer to as aural architectures: the 'composite of numerous surfaces, objects and geometries'²⁵ of a given environment. Sounds require space and air for their form, which means they 'take shape on different scales of space' just as they do different temporal scales.²⁶ This is how spaces manifest sound, even if the sound energy does not originate from the space itself; this occurs through reverberation and reflection – spaces, through their material densities and gaps, modulate and refract sounds and voices in peculiar ways. This occurs too on the level of bodies, the bodily cavity being an anatomical acoustic chamber through which the sound of the voice is shaped. As Brandon LaBelle explains, sound sets into relief the properties of a given space, its

materiality and characteristics, through reverberation and reflection, and, in turn, these characteristics affect the given sound and how it is heard.²⁷

The physical spaces in which social and cultural politics become organised and collective in certain modes effect what kinds of voices are heard and how, just as do the times of meetings. From community centres to squatted social centres, from university classrooms and auditoriums to living rooms, from an outdoor camp or a union office to a Skype conference, the spaces in which political conversation and organisation occur vary in dimension, architecture and temporality. It is imperative to recognise the reciprocitous dynamics of voices and the spaces in which they become, and make, present, because the places of organisation effect participation through differential inclusion, both in terms of a desire to be present and in terms of accessibility. The material geographies of buildings, rooms and activist camps necessitate a capacity for mobility, for traveling to and from somewhere. While not spatially fixed, online arenas also require the capacity for access to technologies and skills that enable participation. These sites are steeped in histories and currents of power; the ways that people engage with, or participate within, spaces hinge on the associations they ascribe to them, the affects and psychic-emotional experiences they have, or project they may have, within them. Such experiences may play out in desires for engagement or disengagement. How these spaces are perceived varies with the different experiences of the individual and the collective, but it is clear that architectures may have particular design elements conducive to producing specific states.

Along with these codings of a particular site, architectural features, or lack thereof, impact upon the disposition and mood of an event through spatial acoustic qualities. As Blesser and Salter note, 'auditory spatial awareness...influences our social behaviour. Some spaces emphasise aural privacy or aggravate loneliness; others reinforce social cohesion.' The size of a room or space, its resonant cavities, its density, its formal or informal feel and function, the arrangement of furniture or objects, all contribute to how the voice moves within it, the kinds of utterances that are likely to be made and the ways in which we listen and respond to one another.

If we understand space from this perspective, as both made by, and making, relations, subjects, voices, we can see that space and place are not fixed, but are in process. Because space and place are multivalent and conflictive, constructed out of interrelations and interactions, they can be political. In this sense space and place are productive in the configuration of our social worlds and experiences. This has explicit consequences for those of us engaged in political organisation for 'by shaping social interaction and mobility, the materiality of space also shapes the nature and possibility of contention'²⁹.

An evocation for attentive listening

What might we take from a consideration of listening and response? It is my hope that this text has offered an invitation for an attentive listening, not only to the content of speech, but to its soundings, an awareness of the ways in which class, economics, culture, race, and gender effect our communication. As we have seen, dynamics of power and how we relate to one another find an articulation through the voice, they shape the voice and they affect the capacity for listening and response. The inflections and modulations of the voice contain forces that we must become more conscious of. In his discussions of avant-garde sound poetry, Félix Guattari writes that as discordant sounds of the voice break and interrupt the expected rhythms of speech, they also break and interrupt normalised capitalist ways of being, they act as a means of renewal.³⁰ If an acknowledgement is made of the effect of vocal characteristics and the social, political and ethical forces they contain, then what is required is a dedication and attention to the soundings of our speech, perhaps at times autonomous from its content. Especially when what is desired is the opening of new spaces and the finding of ways to speak in common, with conviviality and with care.

📢 Recording	13.	Conclusion
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Endnotes

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- ${\bf 24}.$ Jean-Luc Nancy (2007), ${\it Listening},$ translated by Mandell C. New York: Fordham University Press. p.14
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EXERCISE Listening and speaking warm up

Sit with one or two others. Choose a topic of conversation, preferably something that is quite engaging and emotive for you all. Then begin a dialogue on this topic, making sure to pause 5 seconds between when one speaker finishes speaking and the next begins. Be mindful of how long you are speaking, how your voice, and your conversationalists' voices, modulate and change through the course of speaking about this topic. Reflect on how taking a moment between speakers changes the flow of the conversation, and your concentration and investments in it. End when you feel the conversation is drawing to a natural close, and discuss your experiences with your collaborators.







Notes on how to grow tomatoes from a tomato

— **Lisa Burger** traduzione dall'italiano di **Paolo Plotegher**

Next time you eat a tomato that tastes good, put some seeds aside. You can rinse the seeds and dry them in a bowl. At this stage you don't need to worry about them: but watch out, if they are tomatoes from a supermarket the seeds might not eventually sprout because the fruit might be genetically modified.

You will need soil, water and at least one seed. The soil shouldn't be too clayey (it should stick together in lumps when it's wet, and when it's dry it's flowery and compact). It's best to use soil that's dark and humid. Put the seed in the soil at a depth that's the same as its size (so: shallow!).

1. You need very little for this. Maybe the most important thing is time: what we are less inclined to offer might be the patience towards a rhythm of life that does not coincide with ours (anymore). What a struggle it can be for us to follow the temporalities of a sprouting life! 2. If you have the possibility of growing a plant in a garden, choose that over the balcony. This is how I started, in an inter(horti)cultural community garden organized through an association of migrant women in Bolzano, Italy. Now it's since two years that I observe (and eat) my plants, and at the same time I try, together with some other 50 people, to make a collective experiment of sharing, organizing and cooperating work. But to talk about this we would need many more pages...

