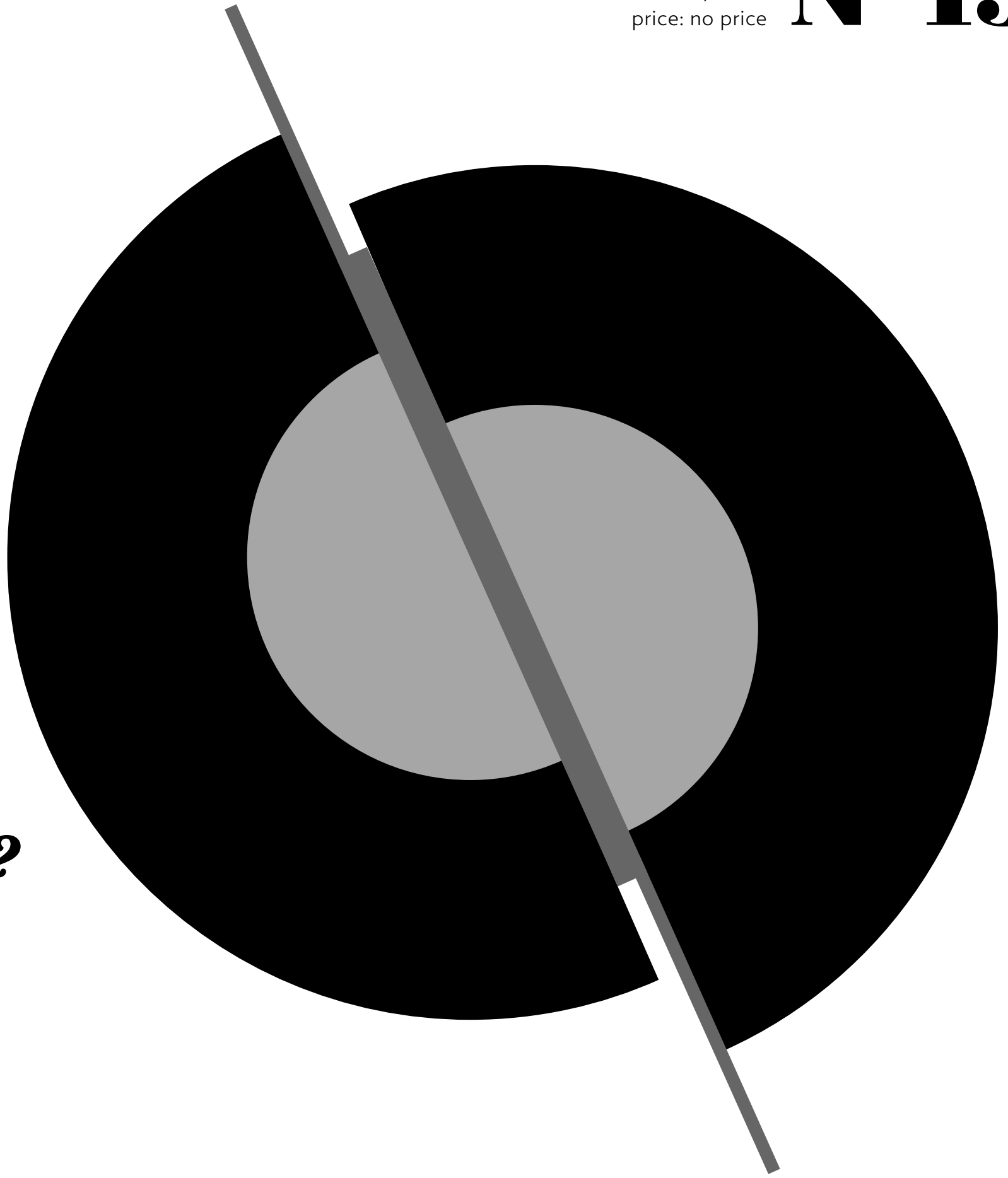


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# introduction

A continent is a name for immensity without reserve: a mass of land so large you can never imagine the end of it, the ground of everything.

Yet the questions we want to raise are intimate ones, which over the course of recent decades have crept their way into the thoughts and feelings of individuals, associations, cultural groups, professional or political formations and even nations, when they are faced with the emergence of a society beyond all borders, a non-place where the continents themselves begin to lose their moorings.

How to conceive of a **world society**? When and why do people begin to speak of it? Where to locate it, how to perceive it? For whom does it appear, whose interests does it serve or threaten? What are its origins, its laws and regularities, its chances of lasting till next year? Does it have a taste or a color, a wavelength or a rhythm? Above all, should I be part of it? Should we be part of it? How to take that decision – or assert that refusal?

In 1997, **Ulrich Beck** published a book in the form of a question: *What is globalization?* His answer: it is a world society without a world government, where outdated national institutions tend to dissolve between the twin extremes of transnational capital and hyperindividualism. Yet Beck is not a fatalist. Rejecting the belief in globalism as a *fait accompli* whose only agents are giant corporations, he suggested an examination of the transformational processes affecting communications, culture, economics, labor organization, civil associations and the ecology. He conceived world society as a “multiplicity without unity,” and believed its emergence could be measured by the degree to which distinct social groups become aware of and debate these transformations: their origins, causes, spatial distributions, effects and susceptibility to change and redirection. The political question would be this: “how, and to what extent, people and cultures around the world relate to one another in their differences, and to what

extent this self-perception of world society is relevant to how they behave.”

So far, so good. Become aware of social change, and find the languages that can express it! But **Beck** still refers to self-perception “as staged by the national media.” We’re looking for something different: the consciousness of the present as expressed by artistic inventions, on “stages” ranging from museums, universities and theaters to social centers, hacklabs and cabarets, the Internet and the streets. Rather than relying on studies and scientific procedures, let’s see how these expressions of the present are debated in the forums, circuits, institutions, self-organized meetings and counter-public spheres that have proliferated across the planet in recent years. What’s elusive are ways to sound out multiplicity, solidarity and resistance, all of which don’t only arise in words. Form, image, concept, rhythm, experiment, intervention, rupture: these are aesthetic devices for touching the world, and taking part in a world conversation.

Throughout the twentieth century the visual languages of modernism offered a means of communication, culminating more recently in a massive overflow of biennials, traveling shows, exchange programs and markets – contested from below by an explosion of autonomous interventions, self-organized circuits and alternative modes of production. Since the end of hegemonic modernism in the 1960s the definition and value of art has been a subject of intense dispute, resulting in a focus on process rather than object, a shift towards activism and

group experimentation. This questioning of frames and contexts has led to the inclusion of sociological, philosophical, economic, political and psychological concepts within the very contours of the works. But this whole development is deeply ambiguous. Even as artistic circles have extended their geographic and discursive reach and tended to morph into sites of generalized experimentation, public consciousness has retained the twentieth-century definition of art as the signifier of individualism, legitimating an endless range of formal innovations, of cultural and individual eccentricities. This proliferation of choices is exactly what allows for the increasingly deep integration of art to the market, not only as a luxury object or attribute of personal distinction, but also as the prime example of innovative, value-adding production processes in the risky environment of the information economy. The upshot being that art seems to mirror and internalize the global transformations, in their mix of multifarious complexity and one-dimensional standardization.

What to do? This project began in the USA in 2005, with a still-ongoing series of self-organized seminars held at **16 Beaver Street** in New York. The idea was to look at artworks and activist projects through a geopolitical and geocultural lens, in order to find some clues for future practices. We had to start with the sweeping transformations since 1989: the triumph of Anglo-American capitalism and the extension across the planet of a single technological, financial and organizational toolkit, permitting the unrestricted flow of goods, money and labor. Existing ideas could not help us much here. Postmodern theorists had been analyzing the globalization of capital since the early 1980s. They focused on the universalization of the commodity-form as an alienation from any



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traditional identity, yet also on the market's capacity to mediate individual and cultural differences through the play of reception. For them, commodity and cultural aspiration are one and the same. But for people working in the wake of the financial crisis of 1997-98, the counter-globalization movement of 1999-2003, the second Intifada in Palestine and the unfinished wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the postmodern analytic is arrogant and unbelievably shallow. Beyond the surface agitation of the commodity-form and its endless variations, there are necessary revolts and radical contestations of the world order, underwritten by more ambiguous, long-term reactions to the unbearable pressures of hypercapitalism.

Already since the 1980s, but more intensely right now, we see large-scale political attempts to supplement or replace the violently deterritorializing dynamic of globalization by the installation of new territorial and cultural norms, which are often conservative or regressive, but which also point to the forgotten and unavoidable questions of solidarity, redistribution of the wealth, care for the natural and human ecology and respect for the others who share the common space of existence. Because of the ruptures of scale brought by the world-girding processes of globalization, the new territorial norms are conceived and manifested not only at a national but also at a regional or continental level, in the search for a new unit of social and economic organization that can stand up to the tremendous forces unleashed by contemporary capitalism. These regional blocs can be seen at varying stages of emergence in Europe, East Asia, Latin America, the Russian Federation and North America itself, or in more incomplete and tragic forms, in Africa and the Middle East. Their ambivalent relations to the Anglo-American imperial structures is the first aspect of the "continental drift" that we are investigating.

But what can the geopolitical lens reveal, when it's a matter of artistic invention? As cultural producers caught up in transnational exchanges, we're not going to deny the cultural realities of globalization; but we can't find much interest in the claims of a total break with the past or a seamless integration to the market. What needs to be understood are the linguistic communities and complex regimes of translation within which the formation of cultural value is asserted and contested. At every scale [intimate, urban, national, continental] specific debates unfold, in relation to a field or continuum of gesture, but also to the ruptures that traverse it, renew it or render it obsolete. Although no one could keep up with developments all around the world, or even desire to do so, it has become obvious that much more attention needs to be paid to the circuits and scales in which an invention or a debate gains consistency. To believe that New York is still the hegemonic center of an "art world" in the singular, or that all the values that matter can be hammered on the block at a Sothebys auction, is both stupid and dangerous, as cultural clashes everywhere are proving. But the same holds for people who believe that critical formulas can simply be "applied," without having to be put to the test each time: that is, dissolved and transformed through contact with speaking subjects. Across the planet, the renegotiation of the scales at which our societies are organized brings with it an intense debate about what art is, how it can be interpreted, what its places and uses should be and even who are its practitioners. And the same debates usually spill over into larger ones, about the forms, functions and possible uses of social institutions. To be part of a multiple but not integrated world society is to engage in these debates – or at least to have an inkling of their existence.

On one hand, we want to identify some of the places and channels in which significant discussions are unfolding, and to become more familiar with their vocabularies and protocols, their controversies, heresies and temporary resolutions, so as to help restore part of the complexity and depth that has

been lost to the mesmerizing force of the commodity regime and its insistent visuality. The hypothesis is that by seeking articulations on a regional or continental scale, we might find circuits of translation and interchange that are able to address the global dynamics without falling back on preconceived national reflexes. On the other hand, we do not exactly dream of a world-in-blocs, whose last expression was the Cold War and whose historical forerunners in the twentieth century

are the rival monetary and military blocs that formed in the crisis-years of the 1930s. The new discussions of solidarity and redistribution will never get anywhere except into unbearably suffocating fantasies of the national, ethnic or religious past, if they don't find room for the most diverse forms of dissent, free play and hybridity, or cultural and continental bridging. What interests us above all are particular groups, who come to grips with their societies' attempts at responding to the overall processes of transformation. Those who propose parallel paths, new openings, deeper and slower or, on the contrary, swifter and more incisive resolutions to the impasses where conflicts form and violence erupts without reason.

It's clear that this kind of work cannot only be carried out theoretically. Nor can it be done on isolated stages. What we're looking for, in New York and Zagreb for the moment, are places of encounter and exchange, of multiple expression and collective analysis, where specialized discourses can expose themselves to the disruptive or enigmatic complexities of art – but also of society and its intractable realities. The forms, rhythms, concepts and images that confront us on the international circuits and in the global markets do not seem adequate to world society. The definitions, values and uses of art still have to be created, at whatever scales you can touch with your senses. ▶



# On the Necessity to Go

Ayreen Anastas & Rene Gabri

“Continental drift carries you farther away each day.”  
Guy Debord, *Hurlements en faveur de Sade*

When **Continental Drift** was initiated, we felt that there was a necessity to appraise and analyze where exactly we were. “We” meant those of us who had followed with interest and/or been involved with various social/political movements throughout the 90s and early 2000s. As a part of that reappraisal and in light of what has taken place in the first eight years of this century, we want to offer the following assessment.

It is evident that we have upon us a multiplication of various mechanisms of control and surveillance which are being aggressively redistributed in all facets of society. More importantly, a great deal is being invested in entrenching and expanding what appears to be an unending and self-perpetuating war against the specter of terrorism, waged, of course, in the name of an even more elusive “security.”

Many questions remain about how these regimes of control and surveillance around security integrate with the smooth space posited by neoliberal economic policies. Or how the emerging bodies of regional governance, alliances, and economic powers will attempt to instrumentalize the discourse on security in the foreseeable future of further attacks [staged or perpetrated].

A more important and immediate question remains for us in our discussions. How should the growing multitude of non-aligned and informal political actors around the globe respond to these developments?

If we lacked perspective as to the long term ramifications and “success” of the military-security enterprise, we would need not look too far back into history. Today Israel is conducting an experiment. It has invented a model of repression that, once adapted, will profit other countries. Although the statement is absolutely valid today, **Gilles Deleuze** wrote these lines nearly thirty years ago in a text entitled “Spoilers of Peace,” printed in *Le Monde* on April 7, 1978.

We can safely say that the Israeli experiment has multiplied, expanded, and has begun to bring in the profits **Deleuze** predicted. Of course, the much sought-after peace and security, in whose name the worst injustices are perpetrated, is nowhere in sight. But strategically and militarily, Israel controls every resource it needs to secure its long term survival in the region, and for this reason, it increasingly serves as a model for the current American-British-? experiment.

We believe that Israel and its Occupation of Palestine serve as a kind of nodal point in what is appears to be this century’s Cold War. Not only are its mechanisms and discourses of security, surveillance, and warfare actively being exported globally, but also its continued crimes against Palestinians on a daily basis agitate and prevent any possibility for a plausible peace in the region.

Following this logic, we propose that without a clear and explicit opposition

to Israeli policies in Occupied Palestine, there is no near-term hope for ending the stranglehold on our collective futures by the most regressive and conservative elements in our contemporary societies.

Of course, Palestine is not the only issue needing our attention and a clearly even a just settlement in Palestine does not guarantee an end to the current wars. Moreover, a clearly articulated position against the Israeli occupation may not address or change the numerous structural dynamics that have allowed this emergence of the security state to take hold. By these “structural dynamics” we point to **Giorgio Agamben’s** implicit critique of liberal democracy and his assertion of the camp as the paradigm of modern governance. We also point to the various forms of racism that have plagued and continue to plague the internal politics of so many countries [and the Left in general] in the overdeveloped world [as evidenced by the revolts in the *banlieues* of Paris, the [ir]response to Katrina, the LA uprisings...] and beyond.

One can only hope that it may be through Palestine that we can continue a process of education which may overcome or at least contribute to addressing both of these aforementioned structural dimensions, among others.

Our colleagues on the European Left, particularly those who live in countries which have some history associated with the Holocaust or collaborating with Nazis have been handed a gag order. To speak against what Israel is doing today, one could see, is intrinsically related to this history. But not in the way the Zionists would have us believe. Yet equating a criticism of Zionism or Israel with anti-Semitism has unfortunately been a very successful campaign. And this campaign of silence has clearly worked in the countries which do not even share this history of guilt or “culpability.”

But it is precisely by speaking out today against Israeli policies of segregation, enclosure, siege, apartheid, and state terror that one connects responsibly to this history – not by remaining silent. It asserts “never again, we will not be silent and stand by while such horrors take place in the name of the security of a people.” Unfortunately, people’s knowledge of the situation is so obscured or the pressure against speaking out so taboo that the strategy of avoidance or silence has been too readily practiced – especially judging from how many respected intellectuals, journalists, and activists assume this position today.

We are supportive of our colleagues who protest against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as wars of greed and profit. We are supportive of our colleagues who protest against the G8 and attack the economic mechanisms that support the wholesale dispossession taking place around the world. We are supportive of the no-border coalitions and networks that address the question of racism and the hypocrisy implicit in the neoliberal rhetoric of a borderless world.

In fact, we believe that it is not a great stretch to connect this structural racism to the very dynamics that allowed something like the Holocaust to take place. For example, the same logic [relegating some individuals a right to bare life, while accepting that only some can enjoy the fruits of a political life] which was used by the Gestapo to strip each and every Jew of their citizenship before sending them to the camps, lets the American government allow the Red Cross to monitor the physical health of detainees in Guantanamo, while depriving them of the basic rights which would be bestowed upon any prisoner of war or imprisoned citizen of another country.

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And today, in Palestine, a similar logic is unfolding. Israel continues to practice a policy of racial engineering among its own citizens, while at the same time the state actively attempts to foreclose any possibility of a normal existence or emergent society for Palestinians living in the occupied territories. And the international community accepts that an entire people might have the right to bare life, but not necessarily a political existence.

Furthermore, even as the International Court in the Hague [the same one which is given authority to try war criminals like **Milošević**] explicitly calls on the international community and Israel to bring down the illegal wall separating Palestinians from Palestinians and confiscating their lands, what exists of our vibrant contemporary social movements remains largely silent. Why is there no outrage and immediate outcry?

If this mandate does not exist from the major powers, it may be understandable given their longstanding complicity. If this mandate does not come from those who receive their news from mainstream media machines, one can also understand. But how could those who purport to construct their own relation to the world through an active engagement with it, through a pursuit of other sources of news, of information, of communication, of ideas, how could this most promising of all “communities” remain so silent?

As long as this silence remains, as long as we equivocate and lay blame on “both sides,” we remain susceptible to this logic. All the governing elite need is additional “acts of terror” to embolden them to further attacks against more countries, and more limitations against personal freedoms and civil liberties. No security is won by targeted assassinations, let alone punishing civilians as symbolic retribution, not as long as the conditions that produce the resentment or disagreement persist.

It should also be noted that Palestine has been used by many reactionary regimes in the Arab World to keep the status quo in their countries, for example in Syria [“we have a bigger enemy”]. And Lebanon, the unfortunate neighbor of Israel, will stay the free football field of all the military forces in the area, as long as Israel does not change fundamentally.

What other visible or viable movement in the world today offers an infrastructure of political, economic and moral support for ending this injustice for Palestinians? Are we to expect the Bushes or Blairs of the world to engender real change there, when these individuals lack such a mandate in their own countries [US and UK]?

Of course, if the path of peace comes through a process that is not from international solidarity – not from a social movement that resembles the global solidarity that helped the ANC end Apartheid – we relegate ourselves to a “solution” or “road map” that will at best delay and defer a just resolution or produce catastrophic and unworkable solutions as were the result of the Oslo Accords.

For these reasons, we believe that any reconsideration of these social movements for the purposes of investing them with new force and a capacity to respond to contemporary challenges will need to take this position into account.

**THE END**, for now. ►

# to Palestine



# Equal, but different,

It is a song from another time and place, England in the 1970s. It's **Obvious** by the Birmingham post punk band the **Au Pairs** wears its political feminism on its sleeve declaring in the chorus **You're Equal but Different** in a way that brought pop and contemporary politics closer than they have been for a while. But for all their eagerness to claim gender equality, the times and the Cold War never permitted the band to consider certain other imbalances. Today, in a global distribution of inequality, it is as much geographies as genders that fail to equalize, however much a discontinuous zone like Eastern Europe eagerly normalizes itself to external expectations. Terms like 'post-socialist' or 'post-communist' are already contaminated by the discourse of late capitalism and devoid of the immense possibility promised after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Yet, for many cultural workers in Eastern Europe such words continue to express differences that capture real political and cultural imaginations beyond any obvious nostalgia or the instrumentalisation of culture in the service of political 'domestication' and the grand endeavour of the integration of post-communist Europe into the liberal-democratic world of free markets and human rights.

Our work in Zagreb is shaped by an interest in the specifics of the transformation of subjectification and everyday life in post-communist countries. The privatisation of public property during the process of transition went hand in hand with creating an illusion about the sanctity of private property as a necessary component of democracy. This illusion hardened into an ideology that now acts as a material force on society, shaping behaviour and setting the limits to what is thought possible. Working as cultural workers in Zagreb, Croatia, ex-Yugoslavia, means that we are inevitably interested in the differences that make Eastern Europe a kind of European 'other' – given a role that includes securing Western identity as a single and coherent unity, even though the West is obviously also imbued with antagonism, heterogeneity and inconsistency. To pursue this interest with any meaning, we are also compelled to look for worldwide common grounds, in part so as not to get caught up in a self-obsessed story [something even more likely when dealing with the ex-Yugoslav context] and in part not to lose sight of conditions in the world, where 2 billion people live on less than 2 dollars per day, or that the 3 richest billionaires are worth as much as 600 million people in the world's poorest countries. Therefore, our initial motivation to invite the **Continental Drift** seminar

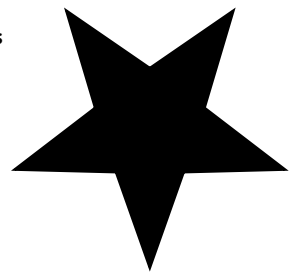
to Zagreb was to strengthen precisely the understanding of what makes Eastern Europe part of the bigger pattern, a pattern that needs to be understood first in order to be contested and resisted later.

During the past year we have been working intensively on the next **Istanbul Biennial**, a highly representative artistic manifestation burdened by the usual demands on culture within the massive economy of tourism and metropolitan rivalry. We have used this platform to develop a process of research, travels and meetings to generate and confirm a network of individuals and organizations throughout the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Central Asia. In an attempt to explore the rules of conduct established by the Western art system, our work in Zagreb merges with questions pertinent for Istanbul. In both locations, we want to question how the circulation and reception of information is regulated and how we can [and can we really?] challenge it? Hence, the discussions that led to the **Continental Drift** seminar in Zagreb were in many ways important for us in developing the **11th Istanbul Biennial** under the title **What keeps**

**mankind alive**. We took the title from the song **What keeps mankind alive** in the **The Threepenny Opera**, written in 1928 by **Bertolt Brecht**, in collaboration with **Elisabeth Hauptmann** and **Kurt Weill**. **Brecht's** assertion that 'a criminal is a bourgeois and a bourgeois is a criminal' is as true as ever, and the correspondences between 1928 and contemporary times are ever more striking, when, on both occasions, rapid developments in the liberal economy resulted in the disintegration of a previous social consensus and then in economic failure. For us, the question of the 'usability' of **Brecht** at this time is not to suggest a *deus ex machina* solution for our own time nor to promote a forgotten method that we can translate directly today, but rather to speculate about certain political-aesthetic puzzles. **Brecht's** methodology might stimulate a proper formulation of current problems and revive the function of pleasure and the didactic role of art against the total commodification of lived experience under the rubric of entertainment. Similarly in our contemporary and now-threatened paradigm, knowledge is perceived not as a search for truth but as the search for relevance, and the processes of commodification seek to liquidate every non-contractual form of association. It is into this world that **Continental Drift** steps, where the dominant subjectivity is that of an entrepreneur/artist who manages not only a career but life itself, as well as the multiplying relationships to oneself and others. As a platform and way of coming together, **Continental Drift** suggests that self-determination and relative autonomy are still possible in the process of collectively formulating the question 'what now?'. ▶

WHW

continental drift



# Articulating the Cracks

16 Beaver Group talking with **Brian Holmes**

[Fall 2006]

**16 Beaver:** When we started thinking about doing something like a seminar together, a few ideas emerged:

- A. We didn't want it to be a seminar in the ordinary sense, nor a workshop, nor a conference, nor a convergence, nor even a "model" for others.**
- B. We wanted to organize it with the minimum amount of money and without relying on any outside organizations, grants or institutions.**
- C. We wanted it to be the beginning of a collaboration, between 16 Beaver and Brian Holmes and other colleagues ... to explore a new way of working together and sharing our know-what and know-how.**
- D. We wanted to bring people together who have been associated with our respective efforts to engage over a longer term in actually influencing one another.**
- E. To combine together, even more than our past collective efforts, our research interests and our activities, to try and make sense of what is taking place around us in the name of "politics" or "economic rationality" or "development," and to find within our own practices the spaces and modes which might pose the greatest challenges and problems to "business as usual."**
- F. To not be afraid to ask the most ambitious of questions, or to fail entirely.**

Having arrived at year 2, we have a much larger number of collaborators and individuals who will be contributing to our ongoing inquiries. So these questions to you, Brian, are not meant in any way to reduce the voice of these inquiries to one spokesperson. They are instead meant to come back to some of the points of departure we shared and to explore both the theoretical concerns as well as the organizational ones. In relation to the ideas we were exploring in the first year, what would you outline as the main theses?

The title evokes geology, plate tectonics, the geohistorical splitting of great landmasses, the telluric shifts that rip continents apart, the incredibly powerful and violent energies coursing through the world today. So it's a name for immensity. On the other hand, it immediately recalls something intimate and experimental, the situationist practice of drifting, of losing yourself, of abandoning conventional purposes and rationalized coordinates to seek out radically different orientations in experience, but on an unexpected planetary scale

**Brian Holmes:** Well, of course there are different levels, analytic and metaphorical, poetic and political, all entangled in the title **Continental Drift**. And since we've tended in our work together to be strict, sociological and painstakingly historical, with an obsessive attention to economics, infrastructure and ideology, I'd like to turn that all upside down for a change and begin with the poetics. On the one hand, the title evokes geology, plate tectonics, the geohistorical splitting of great landmasses, the telluric shifts that rip continents apart, the incredibly powerful and violent energies coursing through the world today. So it's a name for immensity. On the other hand, it immediately recalls something intimate and experimental, the situationist practice of drifting, of losing yourself, of abandoning conventional purposes and rationalized coordinates to seek out radically different orientations in experience, but on an unexpected planetary scale – as though you could wander across entire regions, spanning the gaps between worlds, or spiraling weightlessly through civilizations. So it's a name for intimacy in immensity. At the same time, without any possible escape, the overblown image of continental drift tends to deflate into its opposite, something familiar or downright banal: the basic condition of global unification by technology and money, where it's possible for privileged individuals to move freely but

ignorantly about the earth, like taking the train across town for a buck and a quarter. So if you weave all those sensations together, the whole thing speaks of fault-lines in an overwhelming global unity, and of the elusive quest for a direct experience of a split reality. As though you could embrace the movement of a world that falls apart, as though you could embody the splintering cracks, the bifurcations, the shattering, and on the far side, begin understanding what it will be like to have to pick up the pieces....

**16B:** OK, so what about the economy, the sociology, that obsessively analytic dimension?

**BH:** What we managed to explore last year was above all a single thesis, drawn from the history of political economy: **Karl Polanyi's** notion of the

in the Worlds of Power

"double movement." This refers to the fundamental paradox of capitalism, which by commodifying everything, by bringing every aspect of human experience under the rules of profit and reinvestment, at the same time provokes a defensive reaction of breakup, of escape, whether through withdrawal and autarky, warlike aggression, or the search for a better alternative. **Polanyi**, whose major work is called *The Great Transformation*, is really an ecological thinker. He shows how the notion of the self-regulating market, which is supposed to assign a proper price to everything and thereby secure the necessary resources for the continual production of an ever-expanding range of goods, fails tragically to account for all the factors involved in the reproduction of land, of labor, and of the very institution of exchange, money itself. What happens instead is that careless trading in these "fictitious commodities" tends to destroy them, to blight the land, to exhaust and even kill the laborer, to ruin the value of the money through unchecked

speculation. **Polanyi** showed how these self-destructive processes operated up to the First World War, how they ultimately wiped out the international gold standard that had been built up by British liberalism and then brought on the Great Depression. What resulted was a division of the world into five rival currency-blocs, which went to deadly war against each other from 1938 to 1945. After the war, of course, the people of the world had to pick up the pieces; for better or worse, they had to establish new balances, new systems. Giving in to the history obsession, I tried to explain both the new basis of stability and the potential weaknesses of the postwar world-system that came together under the domination of the United States. With **David Harvey's** help we analyzed the very shaky state of that system today, with all the strains that neoliberal globalization is now placing on the world ecology, on the conditions of existence for the global labor force, and even on the hegemony of the US dollar, whose continuing status as the international reserve currency has never been so uncertain.

**16B:** That's something we realized during the first sessions: empires always find a way to tax, and the US has done it through the dollar.

**BH:** Exactly. By printing more dollars for export, by floating more Treasury bonds, by manipulating interest rates to create a favorable trade conditions, even by exploiting huge

# BH



monetary crises, like the so-called “Asian crisis” in 1997-89. But all that finally destroys any possibility of cooperation. Observing the first movements toward the constitution of rival blocs – the emergence of the EU, of the Japanese-Chinese-Southeast Asian trading system, of NAFTA itself, of a potential socialist pole in Latin America around

Venezuela – was a way to ask whether the “double movement” described by **Polanyi** might be repeating itself before our eyes. It was also a way to understand Al Qaeda’s call for a “new Caliphate” in the Middle East as another defensive reaction, though a particularly desperate and dangerous one, to the neoliberal push for global integration under highly exploitative unilateralist rules.

I was very convinced by all those ideas, but at the same time, quite uncertain as to whether anyone would be ready to hear such things. Now, just one year later, all that speculation about a possibly violent breakup of the postwar world-system looks a lot less unlikely, after the experience of Hurricane Katrina, after the further decline of Iraq

and Afghanistan into chaos, after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the continually deteriorating situation in Palestine. Maybe we didn’t go far enough with the geopolitics! But at another level, closer to everyday experience, we also explored the consequences of the commodification of knowledge and culture, which many now consider a fourth “fictitious commodity.” As people working with knowledge and culture – as “immaterial laborers” – we tried to look around us, on Wall Street where **16 Beaver** is located, and see what the pinnacle of networked symbolic exchange really entails. It’s tremendously important to understand the degree to which all forms of cultural and scientific production are increasingly being functionalized for market exchange, whose quintessence is the trading of immaterial goods on Wall Street. Financialization also means the lived experience of semiotic obsolescence: the fact of producing symbolic trash, numbers that vanish infinitely into other numbers, the meaninglessness of making money with money. Unfortunately, there is no inherently progressive aspect to immaterial labor, and “Empire” is still driven and piloted by imperialist nation-states, above all Britain and the USA. But still there is a deep ambiguity in the practice of immaterial labor, to the extent that it too is subject to a double movement – or in other words, to the extent that we too can

recoil from the pressure of total commodification of ourselves, and look for ways to escape, or ways to fight back culturally, or better alternatives for the

use of our minds, our emotions, our expressive capacities and our sensoriums. I think that this uncertainty over the appropriate uses of culture and knowledge is potentially something which can be shared today, even across the geographical divides.

**16B: Based on the contributions others gave last year, what additional questions emerged for you, if any?**

**BH:** What emerges first of all is a better sense of the possible, of what we can really do together. Last year we had two separate sessions, each very intense, but different. The first was more formal, more difficult in a way, and I think whether rightly or wrongly I put out a lot of pressure to up the intellectual ante, to introduce a tremendous

**there is no possibility of generating a critical counter-power – or counter-public, or counter-public sphere – when there is no more search for relative autonomy, or when the collective self [autos] no longer even asks the question of how to make its own law [nomos]. So the importance of this kind of project is to use it as a moment of experimentation, not just in the quest for the perfect theory or the perfect procedure, but cosmologically, to rearrange the stars above your head. Such events don’t often happen, the only solution is do-it-yourself**

amount of political and economic theory into what have largely been artistic and activist discussions. I think that was important to most people, and at the same time there were some very good interventions by the more activist-minded participants, mostly people who have worked together in Chicago, who have learned how to cooperate on very risky and often very successful projects, and who injected some elements of group process and horizontality that you can easily lose sight of in a heavily arty and academic context like New York.

The second session was somehow more relaxed, basically because we had gotten to know each other, and also because we had established some shared vocabularies. I forget at which point there emerged the notion of “felt public space” – related, I think, to a kind of dodgy reference to the artist **Joseph Beuys** – but anyway, the phrase was definitely an icebreaker, and it gives a good description, not only of the conversations that we had in that second session, but also of the

kind of enlarged conversations that we might get into this time. By pooling experiences and talking through the details and difficulties of work that has been done in a wide range of places and contexts, what emerges is nothing homogeneous, but an incredible texture of differences and open possibilities that can’t be reduced either to political sloganeering or to discrete little rungs leading up the golden ladder of the art world. Instead there is just a world out there, the real one: and little animated bits of it come walking through the doors of **16 Beaver**. After this excruciating year, with the new outbreak of war in Lebanon during the summer and the realization, by so many people around the planet, that the problems facing us are deep and vast and unlikely to just resolve themselves with passing time or the usual elections,



what stands out is a heightened sense of the importance of speaking with other people, and of listening. The hope is to extend the conversations of last year into a network of feelers that reach out further and maybe touch all of us a little deeper, so that we can really get somewhere with all the crazy hyperstimulated global wandering that present-day life seems to require.

**16B: For some people, it is difficult to distinguish what we are attempting here from a colloquium that would happen at some university or art institution. Is it important to differentiate?**

**BH:** Well, the problem I have, and maybe others have it too, is that the formalism and the professionalism of the university-museum circuit sometimes keeps you from knowing either who you are, or what you’re really talking about. This is not to say we should close the museums, picket the universities, burn the libraries or go back to the land. But it is to say that unconventional and dissenting ideas don’t often come out of established and conventional functions. And when everybody tacitly agrees that cultural production can only take place under the beneficent gaze of the market and the state, and on their payrolls, what you get in my opinion are very dull and timid attitudes, combined with grotesquely simulated and overblown emotions. Or, from the more ambitious and professional types, you may get hyper-specialized discourses and







**16B: What is the relation between this mode of inquiry we are positing and the topics we are actually exploring together?**

BH: For me, the relation would be in the possibility to have some transformative influence on the damnably complex reality that confronts everyone today, precisely the political-economic-cultural situations that we're trying to discuss. For example, you've probably heard me use the phrase "liberal fascism." What does that mean? Why should people involved with art and culture have to deal with such an idea? I've been trying to clarify the preconditions for liberal fascism on the psychosocial level, since I started my work on the flexible personality around the year 2000. In other words, I've been trying to find out how a liberal society, liberal in the political sense, that is, based on individual freedoms, can reach such a point of consensus that it is willing to strike out immediately and without warning against whoever it decides to exclude, without any non-compliance or resistance from an overwhelming majority of citizens. I've seen that willingness grow tremendously in recent years, not only in the US but also in Europe. But at this point I think we should collectively define the concept, now that the reality exists without a doubt, now that so-called democrats have voted for the Military Commissions Act, which suspends *habeas corpus* and the right

elaborate aesthetic affects, this sort of highly valorized cultural production which appears irrefutable when it comes out of MIT or MoMA, but still doesn't seem to be what we're looking for.

To put it in more theoretical terms, there is no possibility of generating a critical counter-power – or counter-public, or counter-public sphere – when there is no more search for relative autonomy, or when the collective self [*autos*] no longer even asks the question of how to make its own law [*nomos*]. So the importance of this kind of project is to use it as a moment of experimentation, not just in the quest for the perfect theory or the perfect procedure, but cosmologically, to rearrange the stars above your head. Such events don't often happen, the only solution is do-it-yourself. It's also part of the search for the outside, which is an existential necessity. I think I've learned the most about art and social theory from counter-summits with lines of teargas-belching cops, and from those kinds of anarchist summer universities where you camp out for a week and have a hard time finding a shower, but also get to cooperate directly with people whose words and gestures aren't totally dissociated from their bodies and their actions.

Well, since those moments I have felt a need to develop more complex discourses and experiments, but hopefully not more conventional and complacent ones; and it seems like with this project, 16 Beaver has been a kind of convergence center in many people's search for different formats.

**16B: Organizationally speaking, what do you think is the importance of these kinds of activities? Although we may be reluctant to employ the word model, we are positing a certain mode of research/practice?**

BH: I guess we're positing it. I would guess that everyone involved in the organizing is secretly hoping that this will be some kind of turning point for their own practice, both in terms of the kind of critical research into contemporary society that is being proposed, and as a way to get beyond a certain social limit, a certain dependency on conventional institutions for fixing the calendars, setting the topics and themes, generally guiding the rhythm and focus of public interactions. I would guess that we're all dreaming that with a little extra effort, we could regain a certain intellectual and artistic dignity, a sense that we are establishing our own questions and problematics, while setting up experimental spaces to deal with them. I think this is a widely shared aspiration right now, not only for people who are operating autonomously and independently, but also for others who are pushing the limits of institutions and regaining the capacity to do something challenging in public. But it still remains to do it, to fulfill collective goals and get some palpable and usable results – which probably explains the reluctance to talk about models in the meantime!

to a fair trial, or even the right not to be tortured, for anyone arbitrarily designated an "unlawful enemy combatant." Meanwhile, in case you managed to forget it, a corporation named **Kellogg Brown & Root**, aka **Halliburton**, has been given a \$385 million contract to establish – I'm quoting directly from their website – "temporary detention and processing capabilities" to augment existing U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement facilities "in the event of an emergency influx of immigrants into the U.S., or to support the rapid development of new programs." New programs? Which new programs? What kind of potential is hiding in that juxtaposition between "unlawful enemies" and domestic Guantanamo? Why don't people talk about it?

One thing is that there's no adequate language to describe what's going on. But the other problem is that defining a concept doesn't necessarily help you do anything about the reality. What used to be known as the Left in the USA has lost any significant capacity to move from theoretical definitions to effective actions. Under such conditions, there is really no use to go blithely ahead with utopian thinking, it becomes hypocrisy. But utopian thinking is at the very origin of cultural practice, so far as I'm concerned. So this is what you call a crisis, a life-threatening moment. We know we should all "go out in the streets," but when we get there, there's no there there. We have to create arguments so strong that they can merge with feelings, in order to reshape reality. By trying to articulate an examination



of contemporary conditions with a cooperative, non-professional public practice, I think we are moving away from the self-imposed blindness and silence that characterizes the hypermobile, hyperproductive citizen under a regime of liberal fascism. But there is much more to be done, and I am hoping to learn more about the practices of making things public that different people in the group have been developing.

**16B: Given that in this second year, we are attempting to expand our questions from last year, what would you say from your perspective are the developments intellectually in your own work, discursively in terms of writings you have come across, and politically in the last year?**

**BH:** Well, a year is a long time, so it may take a while to answer! Certainly in my own work I have pursued the inquiry that began with the text on “Neoliberal Appetites,” which I presented at **16 Beaver** last year. The point is to see how specific social institutions impress upon us the basic underlying procedure of neoliberal subjectivity, which consists in understanding yourself, your accomplishments and your own creativity, indeed your own desire, as human capital, to be nourished and cherished in terms of its potential returns on the market, and to be used as a measurement of the value of any kind of experience whatsoever. Of course, this capital is also something to be risked in particular ventures, the way you risk your money on the stock market. I think that both museums and universities are now doing a lot to encourage this kind of self-valuation among intellectuals and artists, through the exaltation of creativity as a productive force, and through the institution of intellectual property as a technique for reifying that force, making inventions into contractual “things” that can be securely owned. I have written a text called “The Artistic Device” to explore how neoliberal subjectivation takes place in the knowledge society, notably by examining a performance where an artist takes on the role of a day trader. The text also looks at a deliberate attempt to escape this form of subjectivation, to establish a new cooperative ethic and even a new imaginary, inseparable from the immanent experience of crossing a continent on the trans-Siberian train. It ends with a **Foucauldian** analysis of a British university museum that’s now under construction, called *The Panopticon Museum*. But I can assure you, this is not the same analysis of centralized authority and internalized surveillance that has been repeated as a leftist dogma for the last thirty years. “The Artistic Device” takes on the proactive roots of power, the ways we produce it. In

addition to that I have been structuring a book on the whole problematic, with essays on the artists **Ricardo Basbaum** and **Marko Peljhan**, on the concept of swarming and its limits, on **Felix Guattari** and his schizoanalytic cartographies, as well as other things in the works. It’s all coming together on a blog I started late one night, under the name of **Continental Drift**, at <http://brianholmes.wordpress.com>.

Outside my work, a particularly interesting discursive event has been the publication of two essays by **Malcom Bull**, “The Limits of Multitude” and “States of Failure.” These use the language of political philosophy to point to something very much like **Polanyi**’s double movement: namely an attempt to consolidate a World Government, which inherently fails and whose failure gives rise to the “dissipative structures” of a new multi-polar world. In “States of Failure” **Bull** shows the root impossibility of a world run by pure economics, as in the **Clintonian** dream of the World Trade Organization. Such a World Government either becomes a full-blown global state with military powers of enforcement, or it dissolves, in various fashions, under the influence of different groups and social formations. What becomes clear at the end of the text, in a few amazing pages, is

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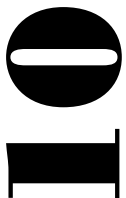
that this dissolution is already underway, and that the whole political question is how to keep it as peaceful as possible: that’s where the specific character and orientation of the “dissipative structures” has so much importance. I think it can be interesting for the philosophically minded to read those texts before the upcoming **Continental Drift** sessions, as a way to understand that the issues we are dealing with here are very much those of our times. **Bull**’s development of the concept of World Government also vindicates, in a general way at least, the speculative research that my friends in **Bureau d’Etudes** have been doing for years.

The main thrust of my own research, however, has been in another direction, spurred on by the long-term realities of conflict and the insane war in Lebanon during the summer months. It comes partially to light in a text called “Peace-for-War,” which I wrote for the conference series recorded at [www.dictionaryofwar.org](http://www.dictionaryofwar.org). But I have a lot left to do before I can complete this argument. In order to grasp the strange mix, in the current American administration, between a kind of archaic Cold-War mindset and a very

futurist, hi-tech practice of preemption, I have been looking into the early period of cybernetics, which was the great applied social science of the postwar period. Basically it’s about control through negative feedback, or error control – like an anti-aircraft gun gradually homing in on its target, with the assistance of its automated tracking device and its human operator. This was the primary model for the early worldwide control systems that were installed after WWII, typically leaving a very reduced place for the human operator, who becomes a kind of logical calculator and biological servomechanism nested inside the larger machine. The research shows how the fulfillment and closure of something like World Government was sought through the applications of cybernetic logic to city planning and to organizational and technological system-building at a global scale. But it also shows that the ambition to constitute a “closed world” [the title of a great book by **Paul N. Edwards**] was already overcome on the theoretical level in the late 1960s and early 1970s by the innovations of second-order cybernetics, with its emphasis on positive rather than negative feedback. Second-order cybernetics was first defined by a guy named **Heinz von Foerster**, who tried to understand all the perturbations that arise when the observer is part of the machine she observes, and attempts to reorient or transform. Rather than seeking to preserve the balanced state of a homeostatic system, second-order cybernetics tries to map out how a system unbalances itself, alters its parameters and rules, then goes through phase-changes provoked by the excess of positive feedback. In fact, the notion of “dissipative structures” would come in right here. Similar ideas were taken up and played out in daily life by the counter-cultures, as a way to break up the grip of monolithic control systems on our minds. I think that if you look back on the psychedelic “acid tests” that were done around San Francisco in the mid-sixties, and at the role of electronic media as something like a delirious counter-information source in those experiences, you get a first inkling of this kind of systemic unbalancing.

Recently I’ve been reading a lot of texts by **Felix Guattari** to understand the deeper principles of counter-cultural subversion, and I think **Deleuze** and **Guattari**’s work does what I’m describing: it overflows cybernetic control through an excess of nomadic desire, in an aesthetic equivalent to the kinds of guerrilla tactics that were able to overcome the rationalist battlefield strategies of the US imperial system. Much of what we think of as avant-garde art still tries to pursue this kind of disruptive, overflowing movement. However, what the strategy of subversion ultimately led to, when postmodern capitalism had finished recycling it back into a new functional pattern, was the optimistic emphasis on innovation that was characteristic of the New Economy. Second-order cybernetics, reborn as complexity theory, became the master discourse of the 1990s, of post-modernism, of the Internet boom: it was the cynical reason of immaterial labor, something I already more or less described in “The Flexible Personality.” Semiotic chaos was made into a productive principle, as becomes clear when you look at a landmark book like *Increasing Returns and Path Dependency in the Economy* published by

**B**



**W.B. Arthur** in 1994, which specifically focuses on the role of positive feedback in the creation of financial values. But this kind of economic logic couldn't last, it was just too unstable. In parallel to the collapse of the World Trade Towers and the New Economy,

what we saw coming to the fore, with incredible suddenness, were more militant versions of emergence, practiced first by the antiglobalization movements, then very differently by the networked terrorists. In the 1990s, the system believed it could thrive on its capacity to destabilize itself. But in the end, that was an illusion.