Water it a bit.3

Water regularly, depending on the climate: observe the earth and its humidity. Some plants will sprout soon, others later (and some other will never sprout...). Follow them and support them in their process.

For a while, during the initial phase of growth, you will just need to water. When the plant has grown a bit, watch it and ask yourself what it might need, and if some changes are necessary⁴: light, water, supports, more space or earth, warmth... you can try out different things, always considering that a plant has reactions and adaptation times that are slower than ours. Give it time to respond, and stay attentive.

If everything goes well now it may be that your tomato plant gives some fruits. It's a great satisfaction to eat them. Remember that all this comes from just time and a seed. Incredible, right? Of course it comes from your care as well!⁵



3. To propose to a plant to grow you need your proposal to be sensible: it's pointless to plant a tomato seed in November or a pumpkin seed in January! If you are in doubt go to a farmers' market where they sell local vegetables and think that to be ready those vegetables need to have been planted 2-4 months before. If no tomatoes are sold at the local farmers' market this possibly means that they don't grow well where you live: change the choice of plant, maybe try cabbage? 4. This year, whilst in the garden, I have realised that often, rather than looking for information on how to do things (on the internet, in books...) it can be better to think: a plant grows and lives according to a logic of which we are also part of. Try to: imagine (if I was a plant, how would it be for me to be here?) ; sense the connections amongst elements (if the plant has difficulties growing, this could be because the soil gets dry too quickly and does not keep the humidity) -observe the novelties and adjustments of the plant patiently, like a detective looking for signs and traces that you don't know, not knowing where they will lead you.

5. To take care of something is not simply to provide it with the necessary elements for survival; it can also be a form of attention, almost inter cultural, that interrogates itself and tries to understand how being and systems that are different from us function



At some point the plant will cease growing and making fruits, it will start to become yellow and dry up, and finally it will die⁶. If, when dead and dry, the body of the plant should be cumbersome, you could break it into pieces and mix the bits with the earth. Since the earth gave it nourishment to grow, it's right for the earth to get the organic substance of the plant back so that it can be nourished in turn.

P.S. often, especially with aromatic plants, the right moment to take the seeds and keep them for the next year is precisely when the plant is almost completely dry.

6. At first, I felt sorry whenever a plant died (I thought it was my fault, as if I had the absolute power / control over it – how presumptuous!). Now, after a bit of experience, I have started seeing this matter under a different light (also because otherwise it was going to become frustrating): death is part of the life of the plant, as well as its birth, its growth, the fruits that gives; and in some way I find it beautiful (and rare) to take part in the entire life of a being, from beginning to end.





Voku Pocu: making a people's kitchen

— Irina Burger traduzione dall'italiano di Paolo Plotegher

In the spring of 2012 in the northern Italian town of Bolzano, Voku Pocu (Die VolksKuchl La Cucina Popolare) was born: a people's kitchen organized by a small informal group of people who came together through meetings to discuss degrowth and sustainability in the city. A people's kitchen has nothing to do with charity: the aim is to change your own and people's sensitivity by reflecting and experimenting with recycling and re-using otherwise wasted food, building cooperation, solidarity and self-organization. What follows is a recipe to nourish and invigorate yourself and your city or neighbourhood.

The basic ingredients for setting up a people's kitchen are:

A nearby fruit and vegetable market (better if it is operated by local farmers). Or, if there is no market, a supermarket from which you can skip¹ discarded fruit and vegetables (in this case, don't expect to be warmly welcomed!);

A bunch of sweet people;

A space for cooking (a kitchen, an ambulant handcart with portable cookers, an open air oven...);

And, obviously, some improvisation skills!

^{1.} Skipping, or Dumpster Diving, refers to the activity of going to take discarded food from markets, trays, bins, etc.





The procedure is simple: its point of departure is the gathering of discarded fruit and vegetables. For this you need a trolley and a few strong and keen pairs of arms. Ask the farmers or shopkeepers if they have fruit or vegetables that they are not able to sell anymore – maybe something bruised, or shrivelled, something they would otherwise throw away. Not everybody will have this available; some will keep their ageing vegetables for themselves and/or their animals, some might get upset, while others will be happy to hand several boxes to you.

Don't worry, fruit and vegetables are good even if they don't look fantastic. As for myself, I prefer the less pretty ones, those that look like a real and living nourishment, grown in a field or on a tree where there are also animals and other natural forces affecting them. Is it necessary for vegetables to be perfect and glossy, and served on a porcelain dish for us to eat them?

As I said, you won't have the possibility to choose your 'shopping', you'll get what is available in that season and what will be given to you (if at a local market), or what you can save from the sad destiny of becoming waste. Then follows the more creative phase: having carried home and washed your loot (I suggest you do this straight away, unless you have a big enough fridge at your disposal), you arrive at the moment of improvising the menu of your people's kitchen. Maybe you'll need to add a few extra ingredients to the mix, so go buy some grain and pulses or whatever before you start chopping and cooking.

To give an example, if you are 5 people cooking a pasta dish with vegetables for 20, and you have a good stove and you can coordinate well the cooking, this would take about an hour. In Bolzano we are usually at least 7 people cooking, and because we like to treat ourselves well, we often prepare at least 3 different dishes, for 40-50 people, this takes 4-5 hours of cooking.

A people's kitchen is not a catering service that has to offer luxurious dishes: if it's only a few of you cooking, it's ok for the dishes to be simple. If you are many enthusiastic cooks, the enthusiasm will reflect itself in the variety of dishes. It's a matter of sharing time and work with others, coming up with a good organization and division of tasks, and then of eating and celebrating together... (I won't lie to you: the dishes won't wash themselves without human intervention... you'll have to keep putting your hands together in this process!). Remember: the work you put into a people's kitchen is not remunerated. So don't put pressure on yourselves, don't get stressed: work slowly, chat, laugh, sing, and enjoy yourselves!

People's kitchens have a strong link to the tradition of social centres, where food is usually made available to anyone who comes by, beyond a small circle of friends and relatives by word of mouth and self-produced flyers. In this scenario, you gather funding through the donations that people give to socially engaged projects like your people's kitchen. You can go about setting up your kitchen through a space like this, or you can invent other ways. You might be hosted by local people in their homes or gardens, you might use parks or streets to cook/serve, you might even rent or squat a place for the purpose. There are many techniques and themes you can then draw on to get your act/ ion together: you can promote organic farming as much as you can, trying to get food from farmers who grow organic; you may want to cook vegetarian or vegan; you may want to organize thematic evenings, with screening, music and discussions – there are many possibilities!

Still, to me, the best aspect of it all is that it's quite straightforward: everybody eats the same food and no one has to pay for the presentation or service, the menu is the same for everybody and it's enough for the food to be good and nutritious – there's no need for the business calculations that come with eating out in restaurants or with feeding people commercially.



At least for an initial period, it would be good to do the people's kitchen in the same place, the same day of the week, and at the same time, so that people can get accustomed to it more easily. People's kitchens live of people, not money. Try to be clear about the ways in which people can participate; explain the tasks and the aim of the project. Be clear and transparent about how the money collected will be used.



Polenta cakes for friends and comrades

— a nanobody

The delicious nano-cupcakes are great stuff for meetings and tea sessions, quite filling and nutricious. They're quick(10 mins preparation, 20 minutes baking), easy (no blender needed) and cheap to make, and wheat/gluten-free (as well as vegan and sugar free if you like). This recipe was adapted from a dear friend of nano, who inspired us much with her wonderful hosting of parties and dinners, and the many lovely moments we shared as we stuffed ourselves with these gluten free gems at varying intervals and occasions. This stuff has become part of the bodily substance of many nanopolitics group members, hence here's a recipe if you want to try a similar molecular transformation via cupcake intake.

INGREDIENTS

225g butter or a cup of sunflower oil

115g **brown sugar**, or a small cup of Honey, Agave Sirup, half a teaspoon of Stevia, or just rely on the sweetness of your fruit!

3 eggs

160g Ground almonds

160g polenta

1 tsp baking powder

your favourite **berries**, and/or organic lemon zest (from half a lemon) potential **icing additions**: icing sugar, or cream cheese and maple syrup

INGREDIENT VARIATIONS: PLAY AROUND, MIX IT UP, IMPROVISE!

You can make these cakes with your favourite berries, and/or with a lemon zest flavour. The easiest way to go with this is to use sunflower oil and brown sugar, but try whatever oil or fat you have handy (coconut butter included!), be experimental! Same for making it sweet, have a play!

You may have enough fruit to give it a gentle sweetness, or use some honey, or try Stevia (in that case, use a bit more polenta/amlond to make up for the sticky dry content, else your cakes may be a bit too moist). Or of course, take chocolate instead of sugar – small chocolate cubes to give the cakes a nice texture, or melting chocolate into the mass makes for creaminess throughout.

Upon repeating, have a go at changing the ratios of ingredients; find your favourite match, stick in some spices (Cardamom? Cinnamon? A hint of Coriander even?). If you're feeling experimental and curious, split the mass into a few containers and try different ingredients in each of them. The more love and curiosity you mix in with your foodstuffs, the more likely you are to get deliciousness out.

PROCESS

In a big bowl, cream the butter/oil and sugar/syrup together.

Mix the polenta, almonds and baking powder.

Beat the eggs until in a creamy peach coloured state (a fork and some patience will do!).

Mix the eggs in with the oily-sweet mass in the big bowl. Then add the dry ingredients to the mix.

And don't forget to stir in your beloved fruit, or some lovely lemon zest (grate it finely)!

Fill up your cupcake containers (remember to grease 'em up if necessary!) Pop into pre-heated oven (180 degrees Celsius).

After 20 minutes, stick a skewer into the middle of a cake to see if it's ready – if nothing much sticks to it, your cakes are ready. Leave the cakes to cool for some minutes while you make tea for the others.

ICING VARIATIONS

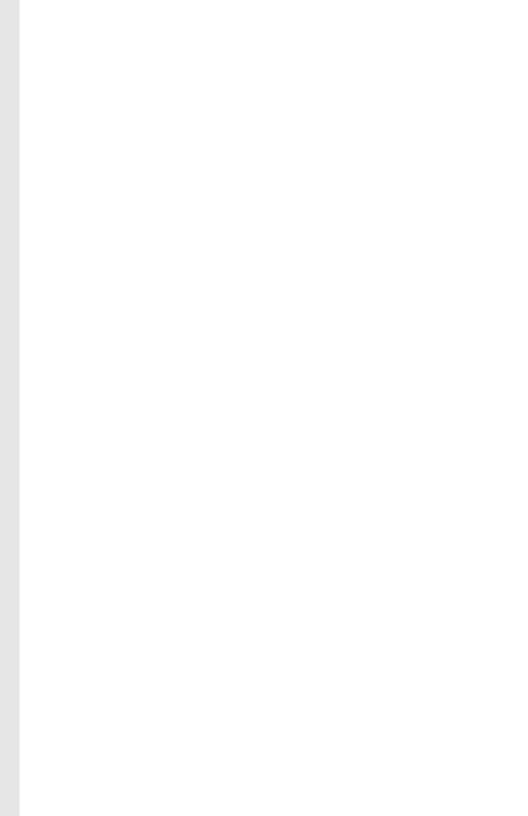
Plain icing: If you fancy plain icing, mix some icing sugar with bits of water (and whatever else... rose water, fruit syrup) until you get an icing. Luscious creamy icing: get hold of a small packet of plain cream cheese and

mix it with maple syrup. This is probably the cheapest icing trick ever but it works. Honey or other syrup does the job too if you don't want to invest in maple syrup, by the way.