What we finally arrive at is a desperate moment where the US government tries to regain or prolong the paranoid fantasy of static control promised by the Cold-War image of World Government, but now through an entirely new, extremely dynamic strategy of "preempting emergence," to borrow the title of a brilliant article by **Melinda Cooper**, which is the third text I'd like to recommend. The individual's sense of a desiring, creative and valuable self at risk in an unpredictable world – in other words, the neoliberal appetite for self-capitalization – is paralleled on a macro level by a government that lashes out with its full hegemonic power in the attempt to annihilate risks which at the same time it continually re-creates, by its own compulsive drive to extend neoliberalism's constitutive instability to the entire world. Here we have as situation as patently mad as the Cold War was, with all its strategic zero-sum games of Mutually Assured Destruction. And we see this new form of civilizational madness being built around us, in the form of the security architecture of biometrics, used for the computerized tracking and targeting of singularities on their labyrinthine paths through the world-space. This hyper-individualized control obsession underlies the liberal fascism of the Military Commissions Act.

In the face of the long-term bid by the US to achieve a kind of total planetary lockdown, societies in danger have reacted in two ways: by developing dangerous and aggressive forms of chaotic emergence, and by plunging into archaic religious identities which do not obey the rational models of mainframe cybernetics. In other words, they have reacted by risking the future and hiding in the past, which is the symptomatic movement that we identified last year with the phrase "neolib goes neocon." The **Bush** administration itself has become at once archaic, in its dependency on a religious address to world populations, and hypermodern, in its attempt to institute a molecular surveillance of the future. But there's no room for a sane response on those two opposed planes: what we need is a way to survive and flower in a present that's open to becoming and otherness. So all of the above is just a more precise, perhaps deeper and more urgent way of asking the basic question: What to do in the face of the double movement of contemporary capitalism, with its disastrous consequences? Or in other words, how can we "subvert" [if that's still the word] a system which is so dramatically and dangerously failing in its simultaneous attempts to instrumentalize the archaic and to preempt emergence?

**16B: Based on that response, one question is whether what you outline above is compatible with a multi-scale social ontology**

**as proposed by some thinkers like Manuel De Landa [consisting of individuals, families, groups, communities, neighborhood associations, social and cultural groups, activist groups, small and medium sized corporations, unions, courts, towns, cities, city councils, regional groups, universities, large enterprises, states, state governments, nations, federal governments, national political organizations, media organizations, lobby groups, NGOs, international bodies, int'l courts, global corporations, conglomerates, trading blocs....]? The question is not meant to undermine the proposals we have examined so far, nor to reject the assertion that there are extremely powerful forces attempting to preempt emergence, nor even to deny the fact that there are large concentrations of power in the hands of a shrinking number of players. It is meant instead to demand a theoretical approach that does not reduce the complexity of our societies – an approach which makes it more plausible to retain spaces for contradiction as well as spaces for hope, for the heterogeneous potentialities which will alter the course of history.**

**BH:** Well, I definitely agree, and what we are doing together is predicated on that approach. But to acknowledge the existence of multiple actors and a multi-scalar society is one thing, to know what to do with it is another! The very quandary of democracy has always been the uncertainty of moving through those scales, compounded

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by the question of whether one would really want access to the power techniques used by the larger formations to manipulate the smaller ones, to homogenize them and make their actions knowable, predictable, steerable. The unpleasant suspicion that you are being steered, and the difficulty, or more often the impossibility, of going high enough up the ladder to challenge that steering effect and ask for more transparent decision-making procedures, is one of the things that can literally drive people nuts under the paradoxical regime of democracy, which says you are free to participate in the drafting and interpretation of the collective law, but then consistently proves the contrary. One of the traditional responses to this problem has been to become more deliberate, to participate in or actually develop structures which are at once larger than the immediate forms of face-to-face association, yet at the same time contain both ethical cultures and formal procedures to make sure that individuals and small groups still have some input. I don't think that kind of deliberate action should be discounted, and the emergence of new parties, unions, NGOs, or the reform of old ones, is always worth attention. That's also why I keep intervening in formal art institutions and

university programs, and encouraging group interventions, though always from a position of relative autonomy. I admire tenacious people who are able to introduce change and experimentation on those levels, and I want to contribute. But the present-day situation has seen a real paralysis of most of those formal structures, which becomes clear when you look at the paradigmatic case of the political party.

There were a lot of reasons, in the late nineteenth century, for individual politicians to accept party discipline,



Agricultural trade show, Argentina

one of them being that the party provided a new place and a new set of rules for the decision-making process, outside the cacophony of the parliaments. So increasingly, in the twentieth century, policy was worked out at the headquarters of parties, which then confronted each other as voting blocs in the parliaments. Another advantage of the party was that it could have a broad popular membership, which proved essential for gathering information about what people really want in a democracy. And the fact of being consulted, of participating in workshops or surveys devoted to a particular issue, perhaps even of going out on the street to ask questions as a party member addressing a general public, all that helped create loyalty at the voting booth – another essential attraction for the politicians. But the professionally conducted opinion poll, then in recent years the focus group, gradually replaced the function of broad party membership as an information-gathering device; and the function of advertising, then of the campaign as an integrated spectacle, also replaced the older, more organic ways of motivating people's votes. So today the political party has everywhere become a televisual juggernaut piloted by a sociological research arm, which serves only to get the vote out once every few years, while the specialized political-economic deals required to raise money for those studies and campaign extravaganzas are struck in private rooms under a veil of ignorance and manipulated information, and at levels of complexity which citizens are completely unprepared to understand. This same kind of phenomenon also crops up at the municipal scale, the corporate scale, the branch scale in unions, the state or national scale in big NGOs and so on, to the point where the idea of moving freely between them becomes a real fiction!

The need for very large actors to operate at the world scale and at the speeds made possible by modern communication and transportation finally makes leaders just give up the whole pretense of any complex give-and-take between the different groups and organizations you mentioned, to the point where a guy like **Bush** says, almost immediately after taking office, and I quote, "If this were a dictatorship, it would be a heck of a

lot easier, just so long as I'm the dictator." Under the pretext of urgency, people with that kind of mentality will actually set about destroying the possibility of any bottom-up relationship between the scales, the way the Israeli military methodically destroyed the brand-new civil communication and transportation infrastructure this summer in Lebanon, and over the last year or so in Gaza.

**16B:** This is why we wanted to add a fourth text to our list of shared references: a chapter from the Retort book "Afflicted Powers," entitled "The State, the Spectacle and September 11." Their book raises various critical questions and points where we may diverge from their analysis. But one interesting link to us is their discussion of the current regime's need both for "failed states" abroad and for "weak citizenship" at the centers of capitalism.

**BH:** Yes, the Retort book is one of the few major statements to have come out of radical circles in the United States.

They make an essential point when they say that state power now "depends more and more on maintaining an impoverished and hygienized public realm, in which only the ghosts of an older, more idiosyncratic civil society live on." That's what I was describing above. Yet they tend to see the spectacle cracking in the wake of September 11 – and I think that's even more true outside the country. September 11 and its consequences have brought many people to a shared understanding that traverses all the borders. We are becoming increasingly conscious that we live, not just in any one city or country or region, but in a world society: a world constantly traversed by people with multiple belongings, people who are acutely aware

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both of the interdependence of supposedly autonomous organizations, political units and sovereign power blocs, and also of the extreme fragility of the networks that link us all together. Never before has so vast a conversation and interchange been possible, even if it does not mean that any new articulations of power are necessarily emerging. What has emerged, despite all attempts to preempt it, is something like a resistance power, the power of people to block off the very worst, to self-organize in fundamentally negative, but still very joyful and cooperative ways, which I find extremely promising. What this seems to mean, in cultural and intellectual terms, is that every small meeting or working session is in reality just one temporarily active condensation of the immense and continuing process that is leading to the formation of a global public opinion and of a felt public space on a world scale, which may be called upon, in the near future, to resist the worst of what our governments and corporate oligarchs are now

preparing. Such resistance, each time it becomes necessary, can happen only through cooperative events whose contours and distributed intelligence we ourselves will have to invent. That's what I call articulation. And what it suggests, in turn, is that what we say and do in such small meetings has more meaning and import than we are led to believe by the careerist and consumerist norms that have taken over the mediated surface of political spectacle.

Is it possible to fulfill a responsibility to this world conversation? Even in New York City at the heart of the financial district? We are proposing the **Continental Drift** experiment again because we believe it can have positive consequences, particularly in the arenas of art and activism that link most of us together. What we need, I think, is just for everyone who participates to take some small, self-assigned and untabulated responsibility for the practical unfolding of the event as it happens, and above all, to prepare in advance for the expression of a certain number of inquiries, activities and concerns, along with a readiness to listen to what all the others have prepared. We are organizing a "program" of contributions, as before; but experience shows that the program is only activated and made useful by the multiple proposals that undercut it, over-arch it and generally loosen the collective tongue, that feed the intellect and the imaginary. "Articulating the Cracks" is the theme of this session. We have to find ways to make our activities more resonant. The shattering of old complacencies is an invitation to join all those who have taken the crisis of the present as a springboard. ▶

# 12

## continental drift



Argentinean Farmer

# BH

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## Autonomy

As a germ, autonomy emerges when explicit and unlimited interrogation explodes on the scene – an interrogation that has bearing not on the “facts” but on the social imaginary significations and their possible grounding. This is a moment of creation, and it ushers in a new type of society and a new type of individuals. I am speaking intentionally of *germ*, for autonomy, social as well as individual, is a *project*. The rise of unlimited interrogation creates a new social-historical *eidos*: reflectiveness in the full sense, self-reflectiveness, as well as the individual and the institutions which embody it. The questions raised are, on the social level: Are our laws good? Are they just? Which laws *ought* we to make? And, on the individual level: Is what I think true? Can I know if it is true – and if so, how?...

Autonomy comes from *autos-nomos*: [to give to] oneself one’s laws... Autonomy does not consist in acting according to a law discovered in an immutable reason and discovered once and for all. It is the unlimited self-questioning about the law and its foundations and the capacity, in light of this interrogation, to make, to do, and to institute [and therefore also, to say]. Autonomy is the reflective capacity of a reason creating itself in an endless movement, both as individual and social reason...

If the autonomous society is that society which self-institutes itself explicitly and lucidly, the one that knows that it itself posits its institutions and its significations, this means that it knows as well that they have no source other than its own instituting and signification-giving activity, no extrasocial guarantee. We thereby encounter once again the radical problem of democracy. Democracy, when it is true democracy, is the regime that explicitly renounces all ultimate guarantees and knows no limitations other than its self-limitation...

This amounts to saying that democracy is the only tragic political regime – it is the only regime that takes risks, that faces openly the possibility of its self-destruction.

Cornelius Castoriadis, “Power, Politics, Autonomy” and “The Logic of Magmas and the Question of Autonomy,” both in *The Castoriadis Reader* [Oxford UP, 1991], pp. 163-63 and 316.



## Creative Destruction

**M**arx emphasizes how a persistent and generalized fall in the rate of profit transforms inter-capitalist competition from a positive-sum game – in which capitals benefit from one another’s expansion – into a zero-sum [or even a negative-sum] game – that is, into “cutthroat competition”... The fall in the rate of profit and the intensification of the competitive struggle, however, do not end in a stationary state. On the contrary, they lead to the destruction of the social framework in which accumulation is embedded and to the creation of a new one. In Marx’s account, this creative destruction takes three main forms: an increase in the size of capitals and the reorganization of business enterprise; the formation of surplus population and a new international division of labor; and the emergence of new and larger centers of capital accumulation...

Marx draws a distinction between *concentration* of capital – the increase in size of individual capitals arising from accumulation – and *centralization* of capital, which transforms “many small into few large capitals”... The centralization and reorganization of capital go hand in hand with the formation of a reserve army of labor and a reorganization of the international division of labor. The extension and speed-up of technological and organizational change strengthens the capital-intensive and labor-saving bias of capitalist development, generating a “relatively redundant population of laborers”... This surplus population is then available for new rounds of capitalist development on an ever increasing scale...

Schumpeter’s analysis of capitalism’s creative destruction covers only a small part of Marx’s ground but has the advantage of highlighting key insights... He divides the incessant working of the

process of creative destruction into two phases: the phase of revolution proper and the phase of absorption of the results of the revolution: “While these things are being initiated we have brisk expenditure and predominating ‘prosperity’... and while they are being completed and their results pour forth we have the elimination of antiquated elements of the industrial structure and predominating ‘depression.’” In Schumpeter’s representation, profit-oriented innovations [and their impact on competitive pressures] cluster *in time*. However, it is just as plausible to hypothesize that they also cluster *in space*. We can then substitute “where” for “while” in the above quotation and read it as a description of a spatial polarization of zones of predominating “prosperity” and zones of predominating “depression.”

Schumpeter’s conception of creative destruction has the further advantage of defining the innovations that underlie the process very broadly, as “the carrying out of new combinations.” These include, not just technological and organizational innovations in industry, but all commercial innovations – such as the opening up of a new market, a new trading route, a new source of supply, the marketing of a new product, or the introduction of a new organization in the procurement and distribution of merchandise – which succeed in “leading” the economy into new channels. Schumpeter calls the agents of this leadership “entrepreneurs” – individuals who may or may not be “capitalists,” in the sense of having substantial command over means of production and payment, but who have the capacity to detect and seize the opportunities for excess profits that can be reaped through a rerouting of the established flow of economic life.

Giovanni Arrighi, *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* [London: Verso, 2007], pp. 82-88.

## Creative Industries: Neo-Liberalism as Mass Deception

Aras OZGUN

In the past few years, we have observed the emergence of a new political discourse/program, which quickly became influential in cultural policy making and public debates concerning cultural production. This discourse defines the field of cultural production as primarily an economic field – by calling it “creative industries,” and often appears as an economic development [or “survival”] program at a practical level. But this pragmatism is actually a pseudo-scientific disguise for the substantially political nature of the discourse, which practically imposes a neoliberal governmentality by attempting to restructure the cultural field through economic principles, assign cultural producers an “entrepreneurial role,” redefine the “creative process” itself, and finally, paradoxically bring the appropriative logic of capitalist economy to the necessarily collective practice of cultural production. In the paper I presented at

Continental Drift 2006 seminar, I tried to develop a critique of such discourse at both analytical and political levels by focusing on the creative industries debate taking place in Vienna. The economic and cultural boom of Vienna over the past decade and continuing successful welfare policies and public support for the arts established relevant conditions for a critical public debate around creative industries discourse. Under these conditions the political essence of the discourse becomes unveiled, and this gives us the opportunity to discuss such economic program in terms of biopolitics and governmentality.

This particular study is a part of my larger project on the political economy of contemporary cultural production through a comparative study of cultural policies and the economics of cultural production in New York, Berlin, and Vienna. My project is shaped by the same concerns that bring the **Continental Drift Seminar** together. As artists and cultural producers living in the “free world,” we are no longer surrounded by direct and visible forms of censorship and oppressive techniques of social control. Vice versa, we are encouraged to be “creative,” even excessively perhaps, as long as our creative productions stay within gallery displays and become economically productive and articulate to the production/consumption cycles of the global culture industry. At this point, our social responsibility as “creative people” seems to be questioning the very conditions of “creativity” as such, and eventually, to create alternative production and circulation mechanisms. For me, **Continental Drift** and similar collective efforts effectively carry the potentials to initiate these mechanisms. ★

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Ecotourism amusement park outside Beijing

# Creating Infrastructure Through Activist Research

Daniel TUCKER

**AREA [Art/Research/Education/Activism]** is a publication and event series in Chicago. While the main project is an attempt to document, challenge and strengthen the local political and cultural left, there is also an emphasis on researching the conditions of this context.

When we started this project in 2005, there was a feature article in the *Economist* hailing Chicago as a “post-industrial success story,” a curious declaration that conflicted significantly with our experiences and observations. Accordingly, one question informing the development of AREA as an activist research project was a slight reframing – “Is Chicago a post-industrial success story?”

There is much disagreement amongst the local business elite and academics alike about whether Chicago qualifies as a “global city.” While this prestige distinction is unimportant for AREA and can be seen as a rhetorical strategy used for place marketing and encouraging competition between cities, the qualities that compose urban life in work and play at this point in capitalist development are important. In our work, Chicago is the lens through which we view the complexities of an increasingly mobile capitalism.

Here are some of the questions we have asked using the platform of AREA Chicago’s “Local Readers” publication series:

- What kind of infrastructure of services and resources do we need when our welfare state is in disrepair and being increasingly privatized? [AREA #1]
- What kind of food policy can we create to make sure that people of the city are healthy enough to pursue organization? [AREA#2]
- What are the things we mean and want when we say “we”? What are critical approaches to the commonplace political concept of solidarity? [AREA #3]
- In contexts where more and more Chicagoans are entrapped in the expanding industry of mass incarceration, how can meaningful, visionary and practical changes to the criminal justice system occur? [AREA #4]
- What is the role of education and pedagogy in strengthening social movements? [AREA #5]

- How do experimental policies turn the city into a social and economic laboratory? [AREA #6]
- What kinds of logics and strategies do contemporary social movements inherit from their predecessors, especially the New Left and Counter-Culture Left of the late 1960s/early 1970s? [AREA #7]

In addition to publishing online and in print, AREA circulates research by participating in local coalitions and alliances, connecting to regional and international networks and gatherings such as **Continental Drift**, the **Radical Midwest Cultural Corridor**, “This is Forever” **Autonomous Marxist** lecture series [NYC], **Spatial Justice** lecture series [Los Angeles], the **National Conference on Organized Resistance, Re:Activism** [Budapest], **Urban Fest** [Zagreb], **Learning Site** [Copenhagen] and many others. Through the lens of critical practices in Chicago, we build a case study in the current shape and trends of left cultural and political organizing in the early part of the 21st century. We offer a narrative of Chicago different from the “post industrial success story” or “global city.” Instead, we explore a city where the shit has hit the fan and people are creating the infrastructure that is necessary to take control of the fragile conditions of their lives and environment. ★ [www.areachicago.org](http://www.areachicago.org) | [areachicago@gmail.com](mailto:areachicago@gmail.com)

## Cultures of Capital

The first culture of capitalism is the one that everyone knows about. It developed in the secular culture of the Renaissance, used the visual forms and literary narratives of antiquity as its raw material, and had naturalistic illusionism as its goal. If it tended to swing between the poles of neo-classicism and anecdotal realism, that was also the source of its enduring strength. It survived not just the transition to industrial capitalism, but also the convulsive politics of industrialism in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Europe. This last claim needs some justification, for this is the point at which the first culture is often said to have broken down. But the period from 1850 to 1950 conforms, in significant respects, to the pre-existing pattern: nineteenth-century realism was the last, and perhaps also the fullest expression of the classical aesthetic of mimesis; the first half of the twentieth century saw the final flourishing of the classical style...

The second culture of capitalism is equally familiar, but not everyone thinks it is a civilization. Before the 1970s it was called mass culture or kitsch; since then it has been known, misleadingly, as postmodernism. It can be argued that the continuity between kitsch and postmodernism is such that they constitute a single culture; and that this culture replaced not, as the word ‘postmodernism’ implies, modernism, but classicism. The differences between the first and second cultures of capitalism might be enumerated as follows: 1] the shift from mimesis to the meme; from the imitation of the world to the reproduction of the unit of reproduction – or, to put it another way, from iconocity to indexicality; and, following from this, 2] the acceptance of stylistic eclecticism [classical models enjoyed their unique prestige on account of their supposed naturalism, their occasional use as ornament in architectural postmodernism was deeply anti-classical], 3] the reliance

on large numbers of consumers to distribute/create the product, and 4] the erasure of the social rather than the technical traces of facture.

The preconditions of commodity culture [as I shall call it] were the expansion of the market and the development of new media. What poetry and painting were for classical culture, the periodical, the photograph and their progeny [film, radio, TV, video, other electronic media] were for the culture of commodities. The sources of commodity culture were various: sometimes [as with popular music] drawing almost exclusively on folk traditions; at others using the classical, sometimes viewed through the prism of modernism. The so-called postmodern era has been characterized not by any fundamental change in commodity culture, but by its colonization of the institutions and media of classicism...

By simultaneously resisting and mediating the two cultures modernism created a space between them, a distinct zone where their transgressive intermingling did not instantly compromise their separation. This liminal space facilitated the long overlap between the two cultures; it was also the route through which one culture turned into the other. If the space of modernism is the space between the cultures of capitalism, and the time of modernism is that of their overlapping, the trajectory of modernism is that which leads from the first to the second. We can picture this trajectory as a double fold. Modernism begins where classicism turns back on itself, and ends where it turns back into commodity culture.

Malcom Bull, “Between the Cultures of Capital,” *New Left Review* 11, 2001, pp. 98-103.

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This is not America, Berlin

## Dialogicity

The word in the dialogical relation as understood by **Bakhtin** is never a neutral word of the language, devoid of intentions, uninhabited by the voices of others. The speaker first receives the speech of others [starting from the voice of the mother], with all its intonations, its emotional affirmations. My own expressiveness finds every word already inhabited by the expressiveness of the other. To speak is to enter into a dialogical relation with the words of others, not initially with the meaning of the words, but with the expressions, the intonations and the voices. Speaking means appropriating the speech of the other. Speaking, as **Bakhtin** says, is like opening a path through the word itself, which is a multiplicity full of the voices, the intonations, the desires of others.

To whom does the word belong? To me, to others, to no one? Can I be the owner of a common good, like the word, in the same way as I can be the owner of an object?

"A word [or in general any sign] is interindividual. Everything that is said, expressed, is located outside the soul of the speaker and does not belong only to him. The word cannot be assigned to a single speaker. The author [speaker] has his own inalienable right to the word, but the listener has his rights, and those whose voices are heard in the word before the author comes upon it also have their rights" [**Mikhail Bakhtin**, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, pp. 121-22].

**Rimbaud's** formula, *Je est un autre*, should be understood as being present first of all in the words that constitute the tissue of our subjectivity. In my own words resound all the voices that have appropriated those words throughout history, but also all the future voices that will take them up again. The other is not

only present in the already uttered word, but is an immanent and constituent element of every utterance still to come. For **Bakhtin**, the other and her words are possible worlds: consequently, the relation with the words of others is always the event of an encounter, and not a simple [linguistic] exchange or a [intersubjective] recognition...