NANO LOVE CAN PASS THROUGH YOUR BELLY

If you fancy a nano edge to your cakes, imagine them as little hearts that you bake in the oven, full of love care and sweetness, ready to be devoured by your favourite friends or even your difficult collaborators. Food makes for good relations and creates molecular nano particular bonds between bellies and cells. Good food, like drugs, brings people in tune. Play round with eating and drinking rhythms in your group, experiment with nice ways of tuning into each others taste buds, digestive systems, blood circulation, create your singular rhythms of shared particle absorption!









Resources

In this section we collate some resources – mostly online texts, books, and links to groups, as well as some video/audio materials.

They will be updated on nanopolitics.noblogs.org

Activism and the life of groups, Bodies and politics, Care, Politics of health, Women's health and bodies, Mental health, schizoanalysis, subjectivity and therapy,

Sexuality, relationships and networks of care, Commoning, Some other handbooks with practical exercises

Activism and the life of groups

There are 'we's' that are already pre-established, that articulate themselves on the basis of an understanding of the world and of history. We, the exploited, for instance, expresses that there is a category of the exploited that transcends subjects. While that's sure on the level of theory – that we might well conceive of a conjunct of beings affected *by the phenomenon of exploitation – has no effect at all in everyday* life, where in order for this concept to make sense, subjects would have to gain a level of comprehension that allows them to imagine themselves symbolically. If in turn an environment emerges within which my encountering other people becomes part of a shared practice; if my recognition of the other is established through the sharing of an experience through which we both process changes; if in finding a new path, my friend is beside me; then this 'we' will be steady in these events, it will have been born out of encounters wherein each one of the participants will have named the other as compañero, giving her/him an existence s/he didn't have before.1

David Vercauteren, Thierry Müller et Olivier 'Mouss' Crabbé (2007) *Micropolitiques des groupes*, Fourcalquier: Éditions HB. Glossaire de concepts et outils pour penser la collectivité politique, écrit a partir de l'experience du Collectif Sans Tiquet en Belgique. En ligne en Francais: micropolitiques. collectifs.net. Publicado en Español por Traficantes de Sueños (Madrid, ES), y en Pdf: traficantes.net/index.php/content/download/24284/233080/file/micropoliticas.pdf

Gruppe X/Anarchistische Föderation Berlin (2011) Game over? Lieber nicht! Politisch aktiv, ohne kapputtzugehen. Ein Booklet mit Ideen, Tipps und Uebungen fuer Leute und Gruppen, die ihren Aktivismus nachhaltiger gestalten moechten. afb.blogsport.de/images/PAOKG_Doku_web.pdf

Laboratorio de Analisis Institucional, Rosario (AR). Un colectivo trabajando dinámicas de institución y grupo, con muchos textos en su sitio web. lair.a.wiki-site.com/index.php/Portada#textos

¹ Francisco Ferrara, (2003). Más allá del corte de rutas: la lucha por una nueva subjetividad. Buenos Aires, La rosa blindada.

Campo Grupal, Buenos Aires (AR). Un espacio plural y transdisciplinario dedicado al intercambio y difusión de experiencias, teorías y técnicas del ámbito psicosocial y grupal. campogrupal.com/textos.html

Fugas, Grupo de estudios micropoliticos, Malaga (ES). Eventos y textos sobre micropolitica, schizoanalisis, etc. fugasgrupodeestudios.wordpress.com

Micropolitics Research Group, London (UK), a collective of politically active cultural workers hosting events and processes to investigate neoliberal work, subjectivity and micro-political processes. micropolitics.wordpress.com

Félix Guattari and Suely Rolnik (2009), *Molecular Revolution in Brasil*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e). A book based on Guattari and Rolnik's encounters with different political and analytical groups and people in the Brasil of the 1980s.

Bodies and politics

The impossibility of not being affected... we can train ourselves to be affectable ... - we can continuously extend the spectrum of our senses and sensibility ... learning to be affected necessarily passes through the body – it means working with the body – nanopolitics is about that – working with the body in this city, in our situations, together...²

Peter Pal Pelbart, *Vida Capital*, an online audiobook in English **kafkamachine**. wordpress.com/vida-capital-audio-book_Translated from the book *Vida capital: ensaios de biopolítica* (2003), São Paulo: Iluminuras.

Peter Pal Pelbart (2009), Filosofia de la desercion: nihilismo, locura y comunidad. Buenos Aires: Tinta Limon. tintalimon.com.ar/libro/FILOSOFA-DE-LA-DESERCIN

Angela Melitopoulos and Maurizio Lazzarato, 'Assemblages: Félix Guattari and Machinic Animism', *E-flux Journal* #36, 07/2012, e-flux.com/journal/assemblages-felix-guattari-and-machinic-animism

^{2.} Nanopolitics Collective notes, session on love and eroticism with Beth Pacheco: 'Tempete de l'amour'. 31st July-1st August 2010, London.