The event created and managed by the TV or the media doesn't open up any possibility, but constitutes the departure-point for an authoritarian production of meaning. It tries to form a subject of enunciation on which all statements will depend; to construct a point of origin for the slogans that will constitute a consensual, majority public. This departure-point or origin of meaning is "performed" by exploiting and neutralizing the creative functions which, in film, radio, television and the net, no longer necessarily involve an author [and his copyrights]. These creative functions are recodified onto the individual subject and his modes of communication and expression: "At the very moment when writing and thinking were beginning to abandon the authorial function, it was taken up again by radio, TV and journalism" [**Gilles Deleuze**].

The power of financial centralization and the technological monopoly imposed on the articulations of expression serve to recreate the authorial function as a point of departure or origin for marketing, news, advertising, viewing publics, etc. The control societies integrate and channel the power to express and constitute multiplicity by separating it from its own capacity to create and propagate possibilities. This is the form that capitalist expropriation takes today.

**Maurizio Lazzarato**, "Expression versus communication," *Les révolutions du capitalisme* [Paris: Les empêcheurs de penser en rond, 2004], pp. 159-60, 174-75.



**How can our artistic, activist and research-based practices respond to the overwhelming urgency of the present moment, to the sweeping "double movement" of neoliberal globalization?**

**Scott BERZOFSKY**  
**Dane NESTER**  
**Nicholas WISNIEWSKI**

We are now living in a period of unprecedented geopolitical transformation: By 2050 the world's population is expected to peak at 10 billion [the current population is 6.6 billion]. For the first time in history, the majority of people on the planet will live in cities. Three quarters of all future world population growth will take place in the emerging megacities of the global South, where there is virtually no planning or infrastructure in place to accommodate these new residents or provide them with services. Consider the prospect of a "planet of slums" in relation to the recent warnings of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which claim that unless we significantly reduce our greenhouse gas emissions [80% by 2050] and therefore largely free ourselves of carbon emitting technologies, the planet will be unable to avoid some of the worst consequences of global warming, including sea levels rising enough to submerge island nations, the elimination of one-quarter or more of the world's species, widespread famine in places like Africa and more intense hurricanes. The potential danger of these circumstances is escalated by the violent partitions and enforced inequalities of what **Naomi Klein** has recently termed "disaster apartheid." As **Klein** suggests, the situations we witness in

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Migrant farmers' village, suburban Beijing



post-Katrina New Orleans, the West Bank or US-occupied Iraq are not exceptions to the norm, but rather present themselves as windows into a near-future terminal condition of neoliberal globalization. A world in which spatial politics have been reduced to Green Zones of privilege and security, Red Zones of poverty and despair, and the militarized borders that keep them apart.

Can we shift scales of analysis and recognize the impact of neoliberal policies and uneven geographical development within our own cities? How are local struggles for affordable housing, environmental justice and the “right to the city” related to the larger concerns described above? How can experiments and interventions at the local level contribute to a global movement of resistance to neoliberalism and the invention of alternatives?

Over the last year we have been working on an ongoing site-specific

project in east Baltimore based on converting a vacant lot into a sustainable urban farm and social space. We are squatting the land and collaborating with residents to produce a space that responds to our collective needs and desires. We are interested in generating a process of small-scale urban planning which is participatory and dialogical. During the first season we produced a variety of vegetables that were distributed for free within the neighborhood. The project has been informed by Felix Guattari’s concept of “ecosophy,” discussed in his short book, *The Three Ecologies*, published in 1989. In it, Guattari argues that in order to respond to the challenges we face today we must develop a new ethico-political articulation that integrates the three ecological registers – the environment, social relations, and human subjectivity. Our project is a modest attempt to put this concept into practice. ★

## Double Movement

For a century the dynamics of modern society was governed by a double movement: the market expanded continuously but this movement was met by a countermovement checking the expansion in definite directions. Vital though such a countermovement was for the protection of society, in the last analysis it was incompatible with the self-regulation of the market, and thus with the market system itself. That system developed in leaps and bounds; it engulfed space and time, and by creating bank money it produced a dynamic hitherto unknown. By the time it reached its maximum extent, around 1914, every part of the globe, all its inhabitants and yet unborn generations, physical persons as well as huge fictitious bodies called corporations, were comprised in it. A new way of life spread over the planet with a claim to universality unparalleled since the age when Christianity started out on its career, only this time the movement was on a purely material level.

Yet simultaneously a countermovement was on foot. This was more than the usual defensive behavior of society faced with change; it was a reaction against a dislocation which attacked the fabric of society, and which would have destroyed the very organization of production that the market had called into being...

[The double movement] can be personified as the action of two organizing principles in society, each of them setting itself specific institutional aims, having the support of definite social forces and using its own distinctive methods. The one was the principle of economic liberalism, aiming at the establishment of a self-regulating market, relying on the support of the trading classes, and using largely laissez-faire and free trade as its methods; the other was the principle of social protection aiming at the conservation of man and nature as well as productive organization, relying on the varying support of those most immediately affected by the deleterious action of the market – primarily, but not exclusively, the working and

the landed classes – and using protective legislation, restrictive association, and other instruments of intervention as its methods.

The middle [or trading] classes were the bearers of the nascent market economy; their business interests ran, on the whole, parallel to the general interest in regard to production and employment... On the other hand, the trading classes had no organ to sense the dangers involved in the exploitation of the physical strength of the worker, the destruction of family life, the devastation of neighborhoods, the denudation of forests, the pollution of rivers, the deterioration of craft standards, the disruption of folkways, and the general degradation of existence including housing and arts, as well as the innumerable forms of private and public life that do not affect profits.

By the turn of the nineteenth century – universal suffrage was now fairly general – the working class was an influential factor in the state; the trading classes, on the other hand, whose sway over the legislature was no longer unchallenged, became conscious of the political power involved in their leadership over industry. This peculiar localization of influence and power caused no trouble as long as the market system continued to function without great stress and strain; but when, for inherent reasons, this was no longer the case, and when tensions between the social classes developed, society itself was endangered by the fact that the contending parties were making government and business, state and industry, respectively, their strongholds. Two vital functions of society, the political and the economic, were being used and abused as weapons in a struggle for sectional interests. It was out of such a perilous deadlock that in the twentieth century the fascist crisis sprang.

Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* [Boston: Beacon, 1945/2001], chapter 11, “Man Nature and Productive Organization.”





# Twelve Notes on Collectivism

## & Dark Matter

### Gregory Sholette

I  
“As a set of rules that define the events of discourse, the archive is situated between *Langue*, as the system of construction of possible sentences—that is, of possibilities of speaking—and the *corpus* that unites the set of what has been said, the things actually uttered or written. The archive is thus the mass of the non-semantic inscribed in every meaningful discourse as a function of enunciation; it is the dark margin encircling and limiting every concrete act of speech.”

**Giorgio Agamben**, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, 144.

II  
From every swipe of your plastic debit card to the surveillance of so-called public spaces, an administered collectivity hides everywhere in plain sight. Every ‘I’ conceals an involuntary “belongingness,” every gesture a statistic about your purchasing power, education level, and the market potential of your desire. Effectively we are collectivized already. The only question now is: should we accept this type of involuntarily, serialized collectivity, or actively seek another? This is not merely one strategy to ponder among others; it is a fundamental issue at every level of lived experience today within what **Gilles Deleuze** aptly termed *the society of control*.

III  
Meanwhile, vibrant popular images of collective resistance abound if we take the time to look for them. Think of filmmaker **George Romero**’s impromptu band of zombie killers in *Dawn of the Dead*, or the multiethnic multitude defending Zion in the **Wachowski** brother’s *Matrix* films, or perhaps most accurate of all cinematic portrayals of collectivism, the 1999 comedy *Mystery Men* based on the *Dark Horse* comic book: “It doesn’t matter what we call ourselves. We know who we are.” It is the archetypical gang of oddball renegade men and women thrown together by necessity who work collectively to

defeat an overwhelming, and typically unnatural enemy.

Within the plastic arts however, collectivism resembles the creative equivalent of dark matter—the

96% of unknown mass that makes up the visible universe and keeps it from flying apart. At once figuratively amorphous and pragmatically indispensable, collectivism appears abject when compared to properly framed and institutionally discernable forms of art. Yet its indispensability functions at several levels.

IV  
Structurally, as a corpus or archive of all previously realized group practices, collectivism the archive surrounds every individual articulation. Each new claim of authorial originality and every artistic gesture is dependent on the persistence of its shadowy trace. [In **Agamben**’s terms it is the dark margin that encircles all concrete acts of enunciation.]

V  
At the level of narrative, whether calling for the radical elimination of individual authorship as many early 20th century collectives asserted, or through the embodiment of diverse subject positions and multiple aesthetic vernacular as in the case of many contemporary art collectives, self-organized, collective practice forms a representational boundary as well as a specific horizon from within which conventional cultural narratives are constructed and beyond which they break apart.

VI  
Finally, in pragmatic terms, collectivism, and by extension all species of dark creativity including amateur and informal art that by definition or inclination remain invisible to institutional high culture, provides the unseen but necessary verification that specific artistic acts are more than merely idiosyncratic occurrences. This is so no matter how unique or autonomous the accomplishment appears to be. And in this sense the archive of creative dark matter evinces the necessary presence of an artistic *Langue*, but in the broadest possible sense: a preexisting set of visual-organizational rules that always already threatens to radiate away from the narrow field of recognized artistry and dissipate into the uneven heterogeneity of the social sphere itself. This link between the *corpus* of collectivism and the generalized creativity of the multitude also explains why so many self-defined artistic collectives—from the Constructivists to Situationists, from Fluxus to Las Agencias—have called for the dissolution of art directly into everyday life.

VII  
Lacking neither a distinct history, nor an adequate explanatory theory, collective artistic activity

nevertheless bears down on the familiar cannon of proper names, stylistic innovations and formal typologies that populate the institutional art world. As part of the art world’s structural shadow realm collectivism invisibly transforms the culture industry, its discourse and even its fondness for categorical and ultimately collectible brands of discrete cultural products. Yet because collective activity is in the first and last instance

driven by social formations, economic circumstances and occasionally even organized political movements that are external to art world interests, the occasional appearance of collectivism within art historical discourse typically falls within two broad representational modes: the curious anecdote or the vestigial stain. That is to say, either collective art making serves as a backdrop or way station for individual artists whose careers have permitted them to mature beyond participation in group activity. Or, far less decorously, collectivism is demonized. Its reoccurring expression within artistic circles is viewed as a remnant of the early 20th Century avant-garde’s affiliation with European totalitarian politics. Still nothing so volatile as self-organized human associations, especially those populated by artists

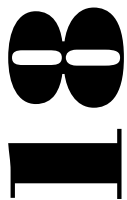
and intellectuals, could possibly remain fixed in time, nostalgically recapitulating past ideological dogma. Instead, collective artistic practice is as complex and unpredictable as the social and aesthetic forces upon which it is contingent. In recent years the transformation within collective activity is so dramatic as to represent a virtual paradigm shift.

VIII  
Contemporary artistic collectivism is typically characterized by its aesthetic informality, political anarchism and its performative approach to the expression of collective identity itself. In practice, its interdisciplinary approach

is also frequently interventionist. Examples of this include the creation of works that tactically infiltrate high schools, flea markets, public squares, corporate websites, city streets, housing projects, and local political machines in ways that do not set out to recover a specific meaning or use-value for art world discourse or private interests. Indeed, many of these activities operate using economies based on pleasure, generosity and the free dispersal of goods and services, rather than the construction of objects and product scarcity that are essential to art world economics. *But above all else what the activist art collective makes tangible, and no doubt what is so anathema to the art market and its discourse, is the capacity for self-regulation over one’s production and distribution.* Certainly this capacity is available and suppressed within all productive activity. Understandably, it is also viewed as a danger to system regulators who recognize the promise collective self-determination has held out to each successive generation.

IX  
What can be said of dark matter in general is that either by choice or circumstance it displays a degree of autonomy from the critical and economic structures of the art world and moves instead in-between its meshes. But this independence is not risk free. Increasingly inexpensive technologies of communication, replication, display and transmission that allow informal and activist artists to network with each other have also made the denizens of this shadowy world ever more conspicuous to the very institutions that once sought to exclude them. In short, dark matter is no longer as dark as it once was. Yet, the art world and enterprise culture can do little more than immobilize specific instances of this shadow activity by converting it into a fixed consumable or lifestyle branding.

X  
For example, groups such as **Forcefield**, **Derraindrop**, **Paper Rad**, **Gelatin**, **The Royal Art Lodge**, **HobypopMuseum** whose names flicker impishly across the otherwise dull screen of the contemporary art world invoke not so much the plastic arts as the loopy cheer of techno music and its nostalgia for a make-believe 1960s epitomized by LSD, free love and day-glo – instead of civil rights, feminism and SDS. As critic **Alison M. Gingeras** explains to us, this new collectivity is not at all solemn, it is “insouciant.” It eschews the “sociopolitical agenda associated with collective art making” and reflects “a juvenile disregard for historical veracity.” But why this sudden rush to revamp the





political rebelliousness of group artistic practice? To re-package it as “tribal,” “exuberant,” “insouciant”? Because when compared to almost every previous collective and many new ones, the recent crop of gallery sponsored art groupettes is unmistakably a product of enterprise culture. As put forward by historian **Chin-tao Wu**, enterprise culture is the near total privatization of everything up to and including that which once stood outside or against the reach of capitalism including

avant-garde and radical art. If communal activity, collaboration, egalitarian cooperation run directly opposite individuated forms of individualistic greed, enterprise culture will not aim to overtly repress this tendency, but instead seek a way of branding and packaging contradiction in order to sell it back to us. No surprise then that this new collectivity is organized around fashion, with its members sharing “nothing more than vacant facial expressions and good taste in casual clothes.”

## XI

Cut the power and storm the museum. Barricade its entrance with **Richard Serra**'s sculpture. Cover its windows with **Gerhard Richter** paintings. Transform the sculpture garden into an organic produce cooperative; refurbish the boardroom to serve as a day care facility; place the cafeteria under the supervision of homeless people. Yet, in spite of this hypothetical uprising it is apparent that institutional power persists. Like gravity issuing from a collapsed star it draws us into the

very orbit of what we once sought to escape because despite our protestations we continue to love it – or at least the unselfish image it projects – more than it could ever love itself. For no matter how imperfectly actually existing museums fulfill their social obligations, the symbolic position of the museum remains inseparable from notions of public space, democratic culture, and citizenship itself. Nevertheless, exploring what a liberated, post-revolutionary museum might look like, how it would function, and what its revitalized role within the local community would be is an approach often taken up today by younger, socially committed artists who have grown apprehensive of the virtually conventional form of institutional critique. Collectives that operate within the contradictions of the bourgeois public sphere openly and playfully expose its imaginary fault-lines dividing private from public, individual from collective, and the light from the dark matter. But while such groups offer important models for cultural resistance, it would be disingenuous to suggest such collectives and dark creativity can provide a totally satisfactory solution to the quest for freedom now or in the future. Instead, these groups and practices are characterized by their discontinuous nature, by repetitions and instability, by tactics rather than long-range strategies. What is effective in the short run remains untested on an extended scale. And that is the point we appear to be approaching rapidly.

## XII

To paraphrase the cosmologists: there is perhaps no current problem of greater importance to cultural radicals than that of the “dark matter.” ►



## No Santa for Hazleton Benj GERDES

NoSantaForHazleton.com site,  
December 24, 2006.

In the summer of 2006, the town council of Hazleton, a small city in the state of Pennsylvania, passed the most aggressive anti-immigration legislation in the United States, instituting harsh penalties for any employer or landlord having business dealings with undocumented workers, as well as declaring English the official language of the town and forbidding the translation of any official document into another language. These laws became a national test case for a conservative moment toward local anti-immigration ordinances that sought to re-write an already abysmal set of federal immigration laws by making them even worse. Tens of other municipalities attempted to pass “copycat” statutes,

and even more towns or counties publicly considered doing so. Despite the fact that Pennsylvania is a landlocked state with no port or international border, the largest number of these racist anti-immigration laws in 2006 were [and still are] pending in that state.

I had initially been interested in an on-the-ground media project with at-risk and displaced Latino and Hispanic residents of Hazleton, but as donations from conservative think tanks flowed into the town's litigation to actually enforce these laws, it became clear that the actual lived social and economic conditions in the town had nothing to do with the national media portrayal of the same struggle. Nationally, the mainstream television news presented an incredibly positive narrative surrounding the town's efforts to effectively drive out immigrant populations via scare tactics. In truth, fears around the very visible economic decline of a former coal mining town had been used to mobilize popular support for their legislation locally. Presenting this project in its development at **Continental Drift**

helped me recognize this struggle as a site where neoconservatism and neoliberalism were in a high degree of tension. This led me to develop strategies of media intervention where, within a playful fictive space, the language spoke directly to a set of economic issues in a very real way. The project also fit into a dialogue about possible sites for protest and intervention in the face of increasingly militarized urban spaces.

**NoSantaForHazleton.com** is a website launched in late December of 2006, supposedly by the “concerned citizens” of the town with the support of the town's telegenic mayor. The launch was announced by a press release declaring Santa Claus “America's most loved undocumented worker” and describing the town's extension of their anti-immigration campaign into a cultural and symbolic realm. Calculated to play into a slow holiday news cycle, within days the Associated Press, Reuters, and hundreds of other blogs, newspapers, and television news outlets had, while declaring the story a hoax, circulated the rumor that Hazleton had banned Santa Claus. This cut short the town's positive media honeymoon and forced a higher degree of honesty regarding their racist intentions when the mayor clarified that Santa was welcome, only Spanish-speakers were not. Because several features of the site – donations sought for a television scare campaign about Santa, a form to send letters to Santa telling him to stay out – were configured both as plausible public anti-Santa campaigns and to feed directly back into the town's municipal offices, the campaign introduced both disorganization and the need for a defensive press in the face of internationally poor PR. ★

## East Asian Network

Historically, there existed several maritime regions that stretched from Northeast Asia to East Asia and then from Southeast Asia to Oceania... This series of seas... includes the seas of Okhotsk and Japan, the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea, the South China Sea, the Java Sea, the Banda Sea, the Arafura Sea just north of Australia, the Coral Sea and the Tasman Sea between southeast Australia and New Zealand. Maritime Asia is far larger, at least as complex, and much more diverse than the Mediterranean. The landmasses separating the seas are thus separated from one another and have their own histories. The states, regions, and cities located along the periphery of each sea zone are close enough to influence one another but too far apart to be assimilated into a larger entity. Autonomy in this sense formed a major condition for the establishment of the looser form of political organization known as the tributary system.

**Takeshi Hamashita**, "The Intra-Regional System in East Asia," in P. Katzenstein and T. Shiraiishi, eds., *Network Power: Japan and Asia* [Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1997], p. 115.

China is the world's second largest importer of oil, over half of which transits through the Straits of Malacca. China also currently consumes half of the world's cement, a third of its steel, a quarter of its copper and a fifth of its aluminum – much of it traveling through choke-points in the Straits of Malacca, Sunda, Lombok and Makassar. These geopolitical concerns, combined with China's insatiable appetite for energy and natural resources, have made it inevitable that China, in its

own way, should pick up where the United States left off. Just as regional economic forums that include the US, such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Forum [APEC], are losing steam, ASEAN-plus-3 [the Association of South-East Asian Nations, plus China, Japan and South Korea] has picked up momentum, and it is the latter that is calling important – and effective – economic shots for the region. And it is not at all unrealistic to anticipate the formation of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area [ACFTA] in the near future. China is also gearing up to create a new security forum within the overall structure of the Asian Regional Forum [ARF], as an alternative to the series of bilateral security arrangements that the United States maintains.

**Meredith Jung-En Woo**, "The New East Asia," in *New Left Review* 47, 2007.

In general, informal cooperation in East Asia has been based on three *yuan* [special relationships]: ethnic ties, industrial linkages and geographical proximity. All three types of informal integration share several features. They are all

- 1] Market driven. Whatever the linkages are, it is the economic returns that ultimately lead to the formation of the informal integration. Other factors only facilitate the integration. This is different from formal integration, where many decisions are politics-driven.
- 2] Privately sponsored. In all cases of informal integration, the actual integrative activities have been conducted by private firms.
- 3] Network based. East Asia is a region where intergovernmental cooperation has been lacking. But privately, all kinds of networks have developed among Asians in different countries. At the macrolevel, there are production networks and ethnic business networks. At the micro-level, these two major networks consist of numerous networks formed through long-term corporate ties, [real or imaginary] kinship, voluntary organizations, etc.
- 4] Non-institutional. Integration through the informal mechanisms does not rely on formal international organizations. In many cases it is even non-contractual. Therefore informal integration involves much lower transaction costs than formal cooperation and is much easier to materialize.

**Dajin Peng**, "The changing nature of East Asia as an economic region," *Pacific Affairs*, Summer 2000.



**Pedro Lasch**. *Tianguis Transnacional: Encuentro Sonidero #4 [Fajardo Speaks]*. Tepito, Mexico City. October, 2007.

**Part 1 [2006] INDIGENOUS IMMIGRANTS:** In Chapter 2 of **Continental Drift I** presented some ideas, practices, and collaborative initiatives I have been involved with surrounding the social and aesthetic resistance movements of American Indians [i.e., Indigenous people from America, the continent], international workers, and immigrants worldwide. A significant part of these endeavors has focused on what people refuse to examine because they claim it to be "obvious" or because, like **Margaret Thatcher**, they think "there is no alternative." Some of the obvious objects and subjects that have concerned me are

- 1] the aesthetic and political forms or structures that rationalize and condition our ideas and

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continental drift



Graffiti, Bucharest

## TIANGUIS TRANSNACIONAL: DRIFTING & INDIGENOUS MIGRANCY

experiences of citizenship as based on

- a) a racialized ethics of facial recognition and
- b) the use of the words natural and naturalization. These investigations and productions with the use of mirror-masks have come under the heading of Naturalizations Series [2002-ongoing] and they all ask: What are we before we are naturalized?
- 2] Thinking and being among indigenous immigrants has also led me to produce **LATINO/A AMERICA** [2003-ongoing] a series of individual and collective map-making/counter-cartographic activities that critically project and twist the relationship between word and image, landscape and abstraction, population and geography.
- 3] Last, but not least, I have deeply and pleasurably played with many ideas and processes with the children, families, and friends who have participated in the workshops, events, and political actions of Art, Story-Telling, and the Five Senses, an ongoing experimental bilingual education program I designed and co-founded in 2001 with the immigrants' organizations **Asociación Tepeyac de New York**, and **Mexicanos Unidos de Queens**. All of these projects have developed in the form of games, non-habitual habits, and temporal rearrangements, what I also call open routines. Tactically and pragmatically engaging with some of the spaces, people, and histories of official legitimation [art institutions, academies, governments, corporations, foundations, etc], these are chains of connected but individually framed interventions that happen mostly outside or against them.

**PART 2 [2008] TIANGUIS TRANSNACIONAL:** The ideas **Brian Holmes** has been developing with us since 2005 through the notion of **Continental Drift**, and the constant intellectual, aesthetic, and socio-political experimentation we've embodied at **16Beaver** for almost a decade [crazy!] have become more than fundamental to my life and understanding. In addition, I find that the philosophical contradictions perceived in the combination of the words, indigenous and immigrant, as well as the epic social transformations created by the populations that are conventionally described by them, have yet to be explored in their full potency. Doing so along the shifting edges of **Fortress Europe** could be particularly interesting, especially as people might benefit from ideas unfamiliar to them, such as **Claudio Lomnitz'** *modernidad indiana* [Indian modernity], or the life-long project of the late **Guillermo Bonfil Batalla** – whose work I consider to be as crucial as **Frantz Fanon's**. During this next chapter of **Continental Drift** in Zagreb, however, I want to specifically propose immigrant indigeneity and indigenous migrancy as two theoretical and practical categories that should be used in direct relation to drifting. I am hoping we can do this together, by using this lens to revisit a few past **16Beaver** projects [**International Lunchtime Summit, Worldwide, 2003; Divided States Tour, Denmark, 2005; Between Us, South Korea, 2006**], while also beginning a dialogue about **Tianguis Transnacional**\* a new set of ongoing investigations I began in 2004 in the street markets of Mexico City, charting an organic exploration of the sites of contestation between neoliberal globalization and the aesthetic, social, and political manifestations of the so-called "informal sectors" of society. ★



## Extradisciplinary Investigation

What is the logic, the need or the desire that pushes more and more artists to work outside the limits of their own discipline? Pop art, conceptual art, body art, performance and video each marked a rupture of the disciplinary frame. But these dramatized outbursts merely imported themes, media or expressive techniques back into what **Yves Klein** had termed the "specialized" ambiance of the gallery or the museum. Now we are confronted with a new series of outbursts, under such names as net.art, bio art, visual geography, space art and database art – to which one could add an archi-art, or art of architecture, as well as a machine art that reaches all the way back to 1920s constructivism. The heterogeneous character of the list suggests its application to all the domains where theory and practice meet. In the artistic forms that result, one still finds remains of the old modernist tropism whereby art designates itself first of all, drawing the attention back to its own operations of expression, representation, metaphorization or deconstruction. But there is something more at stake: a new tropism and a new sort of reflexivity, involving artists as well as theorists and activists in a passage beyond the limits traditionally assigned to their practice. The word tropism conveys the desire or need to turn towards something else, towards an exterior field or discipline; while the notion of reflexivity now indicates a critical return to the departure point, an attempt to transform the initial discipline, to end its isolation, to open up new possibilities of expression, analysis, cooperation and commitment. This back-

and-forth movement, or rather, this transformative spiral, is the operative principle of extradisciplinary investigations.

The extradisciplinary ambition is to carry out rigorous investigations on terrains as far away from art as finance, biotech, geography, urbanism, psychiatry, the electromagnetic spectrum, etc., to bring forth on those terrains the "free play of the faculties" and the intersubjective experimentation that are characteristic of modern art, but also to try to identify, inside those same domains, the spectacular or instrumental uses so often made of the subversive liberty of aesthetic play. This complex movement, which never neglects the existence of the different disciplines, but never lets itself be trapped by them either, can provide a new departure point for what used to be called *institutional critique*.

The notion of transversality, developed by the practitioners of institutional analysis, helps to theorize the assemblages that link actors and resources from the art circuit to projects and experiments that don't exhaust themselves inside it, but rather, extend elsewhere. These projects are based on a circulation between disciplines, often involving the real critical reserve of marginal or counter-cultural positions: social movements, political associations, squats, autonomous universities.

**Brian Holmes**, "Extradisciplinary Investigations" [2007], in *Transversal*, "Do you remember institutional critique?" [<http://transform.eipcp.net/transversal/0106/holmes/en>].

## Fictitious Commodity

A fictitious commodity is something that has the form of a commodity [in other words, that can be bought and sold] but is not itself created in a profit-oriented labor process subject to the typical competitive pressures of market forces to rationalize its production and reduce the turnover time of invested capital. There are four key categories of fictitious commodity: land [or nature], money, knowledge and labor-power. Each is often treated as a simple factor of production, obscuring the conditions under which it enters the market economy, gets transformed therein, and so contributes to the production of goods and services for sale.

*Land* comprises all natural endowments [whether located on, beneath or above the earth's surface] and their productive capacities in specific contexts. The current form of such natural endowments typically reflects the past and present social transformation of nature as well as natural developments that occur without human intervention. Virgin land and analogous resources are not produced as commodities by capitalist enterprises but are appropriated as gifts of nature and then transformed for profit – often without due regard to their specific reproduction cycles, overall renewability, or, in the case of land, water and air, their capacities to absorb waste and pollution.

*Money* is a unit of account, store of value, means of payment [for example, taxes, tithes and fines], and a medium of economic exchange. Regardless of whether it has a natural form [for example, cowrie shells], a commodity form [for

example, precious metals] or a fiduciary form [for example, paper notes, electronic money], the monetary system in which such monies circulate is not [and could not be] a purely economic phenomenon that is produced and operated solely for profit. For money's ability to perform its economic functions depends critically on extra-economic institutions, sanctions and personal and impersonal trust. Insofar as money circulates as national money, the state has a key role in securing a formally rational monetary system; conversely, its increasing circulation as stateless money poses serious problems regarding the regulation of monetary relations.

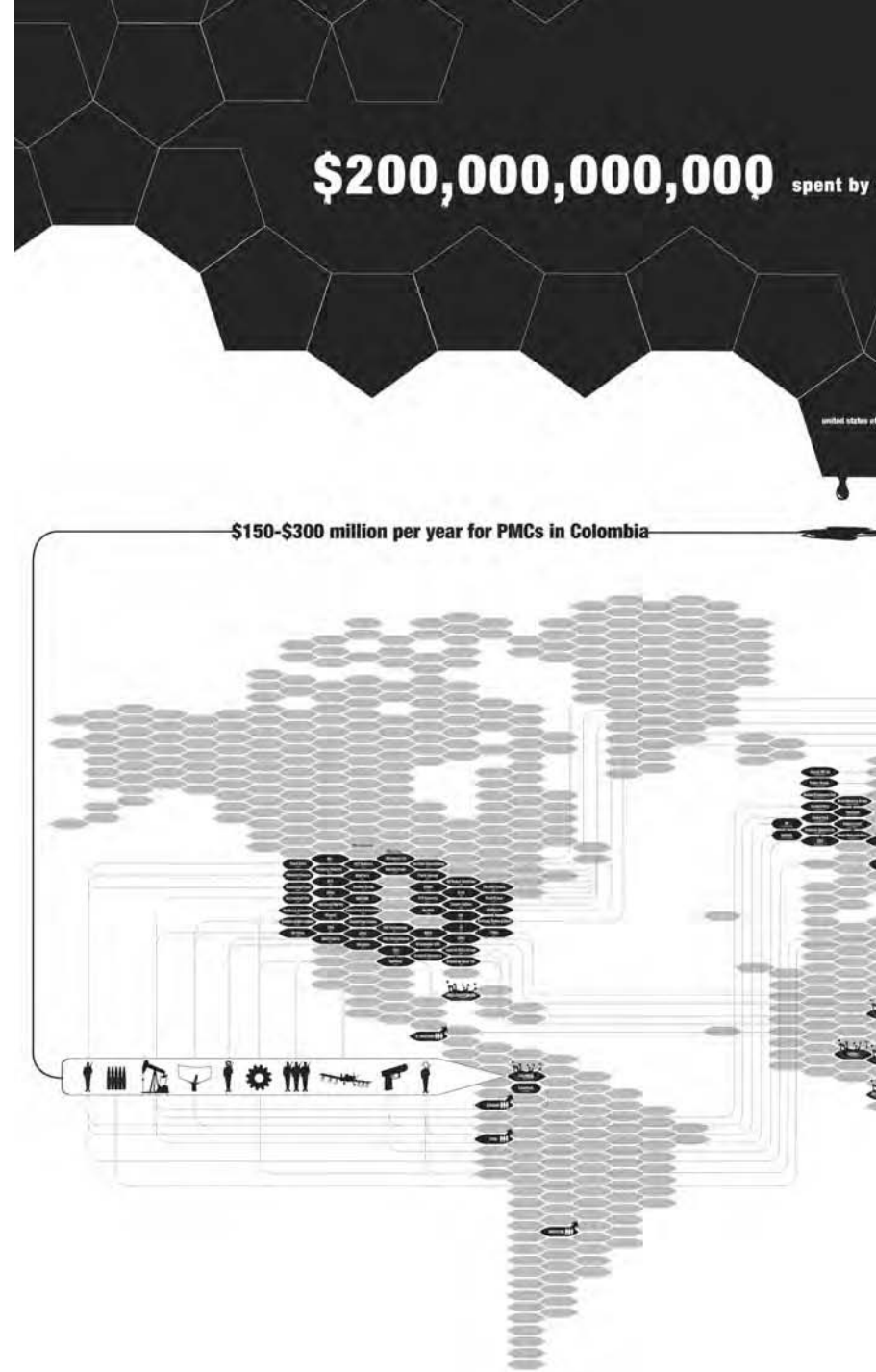
*Knowledge* is a collectively produced common resource based on individual, organizational and collective learning over different time horizons and in varied contexts – non-commercial as well as commercial. Since knowledge is not inherently scarce [in orthodox economic terms, it is a non-rival good], it only gains a commodity form insofar as it is made artificially scarce and access thereto is made to depend on payment [in the form of royalties, license fees, etc.]. Thus a profound social reorganization is required to transform knowledge into something that can be sold.

Finally, the ability to *work* is a generic human capacity. It gains a commodity form only insofar as workers can be induced or coerced to enter labor markets as waged labor. Moreover, even when it has acquired a commodity form, labor-power is reproduced through non-market as well as market institutions and social relations.

Bob Jessop, *The Future of the Capitalist State* [Cambridge: Polity, 2002], pp. 13-14.



Hacker conference, Tarifa, Spain



## The Privatization of War

Lize MOGEL

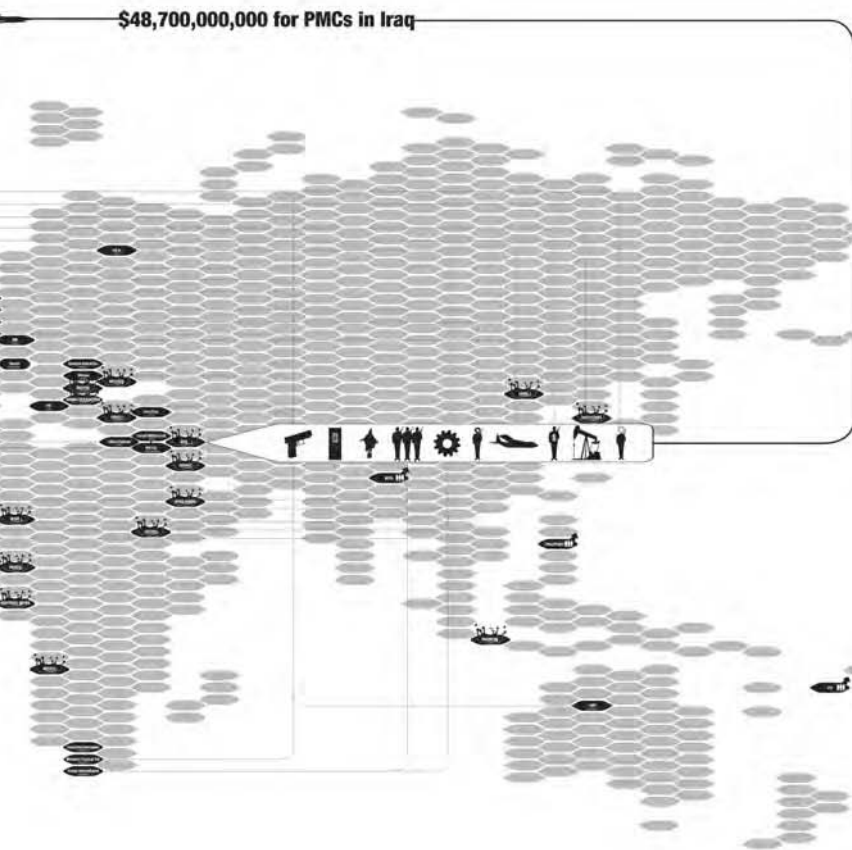
“The Privatization of War: Colombia as Laboratory and Iraq as Large-Scale Application” is a collaboration between myself [an artist] and journalist/researcher **Dario Azzellini**. This project has been exhibited in art contexts and also published in various international newspapers.

“The Privatization of War” diagrams the relationships between the United States and private military contractors [PMCs]; and their activities in Colombia and Iraq. These nations are two key sites that exemplify PMC operation in the new world order.

The privatization of military services is a worldwide business worth \$200 billion a year. PMCs are an enormous part of this economy, offering “products” from logistics [such as building military camps and prisons] to strategic support [radar and surveillance] to open combat and special sabotage missions. PMC corporations are based globally, and recruit heavily in the global south.



world governments for Private Military Contractors each year



The Privatization of War: Colombia as Laboratory and Iraq as Large-Scale Application, Lize Mogel and Dario Azzellini, 2007

It is advantageous for governments to hire PMCs. As private corporations working on foreign soil, they are less accountable to the public or to military law. In Iraq, the death of PMC employees does not have as great an impact on American public opinion as does the death of soldiers, although thousands have been killed to date. Approximately 1 in 6 military actors in Iraq are PMCS.

In Colombia, conditions for "good business" are ensured by PMCS, in cooperation with the Colombian and US armies, transnational corporations, paramilitaries, the CIA, and the DEA. These ever-shifting coalitions are enacted to undermine not only the armed insurgency but also campesino organizations, unions and unionizing efforts, and social movements. [DA & LM, 2007]

Questions:

How do cultural projects become effective as agents of change? Is information and interpretation enough? What is the common ground for artists and activists to meet? How can cultural production affect policy?



<http://brooklynrail.org/2007/02/express/pirvatization>

## Latin American Consensus

Over the course of the past seven years, Latin America has seen the rebirth of nationalist and socialist political movements. Following **Hugo Chávez's** 1998 landslide victory in Venezuela, one country after another has turned left. Today, roughly 300 million of Latin America's 520 million citizens live under governments that either want to reform the Washington Consensus – a euphemism for the mix of punishing fiscal austerity, privatization and market liberalization that has produced staggering levels of poverty and inequality over the past three decades – or abolish it altogether and create a new, more equitable global economy... Anchored by Brazil's enormous market and advanced agricultural, pharmaceutical, heavy equipment, steel and aeronautical sectors, the countries of South America have taken a number of steps to diversify the hemisphere's economy. They courted non-US trade and investment, particularly from Asia. Fueled by a consuming thirst for Latin America's raw materials – its oil, ore and soybeans – the Chinese government has negotiated more than 400 investment and trade deals with Latin America over the past few years, investing more than \$50 billion in the region. China is both Brazil's and Argentina's fourth-largest trading partner, providing \$7 billion for port and railroad modernization and signing \$20 billion worth of commercial agreements. South American leaders have also sought to deepen regional economic integration, primarily by expanding the **Mercosur** – South America's most important commercial alliance – and embarking on an ambitious road-building project. In December [2005] **Lula** claimed that Brazil's trade with the rest of Latin America grew by nearly 90 percent since the previous year, compared with a 20 percent increase with the United States... Last December Venezuela joined Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay as a full member in **Mercosur**. At the same meeting where it approved Venezuela's petition for admission, Mercosur established a Parliament modeled on the European Union, agreeing to cooperate on a range of issues, including multilateral trade agreements with countries like China.

One sign that economic diversification is gaining force was the success in 2005 of then Argentine President **Néstor Kirchner's** take-it-or-leave-it offer of 30 cents on every dollar owed on its \$100 billion external debt, to be paid in long-term, low-interest bonds. In the past, financial markets would have severely punished such insolence, but with Asian investment pouring in and the economy rebounding at a steady clip, a majority of lenders had no choice but to make the deal.

In 2005, 80% of **IMF's** \$81 billion loan portfolio was to Latin America. Today, it's 1% with nearly all its \$17 billion in outstanding loans to Turkey and Pakistan. **The World Bank** is also being rejected. Venezuela had already paid off its **IMF** and **World Bank** debt ahead of schedule when **Hugo Chavez** symbolically announced on April 30: "We will no longer have to go to Washington nor to the **IMF** nor to the **World Bank**, not to anyone." Ecuador's **Raphael Correa** is following suit. He cleared his country's **IMF** debt, suspended **World Bank** loans, accused the **WB** of trying to extort money from him when he was economy and finance minister in 2005, and last April declared the **Bank's** country representative *persona non grata* in an extraordinary diplomatic slap in the face... The **Banco del Sur** will replace these repressive institutions with \$7 billion in startup capital when it begins operating in 2008. It will be under "a new financial architecture" for regional investment with the finance ministers of each member nation sitting on the bank's administrative council with equal authority over its operations as things now stand. Venezuelan Finance Minister **Rodrigo Cabeza** stressed "The idea is to rely on a development agency for us, led by us" to finance public and private development and regional integration projects. "There will not be credit subjected to economic policies. There will not be credit that produces a calamity for our people and as a result, it will not be a tool of domination" like the international lending agencies.

**Stephen Lendman**, "The Bank of the South," [www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?itemID=14164](http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?itemID=14164).

**The ALBA** [**Alternativa Bolivariana para las Américas**] is a proposed alternative to the U.S.-sponsored **Free Trade Area of the Americas** [FTAA], differing from the latter in that it advocates a socially-oriented trade block rather than one strictly based on the logic of deregulated profit maximization.... One of the obstacles to confront is the deep disparity that exists in development between the countries of the hemisphere, whereby poor countries such as Haiti or Bolivia are compelled to compete with the world's leading economic power. In order to help overcome trade disadvantages, **ALBA** pushes for solidarity with the economically weakest countries, with the aim of achieving a free trade area in which all of its members benefit.

**Greg Grandin**, "Latin America's New Consensus," [www.thenation.com/doc/20060501/grandin](http://www.thenation.com/doc/20060501/grandin).

**Teresa Arreaza**, "ALBA," [www.venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/339](http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/339).



## Military-Economic Bifurcation

In the century following the defeat of China in the first Opium War [1839-42], the eclipse of East Asia turned into what **Ken Pomeranz** has called "The Great Divergence." The political and economic fortunes of two world regions up until then characterized by similar living standards diverged sharply, Europe rapidly ascending to the zenith of its power and East Asia just as rapidly descending to its nadir... The situation appeared to be changing in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the mighty US military apparatus failed to coerce the Vietnamese people into a permanent scission along the Cold War divide... The economic conjuncture also seemed to favor the countries that had come to constitute the Third World. Their natural resources were in great demand, and so were their abundant and cheap labor supplies. Capital flows from First [and Second] World countries experienced a major expansion; the rapid industrialization of Third World countries was undermining the previous concentration of manufacturing activities in First [and Second] World countries; and Third World countries had united across ideological divides to demand a New International Economic Order...

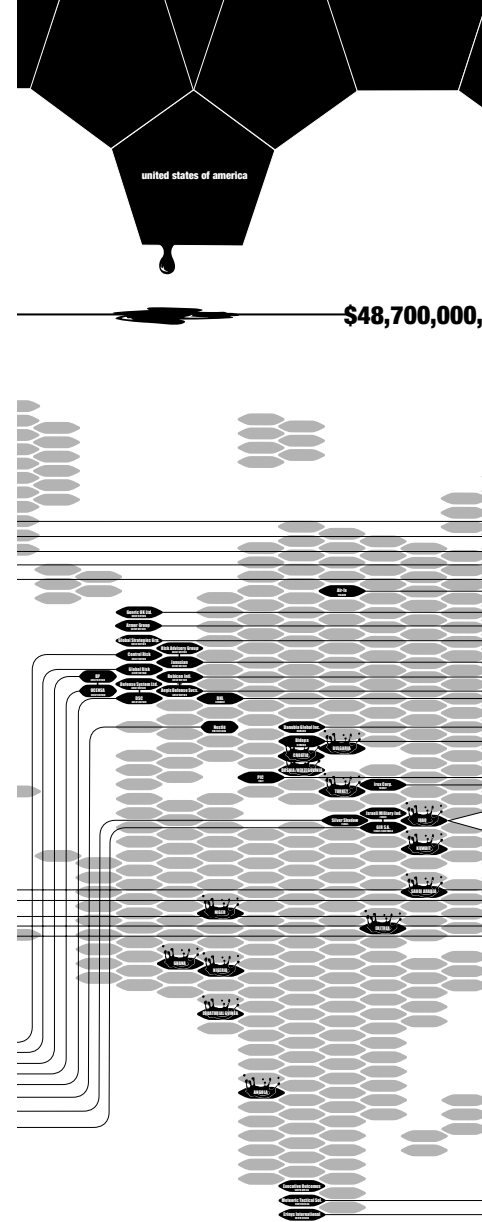
In the 1980s, a US-driven escalation of competition in world financial markets had suddenly dried up the supply of funds to the Third and Second World countries and provoked a major contraction of world demand for their products. Terms of

trade had swung back in favor of the First World... The Soviet empire disintegrated. Instead of having the two superpowers to play off each other, Third World countries now had to compete with the former Second World countries in gaining access to the markets and resources of the First World. At the same time, the United States and its European allies seized the opportunity created by the collapse of the USSR to claim with some success a global "monopoly" of the legitimate use of violence... Nonetheless the backlash had not re-established power relations to their pre-1970 condition. For the waning of Soviet power had been accompanied by the waxing of what **Bruce Cummings** dubbed the "capitalist archipelago" of East Asia... The collective economic power of the archipelago as new "workshop" and "cash box" of the world was forcing the traditional centers of capitalist power - Western Europe and North America - to restructure and reorganize their own industries, their own economies, and their own ways of life. A bifurcation of this kind between military and economic power, I argued [in the early 1990s], had no precedent in the annals of capitalist history and could develop in three quite different directions. The United States and its European allies might have attempted to use their military superiority to extract a "protection payment" from the emerging capitalist centers of East Asia. If the attempt succeeded, the first truly global empire

in world history might have come into existence. If no such attempt was made, over time East Asia might have become the center of world-market society... But it was also possible that the bifurcation would result in endless worldwide chaos...