Isabelle Stengers, 'Reclaiming Animism', *E-flux Journal* #36, 07/2012, e-flux.com/journal/reclaiming-animism

Félix Guattari (1975), 'Desire is Power, Power is Desire', in *Chaosophy* (2009), Los Angeles: Semiotext(e)

Anonmymous et al. (1973), 'To have done with the Massacre of the Body', published as an introduction to the controversial/censored issue of Recherches journal *Trois milliards de pervers*, edited by the Front Homosexuel d'Action Révolutionnaire and Félix Guattari. Reprinted in English in: Félix Guattari (2009), *Chaosophy*, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e)

Félix Guattari (1985), 'Microphysics of Power / Micropolitics of Desire' in *Soft Subversions* (2009), Los Angeles: Semiotext(e)

Shaun Gallagher (2005), *How the Body Shapes the Mind*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Adrián Scribano, Carlos Figare (editors) (2009), Cuerpo(s), subjetividad(es) y conflict(s): hacia una sociologia de los cuerpos y las emociones desde latinoamerica. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Ciccus y Clacso.

Silvia Federici (2005), 'The Great Caliban. The Struggle Against the Rebel Body' in *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, New York: Autonomedia. commoner.org.uk/03federici.pdf

N-1 publishers, for a range of philosophical, clinical and pedagogical books: n-1publications.org

Care

All of a sudden, we don't simply see the world as an ensemble of autonomous individuals that pursue rational ends and life projects, but we see the world as an ensemble of persons taken in networks of care and engaged in responding to the care needs that surround them.³

^{3.} Pascale Molinier, Sandra Laugier, Patricia Paperman (Eds) (2009), *Qu'est-ce que le care?* Paris: Payot. p. 39

Caring labour, an extensive archive of resources (texts, videos, etc) on care, reproduction and work caringlabor.wordpress.com

Cristina Morini (2010) El trabajo de cuidado como arquetipo del biocapitalismo swarm-webjournal.info/articulo/el-trabajo-de-cuidado-como-arquetipo-del-biocapitalismo In italiano: bin-italia.org/pdf/morinicura.pdf

Precarias a la Deriva, Colectivo de Trabajadoras (2003-2006): archivo de documentacion del grupo, con textos y reflecciones sobre mujeres, militancia, cuidados y trabajo sindominio.net/karakola/antigua_casa/precarias.htm

Pascale Molinier, Sandra Laugier, Patricia Paperman (Eds) (2009), *Qu'est-ce que le care?* Paris: Payot

Revue Multitudes, Politiques du Care, No.37/38 Automne 2009 (FR)

Politics of health

and when someone got ill the shamans and wise people asked 'when did you stop to sing?' 'when did you stop dancing?', 'when did you stop telling stories?' and 'when did you stop feeling the sweet silence of space around you?⁴

'Health: Disciplinary or Liberatory?' Radio show on *Against the Grain*: againstthegrain.org/program/592/coming-tues-82112

Ben Holtzman (Ed) (2009), *Sick: A Compilation Zine on Physical Illness*. Portland: Microcosm Publishing microcosmpublishing.com/catalog/books/2764

Somementalhealthzines:wemakezines.ning.com/group/mentalhealthzines

Texts by Franco Bifo Berardi: (2009) *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy.* Los Angeles: Semiotext(e); also (2009) 'Communism is back and we should call it the therapy of singularization' generation-online.org/p/fp_bifo6.htm; as well as 'How to heal a depression', 16beavergroup.org/bifo/bifo-how-to-heal-a-depression.pdf

^{4.} Mysterious and disappeared internet meme.

La sociedad terapeutica. Revista Espai en Blanc no.3-4. Barcelona (ES), 2007 espaienblanc.net/-Revista-de-Espai-en-Blanc-no-3-4-.html

Entrevista con gente del Centro de Salud Comunitaria, de Solano/Varela, Buenos Aires; y entrevista con Colectora, Cooperativa de Acompañantes Terapeuticos, Rosario/AR futurearchive.org

Women's health and bodies

Jane was currently in between jobs, lacked health insurance and had a lump in her breast that she refused to have checked out because she was afraid it would, in effect, render her unemployable or constitute a "pre-existing condition" that would prevent her from getting [insurance] coverage in the future.⁵

Mariarosa Dalla Costa (1972), *The power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*, online here radicaljournal.com/books/maria_dalla_costa_power/ For more of Dalla Costa's writings, see libcom.org/tags/mariarosa-dalla-costa

Beatriz Preciado (2010) 'Es urgente e imprescindible en el siglo XXI una rebelión de cuerpos', entrevista en Español diagonalperiodico.net/Esurgente-e-imprescindible-en-el.html; voir aussi, en Francais (2009) 'Entretien avec B.Preciado et J.Butler' tetu.com/actualites/culture/archivesttu-judith-butler-et-beatriz-preciado-en-grand-entretien-15260

Britton Neubacher (2003), *Wives Tales*, DIY guide to hands-on practical feminism, women's health, and healing. Oakland, US: PM Press

Red de mujeres por la salud - muy vinculada al movimiento feminista desde los 70: xarxadedonesperlasalut.org

Carme Valls i Llobet, médica endocrina feminista en Barcelona. Algunas publicaciones: (2006) *Mujeres Invisibles*. Editorial Debolsillo - hay un capitulo aqui: caib.es/sacmicrofront/archivopub.do?ctrl=MCRST456ZI93260&id=93260 ; ver tambien entrevista con Carmen Valls Llobret: diagonalperiodico.net/Hayestereotipos-sexistas-se.html

^{5.} Healy, Stephen (2006) Care in the community economy: towards an alternative development of health care. Phd thesis, University of Massachusetts. Published as part of the Community Economies Project communityeconomies.org/site/assets/media/stephenhealy/distotal08_07_06.pdf

Silvia Gil (2011) 'Vidas precarias y la crisis global' diagonalperiodico.net/cuerpo/vidas-precarias-y-la-crisis-global-la-salud.html; ver tambien 'El genero de las enfermedades': diagonalperiodico.net/El-genero-de-las-enfermedades-en.html