Trends and events have changed radically the probability that each of these outcomes will actually materialize. Worldwide violence has escalated further and the **Bush** administration's embrace of the Project for a New American Century in response to the events of September 11, 2001 was, in key respects, an attempt to bring into existence the first truly global empire in world history. The abysmal failure of the Project on the Iraqi testing-ground has not eliminated but nonetheless greatly reduced the chances that a Western-centered global empire will ever materialize. The chances of endless worldwide chaos have probably increased. At the same time, the probability that we will witness the formation of an East-Asian-centered world-market society has also increased. The brighter prospects of this outcome are in part due to the disastrous implications for US world power of the Iraqi adventure. For the most part, however, they are due to China's spectacular economic advance since the early 1990s.

**Giovanni Arrighi**, *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* [London: Verso, 2007], pp. 5-8.

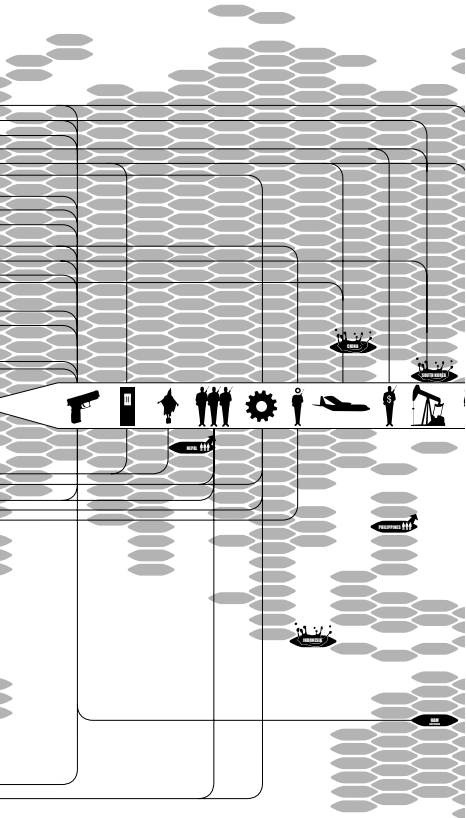


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continental drift



World Park, Beijing

,000 for PMCs in Iraq



## Neoconservative Morality

One of the keystones of modern economic thought is that it is impossible to have an *a priori* knowledge of what constitutes happiness for other people; that such knowledge is incorporated in an individual's "utility schedules"; and this knowledge, in turn, is revealed by the choices the individual makes in a free market... What we are witnessing in Western society today [with the American New Left in the 1960s] are the beginnings of a counterrevolution against this conception of man and society. It is a shamefaced counterrevolution, full of bad faith and paltry sophistry, because it feels compelled to define itself as some kind of progressive extension of modernity instead of what it so clearly is, a reactionary revulsion against modernity...

Certainly, one of the key problematic aspects of bourgeois-liberal society has long been known and announced. This is the fact that liberal society is of necessity a secular society, one in which religion is mainly a private affair... Liberal civilization finds itself having spiritually expropriated the masses of its citizenry, whose demands for material compensation gradually become as infinite as the infinity they have lost... For well over a hundred and fifty years now, social critics have been warning us that bourgeois society was liv-

ing off the accumulated moral capital of traditional religion and traditional moral philosophy, and that once this capital was depleted, bourgeois society would find its legitimacy ever more questionable... It is becoming clear that religion, and a moral philosophy associated with religion, is far more important politically than the philosophy of liberal individualism admits... *The enemy of liberal capitalism today is not so much socialism as nihilism...*

When [the neoliberal economist] Hayek criticizes "scientism," he does indeed write very much like a Burkean Whig, with a great emphasis on the superior wisdom inherent in tradition... But when he turns to a direct contemplation of present-day society, he too has to fall back on a faith in the ultimate benefits of "self-realization"... And what if the "self" that is "realized" under the conditions of liberal capitalism is a self that despises liberal capitalism, and uses its liberty to subvert and abolish a free society?... This is the question we now confront, as our society relentlessly breeds more and more such selves, whose private vices in no way provide benefits to a bourgeois order. Perhaps one can say that the secular, "libertarian" tradition of capitalism – as distinct from the Protestant-bourgeois tradition – simply had too limited an imagination when it came

to vice... It could never really believe that self-destructive nihilism was an authentic and permanent possibility that any society had to guard against... It could demonstrate that the Marxist vision was utopian; but it could not demonstrate that the utopian vision of Fourier – the true ancestor of our New Left – was wrong.

What medicine does one prescribe for a social order that is sick because it has lost its soul? Our learned doctors, the social scientists, look askance at this kind of "imaginary" illness, which has dramatic physical symptoms but no apparent physical cause. Some, on what we conventionally call the "right," cannot resist the temptation to conclude that the patient is actually in robust health, and that only his symptoms are sick. Others, on what we conventionally call the "left," declare that the patient is indeed sick unto the death and assert that it is his symptoms which are the causes of his malady. Such confusion, of course, is exactly what one would expect when both patient and doctors are suffering from the same mysterious disease.

Irving Kristol, "Capitalism, Socialism, and Nihilism" [1973], in *Neconservatism, The Autobiography of an Idea* [Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1995], pp. 92-105.



World Park, Beijing

## Neoliberal Governmentality

In ordinary parlance, neoliberalism refers to the repudiation of Keynesian welfare state economics and the ascendance of the Chicago School of political economy – von Hayek, Friedman, et al. In popular usage, neoliberalism is equated with a radically free market: maximized competition and free trade achieved through economic deregulation, elimination of tariffs, and a range of monetary and social policies favorable to business and indifferent toward poverty, social deracination, cultural decimation, long term resource depletion and environmental destruction... While these referents capture an important effect of neoliberalism, they also reduce neoliberalism to a bundle of economic policies with inadvertent political and social consequences: they eschew the *political rationality* that both organizes these policies and reaches beyond the market... This rationality is emerging as governmentality – a mode of governance encompassing but not limited to the state, and one which produces subjects, forms of citizenship and behavior, and a new organization of the social... One of the more incisive accounts of neo-liberal political rationality comes from Michel Foucault's 1978 and 1979 College de France lectures, still untranscribed and unpublished. Thanks to German sociologist Thomas Lemke, we have an excellent summary and interpretation of Foucault's lectures on neoliberalism.

The political sphere, along with every other dimension of contemporary existence, is submitted to an economic rationality, or put the other way around, not only is the human being configured exhaustively as *homo aeconomicus*, all di-

mensions of human life are cast in terms of a market rationality. While this entails submitting every action and policy to considerations of profitability, equally important is the production of all human and institutional action as rational entrepreneurial action, conducted according to a calculus of utility, benefit, or satisfaction against a micro-economic grid of scarcity, supply and demand, and moral value-neutrality. Neoliberalism does not simply assume that all aspects of social, cultural and political life can be reduced to such a calculus, rather it develops institutional practices and rewards for enacting this vision. That is, through discourse and policy promulgating its criteria, neoliberalism produces rational actors and imposes market rationale for decision-making in all spheres...

Liberal democracy cannot be submitted to neoliberal political governmentality and survive. There is nothing in liberal democracy's basic institutions or values – from free elections, representative democracy, and individual liberties equally distributed, to modest power-sharing or even more substantive political participation – that inherently meets the test of serving economic competitiveness or inherently withstands a cost-benefit analysis. And it is liberal democracy that is going under in the present moment, even as the flag of American "democracy" is being planted everywhere it finds or creates soft ground.

Wendy Brown, "Neoliberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy," *Theory & Event* 7/1, 2003.

## Interventions in the Knowledge Machine

### 3Cs\_Counter Cartographies Collective:

The counter cartographies collective [the 3Cs] was born in the ambiguous yet exciting context of a progressive university in the US South. Different concerns, interests, anxieties and politics began to merge into a series of conversations in hallways and cafes. In particular a group of us were consistently gnawing at how to rethink forms of political intervention in the context of our campus and the US university more generally: how to overcome the limits of existing forms of intervention and how to challenge the discourse of the isolated ivory tower?

Our first collective steps can be traced to fall 2005. We put together an initial research intervention on the main campus during Labor Day trying to challenge notions of work, non-work, knowledge work, etc. – a drift, a stationary drift in this case, to open a space of questioning. Other interventions and presentations followed culminating in a long-term involvement to trace the multiple contours of the territory we inhabited and to find ways of re-inhabiting it.

Our next project built on the influence of contemporary activist research and radical mapping projects, especially *Precarias a la Deriva* and *Bureau d'Etudes*. Following the long-standing tradition of the disorientation guides among campus activism in the US, we wanted one that was more graphical than the text-based production so far.

In the disOrientation Guide the Counter-Cartographies

This Dis Orientation Guide is the product of a Counter Cartographies Collective (3Cs) initiative that uses mapping to produce new ways of thinking about the university.

3Cs is a working group of the Cultures of Economics Project supported by the University Program of Cultural Studies.

3Cs formed in the spring of 2005 as a way to explore the uses of cartography and map-making to critically understand and intervene in the world we live in, especially the communities, ecologies and economies of our university.

3Cs is a network of people contributing their skills and knowledge to build a common project for a different (better) University. We are interested in exploring the ways in which cartography and map-making can be used to understand and intervene in the world we live in, especially the communities, ecologies and economies of our university. We are interested in exploring how these issues pertain to us. Is it just something that happens "out there"? Mapping provides a way to make the connections between UNC and the "real world" visible.

For more information, email [countercartographies@unc.edu](mailto:countercartographies@unc.edu) or visit us on the web at <http://www.unc.edu/countercartographies>

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Collective tried to situate the modern research university as a complex actor working at many different geographical scales. The map we produced sought to read the university in terms of three linked eco-epistemological frameworks: as a factory, a functioning body, and as a producer of worlds. In addition, the disOrientation Guide serves to arm its users with new tools, contacts and concepts to re-inhabit, intervene in or subvert the university and its territories – a re-orienting function if you will.

In the summer of 2007 the 3Cs started tracing the development of Carolina North, a 250-acre industry/university collaborative research park that the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill hoped to build on a

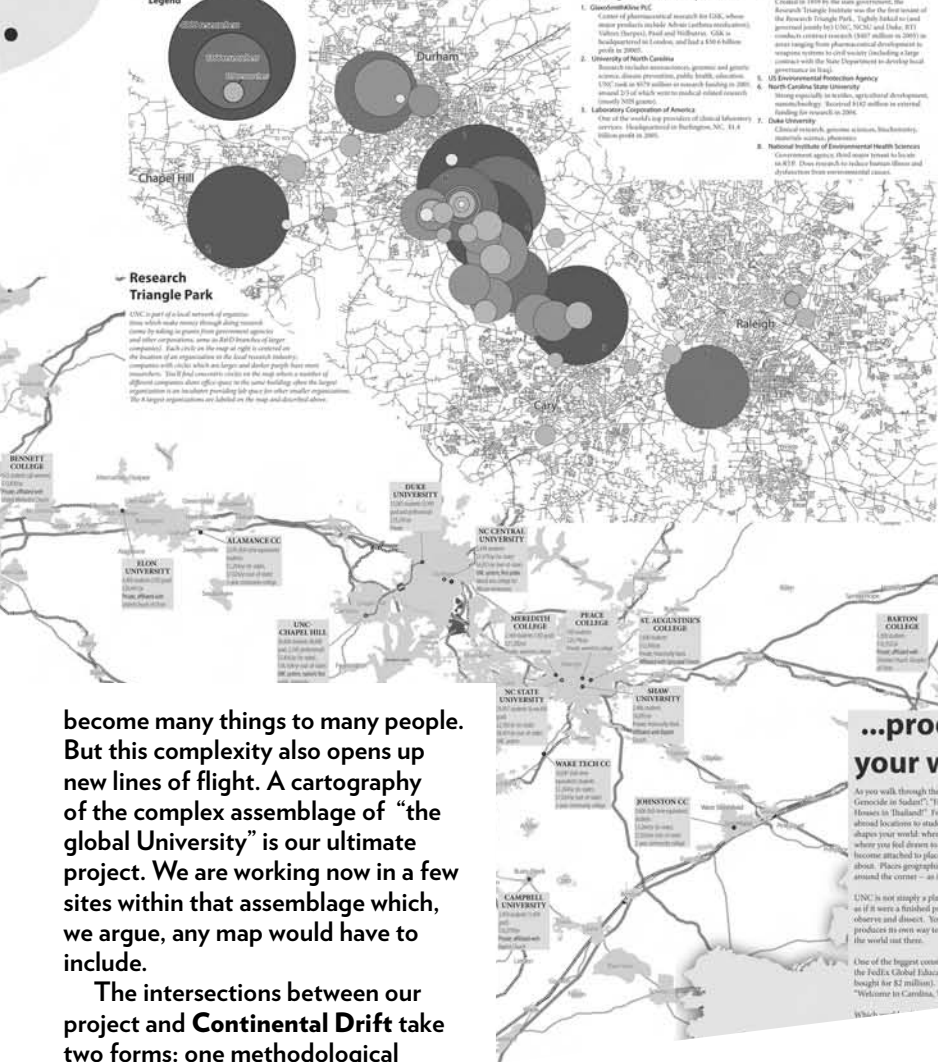
large tract of forest a few miles north of the university.

What follows is our attempt to catalogue the visions, logics and motives producing the necessity and inevitability of a new university-corporate research park at our university. In some senses, then, this is a contextually specific project. However, many of the distinct logics we studied here in this place are explicitly global and national.

Just as "Carolina North" articulates distinct logics together with contextual specifics, we contend that a set of broader logics and discourses is traveling the United States, and perhaps the globe, held together in the name of "the 21st Century University," "the global university," or "the world-class university." It is precisely because of its complex and contradictory nature that this vision is so powerful – it has



What is Harvard Looking for?, Bucharest



### ...a factory

Universities, especially research universities such as UNC, have vital roles of the knowledge economy.

In the current economy, knowledge produces economic value (e.g. ideas, inventions, know-how, information, research). In fact, products of knowledge industries may be even more important, in terms of profit and investment, to today's economy than industries that produce stuff (cars, refrigerators, clothes).

Knowledge cannot be quantified or traded - it never runs out, cannot be held in place, and continuously refines itself. Knowledge economists produce specialized workers (researchers, programmers, and inventors) and research findings to be sold for high profits. They also create a new set of working and living conditions for employees (see Priority on reverse).

UNC is a leading US research University, part of a dense network of higher education institutions in the area, and it is closely connected to one of the most important research and development parks in the world: the Research Triangle Park (see RTP, on reverse).

UNC is a member of knowledge production and workforce training:

- The university's graduates are distributed raw material for the Knowledge Economy.
- Graduates and professors find contracts at corporate laboratories and research institutes in RTP of which UNC is a founding member. In fact, this area has one of the highest concentrations of Ph.D.s in the country.
- Spin-off companies start as university initiatives to fund research findings into large-scale deals for companies investing in the area. Patents for new discoveries generate economic gain but limit access to the knowledge to a few researchers.
- The types of research in which corporations and the government choose to invest affect the direction of UNC, in its role as a factory of the Knowledge Economy.

Whereas we once thought that coming to a university meant "leaving the real world," if we take another look, it seems that the real world may be "going back to school."

**ORIENTATION**  
your guide to UNC-Chapel Hill  
Counter-Cartographies Collective, 2006



International students enrolled at UNC-CH in 2005



UNC-CH Students studying abroad in 2005



### ...producing your world

As you walk through the Pit, posters exclaim: "Stop Genocide in Sudan!" "Help children in Liberia!" "Build Homes in Thailand!" From course topics to study abroad locations to student activism, the University shapes your world, where it is familiar, where it borrows, where you feel driven to act and where you feel safe. We become attached to places we have only read or heard about. Places geographically far away start to feel right around the corner - as if you know them.

UNC is not simply a place where you study the world as if it were a finished product for you to investigate, observe and dissect. Your time living and working here produces its own way to understand and interact with the world out there.

One of the biggest construction projects on campus is the Felix Global Education Center (naming rights just bought for \$2 million). When finished, it will declare "Welcome to Carolina, Welcome to the World."

### Graduate Research at UNC-CH, 1996-2005

Source: ProQuest, CounterCartographies/UNC, Statistics and Measures Lab

**A note on projections...**  
 We used a Mercator projection for the World Through Course Titles (below) because it has historically been used for navigation maps, which we wanted to refer to. As a navigation (navigation) map, it greatly distorts the size of landmasses (despite its appearance being constant in that, only along the line of latitude). We used a world (navigation) projection for the graduate research map (above) because it preserves area, making the relative areas of each country equal to others and thereby allowing direct comparisons of size directly. The most distorted and unrepresentative landmasses appear in the right-hand side of the map. It is possible to use a map that makes individual countries and continents easier to compare, but this means we lose the globe. The map on the front cover uses an equal-area projection, where the center of the map is the point opposite Chapel Hill on the globe, and the center of the map is the North Carolina/Chapel Hill.

become many things to many people. But this complexity also opens up new lines of flight. A cartography of the complex assemblage of "the global University" is our ultimate project. We are working now in a few sites within that assemblage which, we argue, any map would have to include.

The intersections between our project and **Continental Drift** take two forms: one methodological and the other thematic. Being very sketchy:

First: Counter-cartography as a tactic/method to reorient ourselves in a shifting terrain... to discover/open new sites for intervention, critique, organization... a tool that helps re-navigate taken-for-granted terrains [such as the university], highlight their transformations, and re-inscribe new territories and modes of being.

Second: As the questions of creating "competitive knowledge economies" become increasingly strategic goals for the states of the Global North the university becomes increasingly important as a strategic geopolitical site. While we can't hastily jump to conclusions here, this intersection between a continental drift into regional blocs and the role of the university becomes a potential site for exploration. How do we think about the initiatives to create the **Security and Prosperity Partnership [NAFTA+]** between the countries of North America and the increasing economic importance of things such as "research campuses," **Offices of Technology Transfer** at schools, university spin-off industries, etc? More importantly, how do we think of the relation between the university as a growing economic and political actor, as part of the growing "Homeland Security Campus," but also as one of the few sites in North America that serves as a base/incubator for radical thought? ★

www.counter-cartographies.org

## Non-State Public Sphere

In "Results of the Immediate Process of Production," Marx analyzes intellectual labor and distinguishes two principal kinds. On the one hand, there is the immaterial activity that has as its result "commodities which exist separately from the producer..., e.g. books, paintings and all products of art as distinct from the artistic achievement of the practising artist." On the other hand, Marx defines those activities in which "the product is not separable from the act of producing" - in other words, activities that find their fulfillment in themselves, without being objectified in a finished work existing outside and beyond them. The second kind of intellectual labor may be exemplified by "performing artists," such as pianists or dancers, but also includes more generally various kinds of people whose work involves a virtuoso performance, such as orators, teachers, doctors, and priests. In short, this second kind of intellectual labor refers to a wide cross section of human society, ranging from **Glenn Gould** to the impeccable butler of the classic English novel.

The activities in which "the product is not separable from the act of producing" have a mercurial and ambiguous status that is not always and not completely grasped by the critique of political economy. The reason for the difficulty is simple. Well before becoming swallowed up within capitalist production, virtuosity was the architrave of ethics and politics. Furthermore, it was what qualified Action, as distinct from [and in fact opposed to] Work. Aristotle writes that the aim of production is different from production itself,

whereas the aim of action could not be, inasmuch as virtuous conduct is an end in itself.

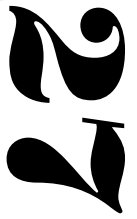
Within post-Fordist organization of production, activity-without-a-finished-work moves from being a special and problematic case to becoming the prototype of waged labor in general. When labor carries out tasks of overseeing and coordination, in other words when it "steps to the side of the production process instead of being its chief actor," its function consists no longer in the carrying out of a single particular objective, but in the modulation [as well as the variation and intensification] of social cooperation, in other words, that ensemble of relations and systemic connections that as of now are "the great foundation-stone of production and of wealth." This modulation takes place through linguistic services that, far from giving rise to a final product, exhaust themselves in the communicative interaction that their own "performance" brings about.

Post-Fordist activity presupposes and, at the same time, unceasingly re-creates the "public realm" [the space of cooperating, precisely] that Arendt describes as the indispensable prerequisite of both the dancer and the politician. The "presence of others" is both the instrument and the object of labor; therefore, the processes of production always require a certain degree of virtuosity, or, to put it another way, they involve what are really political actions. Mass intellectuality is called upon to exercise the art of the possible, to deal with the unforeseen, to profit from op-

portunities. Now that the slogan of labor that produces surplus value has become, sarcastically, "politics first," politics in the narrow sense of the term becomes discredited or paralyzed.

The key to political action [or rather the only possibility of extracting it from its present state of paralysis] consists in developing the publicness of Intellect outside of Work, and in opposition to it. The issue here has two distinct profiles, which are, however, strictly complementary. On the one hand, general intellect can only affirm itself as an autonomous public sphere, thus avoiding the "transfer" of its own potential into the absolute power of Administration, if it cuts the linkage that binds it to the production of commodities and wage labor. On the other hand, the subversion of capitalist relations of production henceforth develops only with the institution of a non-State public sphere, a political community that has as its hinge general intellect. The salient characteristics of the post-Fordist experience [servile virtuosity, the valorization even of the faculty of language, the necessary relation with the "presence of others," and so forth] postulate as a conflictual response nothing less than a radically new form of democracy.

**Paolo Virno**, "Virtuosity and Revolution: The Political Theory of Exodus," in *Radical Thought in Italy* [Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota Press, 1996]; www.16beavergroup.org/mtarchive/archives/000941.php.





## Overaccumulation Crisis

Overaccumulation within a given territorial system means a condition of surpluses of labor [rising unemployment] and surpluses of capital [registered as a glut of commodities on the market that cannot be disposed of without a loss, as idle productive capacity and/or as surpluses of money capital lacking outlets for productive and profitable investment]. Such surpluses can be potentially absorbed by [a] temporal displacement through investment in long-term capital projects or social expenditures [such as education and research] that defer the reentry of capital values into circulation into the future, [b] spatial displacements through opening up new markets, new production capacities and new resource, social and labor possibilities elsewhere, or [c] some combination of [a] and [b].

The general picture which then emerges, is of a networked spatio-temporal world of financial flows of surplus capital with conglomerations of political and economic power at key nodal points [New York, London, Tokyo] seeking either to disburse and absorb the surpluses

down productive paths, more often than not in long-term projects across a variety of spaces [from Bangladesh to Brazil or China], or to use speculative power to rid the system of overaccumulation by the visitation of crises of devaluation upon vulnerable territories. It is of course the populations of those vulnerable territories who then must pay the inevitable price, in terms of loss of assets, loss of jobs, and loss of economic security, to say nothing of the loss of dignity and hope. Capitalism survives, therefore, not only through a series of spatio-temporal fixes that absorb the capital surpluses in productive and constructive ways, but also through the devaluation and destruction administered as corrective medicine to what is generally depicted as the fiscal profligacy of those who borrow. The very idea that those who irresponsibly lend might also be held responsible is, of course, dismissed out of hand by ruling elites.

In the current conjuncture, an obvious candidate to absorb surplus capital is China. Net foreign direct investment rose from \$5 billion in 1991 to around \$50 billion in 2002. Since 1998, the Chinese have sought to absorb their vast labor surpluses [and to curb the threat of social unrest] by debt-financed investment in huge mega-projects that dwarf the already huge Three Gorges dam. This effort is far larger *in toto* than that which the United States undertook during the 1950s and 1960s, and has the potential to absorb surpluses of capital for several years to come. It is, however, deficit-financed, and that entails huge risks since if the investments do not return their value to the accumulation process in due course, then a fiscal crisis of the state will quickly engulf China with serious consequences for economic development and social stability. Nevertheless, this proposes to be a remarkable version of a spatio-temporal fix that has global implications not only for absorbing overaccumulated capital,

but also for shifting the balance of economic and political power to China as the regional hegemon and perhaps placing the Asian region, under Chinese leadership, in a much more competitive position vis-à-vis the United States.

A second possible outcome, however, is increasingly fierce international competition as multiple dynamic centers of capital accumulation compete on the world stage in the face of strong currents of overaccumulation. Since they cannot all succeed in the long run, either the weakest succumb and fall into serious crises of localized devaluation or geopolitical struggles arise between regions. The latter can get converted via the territorial logic of power into confrontations between states in the form of trade wars and currency wars, with the ever-present danger of military confrontations [of the sort that gave us two world wars in the twentieth century].

David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* [Oxford UP, 2003/2005], pp. 109, 134-35, 123-24.



## So who are those subtitles for..?

Naeem MOHAJEMEN

**Muslims Or Heretics: My Camera Can Lie** starts life in 2003 as a polemical human rights documentary about Ahmadiyyas. The Ahmadiyyas are a disputed sect within Islam. Originating from India, and spreading through proselytization, it became one of the beachheads for conversion of African Americans to Islam [until the rise of the competing Nation of Islam]. After years of anti-Ahmadiyya protests, the sect was banned in Pakistan in 1973. In the 1990s, a similar protest movement flared up in Bangladesh. The core controversy revolves around whether their belief in a prophet after Mohammed is heresy. What could be a nuanced, layered conversation around

interpretations of/from Arabic [e.g., does *khatme nabuwwat* mean final prophet or seal of the prophets?] has degenerated into an anarchic mob movement which also serves as a trojan horse for the Political Islam project.

The 2004 screenings of my "finished" film ran into a Dhaka audience that is hyper-aware of other, future audiences. The coincidence of showing the film at the same time as the global media flap over Abu Ghraib turned it into a referendum on the War On Terror [WOT]. Audiences refused to give any approval or "authenticity" blessing... After my naive opening statement that this was a film for "us" [who exactly is?], one viewer taunted me: "Bhaishaab, we all understand Bengali, so tell me, who are those subtitles for? And how many times must we see that Twin Tower footage... that's always designed for a western film festival circuit!"

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continental drift



MayDay 2008, Paris





everywhere Harry Thomas  
ambassador, there was a coup.

In this first iteration of the film, there is grainy, out-of-focus footage of “militant” rallies shot from a great distance. Supposedly clandestine work with a subject so “ferocious” they can only be viewed at a distance. But when I returned to the project in 2005, I found rally organizers welcoming the press. Their fierce expressions, funeral white garb and angry signs were all an extended form of

performance art, designed to give the BBC-CNN-SKY camera crew exactly the right ready-for-prime-time visuals. This time, I noticed a camera mounted on the truck of the protesters. It was filming the fiery speeches and filming us. Where was that tape going, who was its audience? **Michael Ignatieff** once described plane hijacking as auteur filmmaking with real people. Here too, the militant groups are in control of their own image production.

**John Gray** points out that “projecting a privatized form of organized violence worldwide was impossible in the past. Equally, the belief that a new world can be hastened by spectacular acts of destruction is nowhere to be found in medieval times...” Egyptian radical theorist **Sayyid Qutb**

borrowed from European anarchists like **Bakunin** [“The passion for destruction is also a creative passion”], especially the idea of a religious vanguard that would bring a world without rulers – something with little precedence in Islamic thought.

On an individual level, militant groups in Bangladesh have rejected the escalating “modernity” project represented by the mushrooming of an aggressive consumerist culture. The madrasa recruits can’t afford to drink Coke, download Josh ring tones, buy bar-coded fruit at Agora or wear jeans from Westecs. Within their violent program [what some mistakenly call “Islam-anarchism”] is fury at an economic system that has left them behind. But you could also argue that it is hypercapitalism that has rejected them, because it doesn’t know how to bracket in communities of intense, rigid faith. Perhaps, those you cannot sell product to cannot be allowed to exist. ★  
[www.shobak.org](http://www.shobak.org)

“Muslims or Heretics: My Camera Can Lie”, DV video, 50 minutes, 2004

## Risk Society

The idea that the dynamism of industrial society undercuts its own foundations recalls the message of **Karl Marx** that capitalism is its own gravedigger, but it means something quite different. First, it is not the crises, but the victories of capitalism which produce the new social form. This means, second, that it is not the class struggle but rather normal modernization and further modernization which are dissolving the contours of industrial society... On the one hand, society still makes decisions and takes action according to the pattern of the old industrial society, but, on the other, the interest organizations, the judicial system and politics are clouded over by debates and conflicts that stem from the dynamism of risk society...

With the advent of risk society, the distributional conflicts over “goods” [income, jobs, social security], which constituted the basic conflict of classical industrial society and led to attempted solutions in the relevant institutions, are covered over by the distributional conflicts over “bads”... They erupt over how the risks accompanying goods production [nuclear and chemical mega-technology, genetic research, the threat to the environment, over-militarization and the increasing immiseration outside Western industrial society] can be distributed, prevented, controlled and legitimized... In the risk society, the recognition of the unpredictability of the threats provoked

by techno-industrial development necessitates self-reflection on the foundations of social cohesion and the examination of prevailing conventions and foundations of “rationality”... In other words, risk society is by tendency also a self-critical society... Experts are undercut or deposed by opposing experts. Politicians encounter the resistance of citizens’ groups, and industrial management encounters morally and politically motivated organized consumer boycotts... Uncertainty returns and proliferates everywhere. Non-Marxist critique of modernization, small and concrete, but large and fundamental as well, is becoming an everyday phenomenon... Lines of conflict are coming into being over the what and how of progress, and they are becoming capable of organization and of building coalitions...

The socially most astonishing and surprising – and perhaps the least understood – phenomenon of the 1980s was the unexpected renaissance of a political subjectivity, outside and inside the institutions. In this sense, it is no exaggeration to say that citizen-initiative groups have taken power politically. They were the ones that put the issue of an [ecologically] endangered world on the agenda, against the resistance of the established parties... The themes of the future, which are now on everyone’s lips, have not originated from the farsightedness of the rulers or from the struggle in parliament – and certainly not from the cathedrals of power in business, science and the state. They have been put on the social agenda against the concerted resistance of its institutionalized ignorance by entangled, moralizing groups fighting each other over the proper way, split and plagued by doubts... This applies not only to the West, but also to the East of Europe. There the citizens’ groups – contrary to the entire social science intelligentsia – started from zero and with no organization, in a system of surveilled conformity, and yet, with no copying machines or telephones, were able to force the ruling group to retreat and collapse just by assembling in a square... In society without consensus, devoid of a legitimating core, it is evident that even a single gust of wind, caused by the cry for freedom, can bring down the whole house of cards of power.

**Ulrich Beck**, “The Reinvention of Politics,” in U. Beck, A. Giddens, S. Lash, *Reflexive Modernization* [Stanford U.P., 1994], pp. 1-55.

## Subjective Cartography

The subject is not self-evident; it's not sufficient to think in order to be, as Descartes declared, since all sorts of other ways of existing establish themselves outside consciousness, and whenever thought deliberately tries to grasp itself it's likely to take off like a madly spinning top, without any hold on the real territories of existence that drift off from each other in all directions, like tectonic plates beneath the surface of the continents. Rather than the subject, maybe we should speak of *components of subjectivation*, each working more or less on its own. This would necessarily lead us to re-examine the relation between the individual and subjectivity, and above all, to make a clear distinction between the two concepts. The vectors of subjectivation do not necessarily run through the individual, who in reality appears more in the position of a "terminal" for processes involving human groups, socioeconomic complexes, informational machines, etc. Thus, interiority comes into being at the crossroads of multiple components, each relatively autonomous, and in some cases, positively discordant with respect to the others.

It remains very difficult to make such arguments heard... It's as though a scientific super-ego demanded that psychic entities be reified, and insisted that they only be approached through extrinsic coordinates... I find it urgent to rid ourselves of scientific references and metaphors in order to forge new paradigms of ethical-aesthetic inspiration. Besides, haven't the best cartographies of the psyche, or if you prefer, the best psychoanalyses, been

carried out by Goethe, Proust, Joyce, Artaud and Beckett, rather than Freud, Jung and Lacan?... I've come to regard the apprehension of a psychic reality as inseparable from the articulation of speech that gives it body, both as a fact and as an expressive process... The precondition for any revival of analysis – through schizoanalysis, for example – is that as a general rule, once one takes the trouble to work with them, both individual and collective articulations of subjectivity are potentially able to develop and proliferate beyond their ordinary equilibrium. By their very nature, their analytic cartographies overflow the existential territories to which they are assigned. Thus these cartographies should be like painting and literature, domains where each concrete performance is destined to evolve, to innovate, to inaugurate prospective openings, without their authors being able to base themselves on secure theoretical foundations or the authority of a group, a school, a conservatory or an academy...

Social ecology should work on the reconstruction of human relations at all the levels of the *socius*. It should never lose sight of the fact that capitalist power has delocalized, deterritorialized, at once *extensively*, by extending its empire across the entirety of the social, economic and cultural life of the planet, and *intensively*, by infiltrating the most unconscious subjective strata. Thus one can no longer claim to oppose it solely from the outside, through trade unions and traditional politics. It's equally imperative to confront its effects in the domain of mental ecology in everyday life: individual, domestic, conjugal, neighborly, creative or personal ethics. Rather than seeking a dull and infantilizing consensus, it's a matter of cultivating *dissensus* and the singular production of existence.

Félix Guattari, *Les trois écologies*  
[Paris: Galilée, 1989], pp. 22-44.

# On Cultural Production

Ayreen ANASTAS & Rene GABRI

Maybe it would help to begin by asserting that there is no singular response to this question and the solutions may remain forever contingent or provisional, given the variety of complex situations we are called upon to consider and address in the world today. Clearly, remaining on the sideline, detached and aloof, is not the position we are advocating. Yet at the same time, it is clear that the role of culture and cultural production does have the potential to be more than just an instrument in the name of a wider political program, more than just a means to a hoped for or desired end.

The forms of life historically engendered by artists over centuries of struggle have certainly helped create many of the spaces of dissent which we occupy and make use of today. And if these spaces remain more free and less

determinate than other spaces in our contemporary societies, it is in no small part due to an attitude that would not simply relegate our means to ends, but would see the means themselves as an essential element of the coming community we struggle to create. In this sense, we want to be clear not to take for granted the languages we make use of and employ, but in fact interrogate them. And even if we believe that a certain militancy and urgency is required on the part of cultural practitioners today, it is

not at the expense of simplifications, platitudes, or avoiding complexity; not by abandoning poetry or forgetting that our battles need to be waged concurrently – both on the more explicit terrain of politics but also on the political terrain of language, images, and the other forms we use.

Having said this, we do perceive today the need to question practices which retain a fidelity to one pole of the political while losing their relation to the other. We were faced explicitly with this question in our most recent work together in relation to Palestine. Remaining overly focused on analyzing the image as a filmmaker, for example, might seem appropriate at times, as it relates to the politics of form and language; but at other times it

may be distracting from the larger context of the political.

How to untangle ourselves from a political narrative that is governed by disinformation and confusion? There is a fine line between an analysis that enters the nuances and complexities of a situation and one that gets lost in them, finds dead ends, road blocks. Stuck looking for a way back out, for an elegant solution, a nice transition, and losing sight of the untenable situation that Palestinians are confronted with under Israeli Occupation. For the majority of the Palestinians living on the wrong side of it, the wall is a wall, devastatingly fixed, violent, restricting movement, cutting off relations with friends and family members, oppressive. No theoretical maneuvers or wizardry should mitigate such a reality or desensitize a public to it.

In such a context, one inevitably has to negotiate and make choices which profoundly impact the value a work can have to a political struggle. In the case of this most recent work in Palestine, we have attempted to err on the side of clarity on the more explicit political terrain. Even if this sometimes means to work against a style of experimental film practice which may refuse

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continental drift



No Political Borders Depicted, Air India flight

# and its Role in Political Struggle

to provide “information” in the ordinary sense, or deny the viewer a sense that they have gained a kind of perspective on a situation. And this tactic has a lot to do with where we believe that situation is today.

Although there is probably no “situation” or area in the world today which has been the “beneficiary” of so much consistent media coverage in the last 30 years, anyone with even the remotest clarity as to what is unfolding there can tell

you that most people have little clue as to what is going on, or if they have any idea, it is a confused one. And one should note that this confusion and disorientation [by way of misinformation, contradictory information, incomplete information, over-information] is one consistent strategy not only of the Israeli military, but also of our contemporary media. As a result, even someone committed to a politicized relation to images, would have to reorient what an experimental or politicized relation to images could be or become in such a context.

In this case, to work politically with images we would have to slow things down, bring the pace slow and steady, in a rhythm parallel to a machine that has been slowly devouring resistance for the last 40 years, slowly, steadily – to dilate time, allow individuals to speak at their own pace, give time for the viewer to see the physical manifestations of these techniques of dispossession practiced by the state.

Our goal was not to simplify the analysis of the situation. The mechanisms employed are diverse, sometimes lawless, sometimes using the law, sometimes through planning, sometimes through lack of planning. It was necessary to allow for a visual and analytical entry into the political and lived landscape in all its complexity. Something that can resemble a documentary or resemble journalism, but by moving towards them, hacking them, altering them, asking something more from them.

It is within this process, which is not devoid of ambivalence and scrutiny, that we think there is no singular response and each solution is provisional. ★

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The forms of life historically engendered by artists over centuries of struggle have certainly helped create many of the spaces of dissent which we occupy and make use of today. And if these spaces remain more free and less determinate than other spaces in our contemporary societies, it is in no small part due to an attitude that would not simply relegate our means to ends, but would see the means themselves as an essential element of the coming community we struggle to create. In this sense, we want to be clear not to take for granted the languages we make use of and employ, but in fact interrogate them

## Unintended Social Order

[For Sartre], “the basic type of sociality” is the collective, the “inert gathering with its structure of seriality,” which he equates with Hegel’s “atomized crowd.” His most famous example is the bus queue where, despite having the appearance of a social group, everyone is isolated from everyone else and linked only through their alienation, which is what constitutes them in their mutual isolation... Sartre emphasizes that an inert gathering like this can be transformed in an instant, “by the flash of a common praxis,” when it recognizes its common interest. The origin of this “totalization,” as Sartre calls it, is “individual freedom conceived as the will of all.” Individuals fleeing from a common enemy realize that “it is neither Others, nor a few individuals, who flee: instead, flight, conceived as a common praxis reacting to a common threat, becomes flight as an active totality”... Sartre explicitly equates the process with the communist vision of “the gradual withering-away of the State”... Translated into the language of complexity theory, this is an example of a “dissipative structure” – a form of order that unexpectedly emerges as disorder increases. Were the equivalent to happen in the entropy of the state, the resulting dissipative structures would appear as unintended forms of social order...

Reading analyses of the post-1989 global order in light of the early twentieth-century literature on the demise of the state reveals the former to be global variations on the themes of the latter. The convergence of these theories suggests that the master narrative of contemporary geopolitics is not, as some imagine, the move towards global sovereignty or the progress of global civil society as a step toward it. Rather it is the development of global society in place of universal coercion: the reabsorption of a global state by civil society. The obvious contemporary focus for the process is the decline of American hegemony, still in its relatively early stages. But it is possible to see this as the final part of a longer, more complex process, a single transition of world historical importance: a global decolonization, its constituent phases so geographically various, and its political ideologies so distinct as to disguise the underlying continuity. That narrative is the decline of Western dominance from its peak in the early twentieth century. It has three distinct phases: the end of European empires, the fall of the Soviet Union and the waning of American hegemony.

Each empire sought legitimacy in the demise of its predecessor, emphasizing the differences between them and concealing the extent to which all were aspects of the same thing – the three-headed monster of Western imperialism, a global state in all but name...

For the centenarians of Eastern Europe, the Middle East, many countries in Africa, perhaps India, and certainly Afghanistan, this will be a very recognizable history. In each case the failure has been a failure of [imperial] will, the transition often surprisingly peaceful [though none so gracious as the dissolution of the Soviet bloc] and the result a diffusion of sovereignty, partly inherited by successor states, partly dispersed, and partly reconfigured within new non- or interstate social networks.

The constituent elements in the emerging global civil society might include civilizations, intergovernmental networks, ngos, churches, international corporations, academic networks, drug cartels, al-Qaeda. These are diverse groups, but this analysis permits a taxonomy more nuanced than most, for it is able to differentiate those elements of civil society produced by the withering away of the global state from those produced by the global market, dissipative structures from products of the arbitrary will...

Rather than being the building blocks of global politics, civilizations are perhaps the dissipative structures of the entropic global state... The European Union, often implicitly viewed in terms of the Hegelian dialectic as a civil society gradually creating the unity that will allow it to be willed into statehood, may also prove to be a dissipative structure of the entropy of the global state, its growing importance an unintended consequence of the decline of first colonial, then Soviet and now American power.

If so, its relations with the United States may become increasingly conflictual. Another corollary of this analysis is that the seemingly quixotic “war against terror” is in fact just as central to the contemporary world as its advocates claim. Any “war against terror” is by definition not a war between states, but a war of the state against civil society. But this is not a war against the pre-existing structures of civil society that underlie the global state. The “long war” is being fought by the global state against the dissipative structures generated by its own entropy.

Malcom Bull, “States of Failure” [2006], *New Left Review* 46, pp. 16-24.



## Zombie Category

What we are dealing with here is a *meta-change*, a change in the coordinates of change. This meta-change is best understood as a new dynamic that was created when the process of modernization began to transform its own taken-for-granted foundations. Modernity then passed an inflection point and began to change into something qualitatively new... It means all the big questions have to be rolled out again, and the small ones too. They all have to be posed anew, negotiated, and answered again – and not through universalistic arm-chair theory, but through truly transnational and comparative statistics that we have yet to develop...

My central contention is that sociology developed in the container of the nation-state. Its categories of perception, its self-understanding, and its central concepts were all molded to its contours. And because the concepts thus engendered refuse to die, the sociological imagination is now inhabited by zombie categories. They haunt our thinking. They focus our attention on realities that are steadily disappearing. And they haunt our empirical work, because even the subtlest empirical work, when framed in zombie categories, becomes blind empiricism. Zombie categories embody nineteenth-century horizons of experience, the horizons of the first modernity. And because these inappropriate horizons, distilled into *a priori* and analytic categories, still mold our perceptions, they are blinding us to the real experience and the ambiguities of the second modernity...

The achievement of classical sociology was to grasp the internal dynamics of the industrial market society that was then just coming into existence. Sociologists distilled its basic principles out of their own contemporary experience. The concepts they developed spread out and conquered the intellectual world. They were extremely fruitful for empirical research and they had huge political effects. But the irony is that the power of these ideas, and their consequent success, was all founded on this questionable inference from each theorist's society to the society in general. We could call it the universalist inference. It's false. Yet the perspective it made possible had an enormous amount of explanatory power...

What we need to do now is to make the change from a *universal* perspective to a *cosmopolitan* perspective. When we infer from a society, usually our own society, to society in general, the result is a naive universalism. *Globality*, by contrast, is what results when sociologists from all countries of the world, having interpreted their own societies through the use of the same universal categories, then meet and confront each other with their different findings and try to reconcile them. It then becomes immediately clear that there is no longer a privileged standpoint from which society can be investigated. In order to deal with this problem, a global or cosmopolitan society has to introduce a radical change of view. It has to open itself up to a *dialogic* imagination and research... It has to get away from the North Atlantic, and from the myth that this region shows the rest of the world its future. It has to move out to embrace the social cosmos.

Ulrich Beck, Johannes Willms,  
*Conversations with Ulrich Beck*  
[Cambridge: Polity, 2004], pp. 16-19.

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continental drift



Graffiti, Bucharest

## The Left Needs Mediators

Ayreen ANASTAS & Rene GABRI

For Deleuze, a political distinction between Right and Left is made in relation to movements: the Right is about blocking, the Left is about embracing movements, two completely different methods of negotiation. If the state works to capture or channel movement and partition space, the Left avoids capture, invents new channels, or re-invents the meaning of existing ones.

The Left has to re-create the meaning of mediators, the ones who make us able to express ourselves in relation to a problem and would never express themselves without us. To make visible what otherwise may stay invisible.