La guia de ginecologia natural (2008-ahora) viene de ginecologianatural. wordpress.com y un Pdf esta en nanopolitics.noblogs.org/files/2012/06/Ginecologi%CC%81a-natural.pdf

Starhawk's websites (on women, witchcraft, activism, health...) starhawksblog.org/?cat=113; starhawk.org/index.html

Textos da Sonia Hirsch, sobre maternidade, mulheres, saúde: correcotia.com/mulheres/index.html ; ver ámbem cartilhaleitedemae. blogspot.com.br

Colectivo Feministas Nómadas, Malaga (ES) feministas nomadas.blogspot.com.es

Mental health, schizoanalysis, subjectivity and therapy

But when the drought comes, which can happen every year, or when something extraordinary happens, lots of people will have to come to the same water hole and they'll have to negotiate their rights. And how do they negotiate them? They will do so through very complex references lived and re-enacted through Dreaming rituals which are inherited but can also be re-developed. They can be dreamt through new interpretations and it's this dynamic side which is very important.⁶

Occupy Mental Health Project (Eds.) (2012) *Mindful Occupation: Rising Up Without Burning Out*. Oakland, US: AK Press. See also: mindfuloccupation.org

The *Icarus Project* - a radical mental health support network, online community, and alternative media project by and for people struggling with extreme emotional distress that often gets labelled as mental illness. **theicarusproject.net**

^{6.} Barbara Glowczewski, Erin Manning and Brian Massumi (2009) 'Micropolitics in the Desert - Politics and the Law in Australian Aborigianl Communities - An Interview with Barbara Glowczewski'. In: Inflexions no.3: inflexions.org/n3_glowczewskihtml.html

Georges Canguilhem (1991) (French edition 1966), *The Normal and the Pathological*. Massachusets: MIT Press.

Nucleo de Estudos da Subjetividade, Universidade Puc-Usp Sao Paolo (BR) pucsp.br/nucleodesubjetividade

Grupo esquizo Barcelona (ES), Colectivo de trabajo sobre Esquizoanalisis y contextos politicos-afectivos esquizobarcelona.org

 $Fugas, Grupo \, de \, Estudios \, Micropoliticos, Malaga \, (ES) \, fugas grupo de estudios. \\ wordpress.com$

Colectora, Cooperativa de trabajadores en salud y terapia, Rosario (AR) colectoracoop.com.ar/web

Presque Ruines, Paris (FR), groupe de recherche et production artistique presqueruines.wordpress.com

Nick Cooper (2006) SOMA: An Anarchist Therapy. 50-minute documentary DVD ROM, published by Autonomedia as well as on YouTube.

Mady Schutzman and Jan Cohen-Cruz (1994) *Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy, Activism.* London: Routledge.

Sexuality, relationships and networks of care

Declaration of an anarchist lover: Because I love you, you don't need me. Because you love me, I don't need you. In love we never let ourselves be completed by the other. We are deliciously unnecessary to each other?

Entrevista con Beatriz Preciado (2010), 'La sexualidad es como las lenguas. Todos podemos aprender varias'. elpais.com/diario/2010/06/13/eps/1276410414_850215.html; voir aussi (2013) Qui défend l'enfant queer? liberation.fr/societe/2013/01/14/qui-defend-l-enfant-queer_873947

^{7.} Roberto Freire (1990). *Ame e dê vexame*. Rio de Janeiro: Ed Guanabara. See also somaexperiments.wordpress.com/roberto-freire

Freaksexual blog, good on sexuality, polyamory, see for instance: Jealousy, Monogamy and Power freaksexual.wordpress.com/2010/08/11/jealousy-monogamy-and-power

Fabi Borges (2011) 'Posporno' naborda.com.br/2011/texto/posporno

Sexy Shock Collective, Bologna/IT ecn.org/sexyshock/ing/menu2ing.htm

x:talk project, London/UK, sexworker organising and language classes xtalkproject.net

Drucilla Cornell, 'Brutal Either/Ors', an Interview about radical feminism, struggle and families, by Sophie Lewis and Hannes Charen, *Jacobin*, February 5th 2013; jacobinmag.com/2013/02/brutal-eitherors-an-interview-with-drucilla-cornell

Parenting Politics blog parentingpolitics.tumblr.com

Commoning

The fact is that as I was trying to find the cause of my lack of joy, I had to admit that the context within which I had struggled in the 70s, in front of the factories or in the houses - basically the coupling time-money [...] constituted a ground which had failed to move my deep currents in order to produce fluxes of energy. This is the reason why I had felt no joy [...]. What I missed was something which could positively generate emotions, a strong imaginary, which could open different scenarios. I needed to encounter other questions and new subjects, who desired and were able to effectively think a different world. Therefore for part of the 80s I continued to wander around, from room to room, in the house of reproduction. Until, at a certain point, I saw the door to the garden, I saw the issue of the earth.8

An Architektur, Massimo De Angelis and Stavros Stavrides (2012) 'On the Commons'. Interview, E-flux Journal. e-flux.com/journal/on-the-commons-a-public-interview-with-massimo-de-angelis-and-stavros-stavrides

^{8.} Mariarosa dalla Costa (2002), 'The Door to the Garden' generation-online.org/p/fpdallacosta1.htm

The Commoner has many articles on the commons, for example: Silvia Federici, 'Feminism and the Politics of the Commons' commoner.org.uk/?p=113

Silvia Federici (2009) Interview on food politics. In: *Politics and Culture* 2009 (2) - Special Issue on Food (&) Sovereignty. Pdf: newxcommoners.files. wordpress.com/2013/02/federici-food_sovereignty.pdf

Materials from a workshop on the commons at 16 Beaver, New York, 2011, with Silvia Federici, George Caffentzis and David Graeber. 16beavergroup. org/silvia_george_david