It begins through an awareness that one is always working in a group, even if one was working on one's own. One works in a group since one works in a series, a relay. The mediators that we form are always in a series. If we're not in a series, we're lost.

The Right does not face this problem, since it has its mediators working directly for them in place on the field. The Left needs more free mediators. A mediator for a philosopher can be an artist or a scientist, for an artist a geographer or anthropologist, mediators can even be objects. Without them nothing happens. They are fundamental.

In "What Everybody Knows" our collection of videos from Palestine, we choose this title precisely in relation to that question. We are experimenting with the idea of mediators, and how one can be effective in a specific and targeted way. So in that sense, for our writer friends we may be the mediators, and for us, our protagonists are another series of mediators: the geographer, the activist, the family father, the Bedouin, the falafel store owner, and so on. One may assume that one knows all about Palestine, one is on the right side and so on, but is that enough? No.

To explore all possibilities of movement under a military rule which restricts and constrains. To talk to people, and not assume that we know. We need to create our truth on the ground, in lived experiences, not just our own, but those with whom we struggle, which implies that the production or fidelity to this truth involves working on this material. And this work is a small fragment of what is needed and is being done by other colleagues.

If the Right is about opposing movements, it is also well aware to keep us busy with the wrong arguments. This has been the history of recent Palestine, bargaining and hard negotiation for well-known facts. We have to go ahead and do the work that is really needed instead of lingering in the wrong arguments. ★



# Beyond Face

Claire Pentecost

In Jack London's story, *The Lost Face*, two wanderers find themselves

in hostile territory, on the brink of starvation. They are captured by a prosperous, belligerent people who shelter them briefly until deciding the beggars would be put to best use feeding the local hunger for spectacle. The hero of our story – I can't remember his name, so let's just call him Damien – watches his companion undergo gruesome torture for the clan's entertainment and solidarity until the poor man is mercilessly exterminated and the crowd turns to him. "Wait! I know a secret potion that protects a man from death. If you give me time to prepare it, my own execution will serve to show that it works!"

Like wealthy headmen everywhere, the chief had everything he could possibly want; the only thing he feared was death. He loved the idea and for weeks, Damien demanded various ingredients and conditions. An elite circle of most loyal insiders studied his arcane procedures to learn and possess the secret. Damien enjoyed their luxury entertaining them with novelties and tales, while they provided him whatever resources he ordered to create the fabulous elixir, including a workshop, servants, the ministrations of women, and sweet time to let the ingredients age properly. The chief grew moody and at last exploded with impatience and suspicion. "Good news!" replied Damien, "everything is ready! Let's prepare a feast for the great occasion. Tomorrow after just one swallow of this brew, I will bare my neck for you and when you bring the ax down with all your might the whole crowd will see it spring back from the force of life within me."

The chief spared nothing for the next day's show of his glory. At the height of the festivity, Damien sipped from the great vat of magic and knelt to lay his head on the block before the chief. The ax came down before the hushed crowd and Damien's head rolled before them, severed in an instant.

## 1.

One way or another all artists are socially engaged. However individual artists choose to acknowledge their engagement, artists generally expect and are at least nominally accorded more than the common share of autonomy. Autonomy is always conditional, always a negotiation. A persistent feature of artistic practice is that it resonates primarily in the realm of the symbolic. Often the presumed autonomy of the artist is symbolic, or imaginary.

This is not to say *merely* symbolic. Or *merely* imaginary. The symbolic has force, and it is as powerful as ever. We live in the age of semiotic capital. Information drives the economy. Innovation in financial instruments creates money from debt. Computer modeling earns a killing for hedge fund directors. Knowledge and the

We live in the age of semiotic capital. Information drives the economy. Innovation in financial instruments creates money from debt. Computer modeling earns a killing for hedge fund directors. Knowledge and the semiotic systems that convey it are understood as material value, not only to the knower but also to the owner, the buyer, the hoarder, the company with a good legal team. Those who create enough money don't have to

possess knowledge, they can own it. They can fund research at public universities and filter the findings to the mainstream press. The image they create of the knowledge they own is the basis for new money. Perception moves the stock market. Imagination moves armies and creates wealth.

Many activities of this kind are now loosely categorized as "creative industries" and they are. Creativity takes as many forms as we strive to give it. The terms of the artist's autonomy have been mystified for many generations. The artist's autonomy has been defined as autonomy from the world, from daily life, from solutions to real problems haunting the collective. This symbolizes a freedom to be beyond social engagement. Like the American farmer, the whistleblower, the person of conscience and other icons of individual freedom, the artist marches to a drumbeat that is valorized while marginalized.

## 2.

This began as an effort to theorize a paradigm of the artist well under way in practice. Under this paradigm the artist serves as conduit between specialized knowledge fields and other members of the public sphere by assuming a role we call the Public Amateur.

As such, the artist becomes a person who consents to learn in public. This person takes the initiative to question something in the province of another discipline, acquire knowledge through unofficial means, and assume the authority to offer interpretations of that knowledge, especially in regard to decisions that affect our lives. The point is not to replace specialists, but to enhance specialized knowledge with considerations that specialties are not designed to accommodate.

Specialization has brought about marvelous achievements. But under increasing complexity

and fragmentation, the need for overviews of how vectors of power-knowledge intersect has become more imperative than ever. Our culture asks too high a price of society when it demands narrow professional specialization. Conforming to this demand divides our intellect from our emotions, our imagination from our efforts, our pleasure from our worth, our verbal and analytic capacity from other creative talents, and our ethics from our daily lives. The result is frustration and disempowerment for the individual and shortsightedness for society as a whole.

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In putatively secular societies such as ours, appeals to notions of the scientific have justified authority for some time. It doesn't matter if these appeals make sense under scrutiny, only that they convey an effect of rationality. This permeates strategies on work, health, sexuality, family, economics, resource management, urbanization, leisure. Now that rational and scientific claims compete more than they unify, and divergent assertions of prescriptive knowledge can all cite *someone's* science, how should the lay public evaluate contradictory claims, supposedly based on a common system of verification? Authority itself is in fragments, and worse: it is corrupt.



Sensing, if not being told outright, that modernity has produced immeasurable threats, an increasingly confused and phobic public is accused of irrationality. Affected parties are often deemed incompetent in matters of their own vulnerability. They lose an essential part of their cognitive sovereignty.

**3.**

Do I believe **Monsanto's** scientifically based claim that pesticides and transgenic foods are safe to ingest, and controllable in the environment? Do I trust United States Department of Agriculture, Environmental Protection Agency and Food & Drug Administration systems of review and approval for new technologies? What goes on inside these proprietary brands and sanitary acronyms? Who works there? Where do they get the information they use to determine our future? Are there disagreements in the process? Who makes the final decision?

Questions like these generate metaknowledge, that is knowledge about knowledge. It's a level of understanding that can provide a basis for evaluating the circumstances that produce expertise; sort out contradictory findings and claims; and incorporate that which scientific epistemology is designed to exclude: human desires, feelings, and values.

I need to know a lot more than what the authorities are telling me, i.e., I need to create knowledge about the knowledge in question. To do this I have more tools than ever before: libraries, the internet, films, news services, public interest groups, advertising, the freedom of information act, freedom of speech which protects my right not only to say what I want but to hear and

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read what others say. And more and more, I have access to evidence that authoritative knowledge, speaking for us, serves itself first. The rest of us are collateral damage in the war of profit-making.

**4.**

It's not enough to have all this. I need to learn ways to use it. I need new forms of literacy to comprehend all that is available to me. I need to devise a criterion to organize the metalanguage.

In the beating heart of daily life, people find signals in the noise; wittingly or not, they privilege one signal over another and make decisions based on belief, compromise and contradiction. Ultimately what each of us does to get through the day, and how reconciled we are to the options available to us, depends on what we care about. This aspect of survival proceeds in the realms we name ethics, aesthetics, philosophy and love. These are things that organize our being.

If I have no clear reference points in these realms, the metalanguage becomes its own circle of hell. I'm informed, terribly informed, festering with other brains in the vat. I show signs of info-dementia: isolation, frustration, nostalgia, blame, disorientation, paranoia, paralysis. The third chakra, locus of initiative and purpose, becomes soft, as soggy as a sponge.

I observe that many people embrace authoritarianism in the vacuum of trustworthy authority. Religion and other forms of spirituality are natural antidotes. Seeing that the rational professions have failed us, they say, in so many words, "Enough with brains. Religion can at least reinforce what I care

about, with all the affirmation of a distinct community, and a clear system for living." For many, the third chakra, mapped on the body at the region of the navel, hypertrophies, relieving reason of all but the most trivial duties. My gut tells me this is the right thing to do. My gut tells me you are wrong. My gut sticks to my decisions, I am a decider. A firm decision leapfrogs years of contemplation.

**5.**

The artist finds herself alternately feted, ignored or scorned by the followers of the gut. Whichever befalls her, she lives like everyone at the mercy of erratic

transmissions from the vat-bound brains.

Despite the professionalization of the artist, she does what she does because she loves to do it. The amateur moves from a similar impulse, hence the name. The amateur has transparent relations to her object. She approaches and ultimately appropriates the object of knowledge out of enthusiasm, curiosity or personal need. She learns outside the circuits of professional normalization and reward, things the artist was once presumed to resist.

Anyone can develop expertise and, if motivated enough, can even become an authority. The amateur can be as narrow as the specialist or as amorous as the polymath lover of knowledge. The category of the public amateur is not confined to artists. It's a growing polyglot array of people who want to operate equally from the gut and the brain.

Theoretically, everyone now has tools to constitute some kind of audience; any amateur can choose to test ongoing learning in public. It's more difficult for professionals to learn in public because they must protect their authority, which in most fields is not served by saying, "I don't know" in a spotlight, or by openly performing a spastic struggle to understand something. People acutely aware of the failures of authority do this all the time.

Heartbroken parents of autistic children seek out experiments, theories and findings not favored by the medical establishment. The more public their efforts the more likely they are to find each other, compare their questions and experiences, exponentially further their learning. They are forming a new authority, a collective one based on the continuous trial, error, inquiry, and search conducted by a wide range of people. The credibility of this authority is tested by the members of the voluntary collective, people like themselves who have a lot to gain or lose. Their affiliation is based on positions, not identities.

Hackers and other open-source contributors produce knowledge by synching their efforts outside the offices of corporations and universities. They have constituted an autonomous value system outside the values concretized in copyright and profit maximization. In the eighties and nineties people with AIDS educated themselves and hacked the health system to redesign the clinical trials and treatments that meant life or death to them. More recently, people sickened by lifestyles of convenience structure their own experiments in living sustainably. They publish their trials and errors on websites, in books and magazines, speak and listen in public to clarify

problems, exchange solutions, and build purpose.

**6.**

To some extent art always inhabits the plane of metalanguage because of its relationship to the symbolic. When actions are called art, they resonate with heightened symbolic capacity. Art is subject to interpretation and value judgments, connecting us to the realms called ethics, aesthetics, philosophy and love. This is part of the purpose of calling something art.

Artists are expected to have publics, however small or large, but for better or worse, they are not expected to know much. An artist who wants to perform learning can leverage whatever claim to a public she is able to accrue, and initiate processes she hasn't mastered, putting the very notions of professionalization and credibility on the stage. This is an activation of metalanguage, something that artists do all the time. When I perform the acquisition of knowledge in the symbolic resonance that is art, I am inviting new conversations about knowledge itself. By placing this activity in the realm of aesthetics, I subject it to our questions about what we care about.

Let's have a conversation about this love affair we are having. Let's have a metaconversation. Metaknowledge comes about between people. It's conversational. The value and meaning of the art our culture has developed is purposefully debatable; it flourishes between people. When the artist publicly conducts research using new guidelines and criteria, she launches the project of research itself into conversational reevaluation.

**7.**

Artists are not expected to know much, but they are expected to feel and to sense. They are allowed to engage whatever range of the human sensorium is necessary to them. Even when some theories of modernism attempted to purify a given medium from all reference to more than one sensing capacity, the achievers of such a feat were presumed to channel their entire sensibilities into these media-true forms. In the hands of the artist, metalanguage exceeds the literally and exclusively linguistic. **Proust** convinced us to smell the asparagus in our urine.

The worlds conjured by artists have always been freighted with values. These normative investments have been located or dislocated in the broad shouldered, soft-featured, evasive figure of beauty. Recurrently critics and audiences attempt to simplify the problem of the criteria [and purpose] of art by narrowing it to the pursuit of beauty. But this

simplifies nothing. Often assumed to be a universal, beauty, whether narrowed to an idea of visual pleasure or expanded to the essence of the good and the true, is as subject to debate as any other value.

Beauty is still invoked as though it solves the thorny issue of discerning the value of works of art. When people talk about a return to beauty, no matter what else they are saying, the message includes a wish to dissociate aesthetic evaluation from other questions of social value. None of the many transient forms of beauty can spare us the further work of evaluating how the values inherent in any concrete example of beauty fix different kinds of makers and audiences in different relations to power, in different relations to material and symbolic resources.

## 8.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century is a story of artists rebelling against beauty and its alienation from life, only to have their gestures put through a strainer to isolate an anorexic aesthetics: a revised beauty purged of heterogeneous notions of value. When the vitality of a given art movement is irresistible, the strainer refines what can be softened into the morphing shape of beauty, leaving the rest for the historians and social scientists.

In the 1980s and 90s, a generation of artists once again turned our backs on beauty which at the time was being celebrated as stridently irrational. Under that particular wave of anti-aesthetics, we made works informed by the hermeneutics of suspicion. A paranoid epistemology made sense, given the opportunism and corruption flaunted by authority. We believed that the critique of power could deliver us from the catastrophes unfolding around us. Then we found ourselves caught in a routine of unveiling truths about our enemy, as we watched an economic and political system validate whole new levels of violence.

At the end of **Jack London's** tale, the people see that their chief is either a greedy fool or himself a con man, probably both. He is forced into exile, or maybe executed, I don't remember. I'm interested in the question beyond the point where the chief loses face: what new forms will organize the people and their wealth?

Proliferating sharper tools of outrage is not insignificant, but focusing on the failure of authority to produce a more livable world has not in itself produced a more livable world. In compensation, critique offers a sense of mastery. Attached to our skills, we find ourselves nourishing a detached metaknowledge that becomes its own circle of hell. Here we catch ourselves

preempting every glimmer of emergence. An exhausted metaknowledge demands reinvention and something more: if we want to remake our world we have to turn our sensors away from failure and nurture the clumsy initiatives that offer new ways to be. The paranoid epistemology gives way to an epistemology guided by receptivity.

## 9.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century is also a story of artists crashing the division of labor that organizes different forms of intelligence into specializations. What history has named conceptual art is one example. Explicitly articulating an array of new criteria, these artists navigated a channel of aesthetics breaching the usual quarantine of human capacities: thinking-feeling, verbal-visual, critical-inventive, analytical-creative, activism-art. Perhaps most importantly these artists disturbed the division of artist from audience, soliciting new aesthetic invention on the part of those engaging their works.

I've been told that artists should just be artists, and activists should just be activists, because otherwise we get bad art and lame activism. Such prescriptions reinforce the preference for recognized forms of mastery while pre-empting emergence and ignoring the fact that art, activism and other living forms require continuous renewal.

The other is an accident which one sometimes wishes to avoid. The other is a hazard, the constant proximity of chance, because the other cannot be predicted or controlled. The intolerance of seemingly incommensurable systems is a form of defense against the other.

## 10.

*"You see, it was the eclipse. It came into my mind in the nick of time, how Columbus, or Cortez, or one of those people, played an eclipse as a saving trump once, on some savages, and I saw my chance. I could play it myself, now, and it wouldn't be any plagiarism, either, because I should get it in nearly a thousand years ahead of those parties."*

So speaks Hank Morgan, an invention of the American writer **Mark Twain**, a Yankee thrust from 1890's Connecticut into King Arthur's Court, 528 A.D. As an unexpected stranger from another time, he can



hardly account for his oddity, and so evokes the usual homicidal suspicion. Awaiting his execution, this pragmatic man of industry calculates that there will be a solar eclipse the next day, and sends notice to the King that he is a magician more powerful than Merlin, and he will destroy the sun if he is not treated accordingly. Among the skills he brings from the future is hard-nosed business sense, and he negotiates not only his life but also appointment as "perpetual minister and executive" to the King. Armed now with worldly powers he proceeds to modernize the kingdom, introducing electricity, telephone, typewriter, schools, newspapers, advertising, soap, gunpowder and more. His great knowledge and his insistence on business earn Hank the moniker of "the Boss."

He does most of this covertly, so as not to arouse the hostile defenses of local institutions. But in the Boss's view, the biggest obstacle to delivering the people from poverty and fear and into industrialized, capitalist democracy is their own lack of readiness. What holds them back is their subservient acceptance of King and Church.

Complications inevitably ensue until the Boss and his band of loyal followers, despite electrified fencing and Gatling guns, find themselves trapped in a bunker, well defended but unable to conquer. Wounded by a knight, Boss Hank is finished off, and perhaps also saved, by sorcery: Merlin hexes him to sleep for the next 13 centuries. He will wake again in the stream of modernity.

## 11.

Culture may do little more than stall whatever makes people want to kill each other. And symbolic

formulations are always enlisted on the way to the slaughter. **Twain** wrote his book partly to ridicule the influence of Sir **Walter Scott**, whose romantic concoctions of medieval chivalry he blamed for the Confederate War. **Twain** believed in the power of ideas. So much so that the first thing Hank Morgan does as a minister in King Arthur's court is set up a patent office: innovations and the folks who dream them deserve to prosper through commercial exploitation. One of the fondest ideas of **Twain's** age was the promise of education, technology and free enterprise to alleviate human misery.

Now, with over a hundred more years of future heaped on our heads, one of the most frightening ideas of our age is the current consensus that defective education, unregulated technology and prodigious enterprise are hurling us into a future where we will scramble for the humble survival skills of a distant past. Technology is still invoked as though it will solve the thorny issue of environmental risks, natural resources and the distribution of both. But it's never so simple. Subservient to authority systems mystified as rational, we the people lack the readiness to fulfill modernism as an egalitarian truce, or to move beyond it. But one thing is for sure: the Public Amateur does not need to wake up as the Boss. ▶

unutmayın sakın, | Tüm nimetlerden, payını yoksulların. ¶ İnsan neyle yaşar? ¶ İnsan neyle yaşar? ¶ Soyup, dövüp, yiyip yutarak  
anları. | Yaşayabilmek için hemen unutmalı, | İnsanlığını unutmalı insan. ¶ Katı gerçek budur, kaçınılmaz. | Kötülük yapmadan yaşanamaz. ¶  
TÜRKÇEYE ÇEVİREN: *Tuncay Çavdar* ¶ **What Keeps Mankind Alive?** ¶ You gentlemen who think you have a mission | To purge us of the seven deadly  
should first sort out the basic food position | Then start your preaching: that's where it begins | You lot, who preach restraint and watch your waist  
should learn for all time how the world is run: | However much  
you twist, whatever lies you tell | Food is the first thing. Morals follow on. |  
be sure that those who now are starving | Get proper  
helpings when we do the carving. ¶ What keeps mankind alive? The  
fact that millions | Are daily tortured, stifled, punished, silenced,  
oppressed. | Mankind can keep alive, thanks to its brilliance | In keeping its humanity repressed.  
¶ For once, you must try not to shirk the facts: | Mankind is kept alive by bestial acts. ¶ You say the girls may strip with your permission. | You draw  
the lines dividing art from sin. | So first sort out the basic food position | Then  
start your preaching: that's where we begin. | You lot, who bank on your desires and our disgust | Should learn for all time how the world is run: | Whatever  
lies you tell, however much you twist | Food is the first thing. Morals follow on. | So  
first make sure that those, who now are starving | Get proper  
helpings when we do the carving. ¶ What keeps mankind alive? The  
fact that millions | Are daily tortured, stifled, punished, silenced,  
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¶ In keeping its humanity repressed. | For once, you  
must not try to shirk the facts: | Mankind  
is kept alive by bestial acts. ¶  
1928 ¶ *The Threepenny Opera*, PENGUIN CLASSICS, 2007.  
¶ Neyle Yaşar? ¶ Sayın baylar, bize hep ders verirsiniz: | "Aman,  
ondan sonra konuş. | Sende göbek, bizde ahlâk nedense. |  
İster, ardından ahlâk. | Artık vermek gerek, unutmayın sakın,  
yaşar: Ezip hiç durmadan. | Soyup, dövüp, yiyip yutarak  
¶ Katı gerçek budur, kaçınılmaz | Kötülük  
yapmadan yaşanamaz. ¶ Efenkiler bize ahlâksız dersiniz | Kötü kadın,  
suçlanmak hiç çekilmez | Önce doyur beni ondan sonra söyle | Sende şehvet,  
bizde edep nedense | Şimdi bizi iyice dinle bak; | İster şöyle düşün, istersen  
böyle: | Önce ekmek gelir, arkadan ahlâk. | Artık vermek gerek, unutmayın  
sakın, | Tüm nimetlerden, payını yoksulların. ¶ İnsan neyle yaşar? ¶ İnsan  
neyle yaşar: Ezip hiç durmadan, | Soyup, dövüp, yiyip yutarak insanları. |  
Yaşayabilmek için hemen unutmalı, | İnsanlığını unutmalı insan. ¶ Katı gerçek  
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# What keeps mankind alive?

Morals  
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proper helpings when we do the carving. ¶ What  
keeps mankind alive? The fact that millions | Are daily  
tortured, stifled, punished, silenced, oppressed. | Mankind can  
keep alive, thanks to its brilliance | In keeping its humanity repressed.  
¶ For once, you must try not to shirk the facts: | Mankind is kept alive by  
bestial acts. ¶ You say the girls may strip with your permission. | You draw  
the lines dividing art from sin. | So first sort out the basic food position | Then  
start your preaching: that's where we begin. | You lot, who bank on your desires  
and our disgust | Should learn for all time how the world is run: | Whatever  
lies you tell, however much you twist | Food is the first thing. Morals follow  
on. | So first make sure that those, who now are starving | Get proper  
helpings when we do the carving. ¶ What keeps mankind alive? The  
fact that millions | Are daily tortured, stifled, punished, silenced,  
oppressed. | Mankind can keep alive, thanks to its brilliance  
¶ In keeping its humanity repressed. | For once, you  
must not try to shirk the facts: | Mankind  
is kept alive by bestial acts. ¶  
K. Weill/B. Brecht, 1928