Some other handbooks with practical exercises

Augusto Boal (1992), Games for Actors and Non-Actors. London and New York: Routledge

Starhawk (2011), *The Empowerment Manual: A Guide for Collaborative Groups*. Gabriola Island BC: New Society Publishers

Radical Education Forum, London (UK), Radical Education Workbook: radicaleducationforum.tumblr.com/post/34563386245/published-radical-education-workbook

Collectif W, récherche et développement de jeux et pratiques ainsi que théorie et critique. Voir 1110111.org

Biographies:

THE NANOPOLITICS GROUP formed in London in early 2010, around a desire to think politics through and as embodied experience. As an open collective they have organized monthly movement, theatre and bodywork based workshops, as well as discussions and interventions in the context of social movements. The UK student and anti-austerity movements have been an important context across which this practice was articulated and tested. Nanopolitics has facilitated playful reflection as well as support across different experiences of militancy, work and everyday life, with the desire to make new interconnections between those experiences. As such, the group works with a variety of body-based methods with the main aim of undoing alienated, individualised and disembodied forms of relationality and practice. Questions of subjectivity, collective process, organising and relationships are at the centre of this practice. nanopolitics.noblogs.org

ADRIÀ RODRÍGUEZ works on design and filmaking, and he is interested in the importance of the imaginaries for the social movements. He is nowadays working on the Kairós Poject, a video documentary archive about the social movements that are springing up throughout the Mediterranean **projectkairos.net**. He is also part of the militant research group Observatorio Metropolitano de Barcelona **stupidcity.net**, which is part of the Fundación de los Comunes **fundaciondeloscomunes.net**. As a designer is part of the Studio Combi **studiocombi.info**

AMIT S. RAI likes to walk in cities. He has been affected by the kinetic energies of radical practices of care and embodiment in New York, Mumbai, and London. He teaches within and against the corporate university, developing a

collective practice of study **schoolforstudy.org**. He was born in Bhopal, grew up in Boston and Dana Point, and lives in London.

ANJA KANNGIESER is a writer, radio producer and researcher in Communication Geographies. With a background in performance, political geography and communication/ sound studies her interests revolve around contemporary labour, voice, technology, collaboration and social movements. Her research has been featured in a range of academic and popular journals, and she has been involved in political collectives in Australia, Germany and the UK. Her first monograph, *Experimental Politics and the Making of Worlds*, was released by Ashgate in 2013.

BUE RÜBNER HANSEN is a theorist taking his interest in worldly affairs to the point of activism. He is currently researching questions of non/reproduction, money and debt in the current crisis, and recently finished his PhD at Queen Mary University London, a genealogy of Marx's conception of social reproduction, materialism, dialectics and singularity. Bue has been active in the British student movement since the Gaza solidarity movement of 2009, and was during this time a part of the QMCountermapping collective, the editorial collective of *The Paper* and in the Precarious Workers Brigade. He is co-hosting the radio show 'sounds of movement' in Vienna.

CAMILA MELLO carries out research related to the body and public / private space as an interface of artistic experience youtube.com/corpolugar. She has been contributing regularly to collaborative platforms such as collective Mergulho youtube.com/corpoliquido, Art Base Association artebaseasso. wordpress.com and the project SEU – Semana Experimental Urbana (Experimental Urban Week) semanaexperimentalurbana.com

CARLA BOTTIGLIERI is a dancer, somatic practitioner and researcher based in Paris. She is a PhD candidate at Paris 8 University, writing about aesthetics, clinics and politics in the framework of her field research on somatics and care for people living with HIV. Since 2008, she collaborates with several associations of patients and migrants in Paris. As member of the infradisciplinary collective *presque ruines*, she is involved in the making of the film-project "Kafkamachine".

DAVID VERCAUTEREN is a militant and writer based in Brussels. Together with O. Crabbé and T. Mueller he wrote a book on the Micropolitics of Groups, based on their joint experience in the Collectif sans ticket. Currently

he is researching the recent history of UK's social movements in the face of more than 30 years of neoliberalism, together with his collaborator Olivia Lemmens. This research will soon be published in the form of a book as well as radio documentaries.

EMMA DOWLING is interested in how an attention to the body/bodies, affect and movement can help shape a political practice adequate to the challenges of our time. Her work has been published in journals that include *ephemera*, *Lateral*, *Cultural Studies* <=> *Critical Methodologies* and *Social Justice*, and she is at present engaged in a research project on conflicts within the crisis and their political economy. She currently lectures in Sociology at Middlesex University, London.

FABIANE BORGES is a doctoral student in Clinical Psychology at Puc/SP (São Paulo). She is the author of the two books *Domínios do Demasiado* and *Breviário de Pornografia Esquizotrans*, as well as the editor of *Idéias Perigozas* and *Peixe Morto*, and is part of art and media network "Submidialogia". catahistorias.wordpress.com - submidialogias.descentro.org/category/arraialdajuda

GABRIELLA ALBERTI is based at Leeds University where she works as a lecturer in Work and Employment Relations reflecting on alternative pedagogies and resisting from inside the neoliberal university. Her ethnographic research on transnational migration and migrants' everyday politics strives to contributing to new imaginaries and collectives practices with non-citizens, women and precarious people in transit. Gabriella's academic work has been critically informed by collaborations with trans-local activist groups including Precarious Workers Brigade, Feminist Fight Back, Latin American Workers Association, and Nanopolitics.

ESQUIZO BARCELONA have been gathering together since 2010, reading, trying to sediment modes of encounter, spaces of oral and conversational weaving of thought and affective experimentation. The esquizo group is traversed by the interest of producing collective, contingent and situated thinking around micropolitics and the schizoanalytic practice, looking for the invention of collective care assemblages, purring around the composition of liveable lives in the contemporary city.

IRINA BURGER lives in Bolzano, studies "Social Education" and is passionate about theatre. Since more or less one and a half year she is part of a collective

that's somewhat inspired by the Transition Town movement: Voku Pocu, the people's kitchen, is one of the activities they organize.

JORGE GOIA is a Capoeira Angola and Soma facilitator. He has worked with Soma groups in over 10 cities across Brazil. Goia took part in a research project introducing Capoeira Angola into Soma games, and has a PhD in Social Psychology from UERJ, Rio de Janeiro. He has been living in London since 2004, mainly teaching Capoeira at schools, youth clubs and social projects. In 2012 he was in the West Bank, Palestine, to teach Capoeira in a psycho-social project working with children at refugee camps. Upon returning to London he has been facilitating Soma experiments wherever *tesão* is calling.

LISA BURGER was born and grew up in a borderland, South Tyrol. She has studied different things in different places (anthropology, dance, pedagogy; in Siena, Berlin, Venice), and since a few years is back home. There she started experimenting with processes located in a sort of borderland: practices related to collective gardens, the use of systemic approaches to learning processes, the attempt to understand how the chaotic life of the collectives she takes part in can be made more sustainable and ecological.

LOTTIE CHILD is the founder of Street Training streettraining.org, an international network of people actively shaping their environments and behaviours with safety and joy. Recently Street Training has been taking place at the ICA, London, Rathausgalerie Munich, and the Venice Biennale. She lectures at the University of the Arts London. Her research topics are in the field of situation based practice that engages with information exchange and explores the hierarchies, rituals and taboos of the streets through a combination of performance, audience participation and publications. manuela zechner is a researcher and cultural worker

MANUELA ZECHNER is a researcher and cultural working on, in and across care, collective processes and social movements, and frequently (co-)facilitates workshops and projects relating to these. She has just finished a Phd Thesis on Care and Creativity in Collective Practices of Organising around Precarity, at Queen Mary University in London, and co-initiated a group research project on 'radical practices of collective care' radicalcollectivecare.blogspot.com in Vienna, where she also co-facilitates the 'sounds of movement' radio show soundsofmovement.noblogs.org. She participates in different collectives, and organizes the 'future archive' futurearchive.org since 2005.

MARA FERRERI has worked and studied between visual arts and urban geography, and is currently concerned with anti-gentrification struggles, urban transience, and work and life precarity. She is finishing a Phd thesis on the *Cultural politics of vacant space reuse* at the Geography Department of Queen Mary University, London.

NELLY ALFANDARI is currently working as a Drama teacher in Secondary Schools in East London. She has a background as participatory theatre practitioner, which she practised in schools, community centres and in various art settings. Theatre of the Oppressed has been the key of her work for the past years, as a tool to create collaborative platforms within public spaces, education and community settings.

PAOLO PLOTEGHER is interested in exploring how different ways of living together can be constructed through art. In Bolzano, Italy, he set off Summer Drafts, inviting artists, activists and thinkers to organize workshops and discussions together with migrants and locals in South Tyrol. He has been testing the possibility of practicing radical pedagogy in institutions like Goldsmiths – Visual Cultures and City and Guilds Art School. He sometimes publishes texts in independent journals and publications, exploring the political and affective potential of writing. He is finishing a PhD interrogating the possibility of acting politically though the use of everyday artistic forms. Together with some comrades he has recently initiated the New Cross Commoners, an experiment to explore, discuss and produce commons and commoning in the neighbourhood where he lives.

Image index

Front /Back cover	Children's games (1560), by Pieter Breughel the elder
17, 18	Fungus on Tree, Parque Estadual Serra do Mar, Brazil (2009) Photo by
	Manuela Zechner
20, 24, 31	Nanopolitics Collages (2013), based on drawings by Manuela Zechner,
	Paolo Plotegher and Bue Rübner Hansen
43	Old vintage mechanics (2013). Photo by Wesley Lelieveld (Dinosoldier on
	Flickr)
71, 72	Copenhagen Riot Fire (2007) Photo by a nanobody
74-75, 76, 78-79, 80	Technoshamanist Performance Ritual London (2011) Video still by Camila
	Mello and Fabiane Borges
88	Nanopolitics Treasure Hunt Map (2011)
100	Hands at Soma Workshop (2010 approx.) Photo by Jorge Goia
109	Manual do Treinamento na Rua (2010 approx.) Illustration by Lottie Child
127	Areolar Connective Tissue (2006) Image by Akay Miller
143, 144	Feet in Sand (2013) Photo by Nelly Alfandari
151	Collective Map from Nanopolitics Debrief of Student Movement (2010)
	Photo by Nanopolitics Group
152, 157	Nanopolitics Street Training Session (2011) Photo by Lottie Child
181, 182	Skin Closeup (2006) Photo by Manuela Zechner
193	Body/Politics Workshop at Casa Invisible, Malaga (2010) Photo by Manue-
	la Zechner
207	The Corn Harvest (1565), by Pieter Breughel the elder
213	Section of the frontispiece to Hobbes' Leviathan (1651), by Abraham Bosse
249, 250	Blind Dinner (2009), Photo by a Nanobody
252, 253	Orto Semirurali, Bolzano (2011). Photo by Donne Nissa'
256 - 257	Popular Lunch, Bolzano (2013). Drawing by Paolo Plotegher.
259	Voku Pocu - People's Kitchen, Bolzano (2013). Drawings by Paolo Plotegher.
263	Picnic (2011) Photo by a nanobody
265, 266	Stone Closeup in Amphitheatre, Siracusa (2012). Photo by Manuela Zechner.
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