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REVIEWS
in CULTURAL THEORY



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On the Commons

Guest Editors Matthew MacLellan & Margrit Talpalaru

Reviews in Cultural Theory is a journal of reviews and review essays, published twice annually. We welcome offers to review or suggestions of forthcoming books engaged with contemporary theories of culture. We also welcome suggestions for review essays and similar, lengthier variations on the review form.

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Editors' Introduction: Remaking the Commons

MATTHEW MACLELLAN AND MARGRIT
TALPALARU

It is difficult to think of a political concept that has been as impoverished by decades of neoliberalization as “the commons.” It has been almost four years since approximately three decades’ worth of market deregulation culminated in the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, and aside from the initial reverberations of a global occupation movement, centered in Wall Street, there seems to have been very little recognition that the health of any society should be measured from the ground up, not the top down. Instead, that unique brand of shortsightedness peculiar to capitalist development continues unabated as the profitability of transnational financial institutions continues to take precedence over the general welfare. Pensions, education and health care are everywhere slashed in order to maintain the best environment for the source from which all that is good in the world issues, capital investment. More often than not, it seems as if the only form of the commons that has retained its force in today’s political environment is that particular “common sense” that reduces the heterogeneity of our social and political existence to the narrow metrics of the market. Yet it is precisely in reaction to this ongoing state of affairs that the commons has re-emerged in recent years as a defining concept across a wide field of social struggles. Whether enunciated in the context of economic justice, environmental sustainability, anti-militarism or internet freedom, the overarching applicability of the commons as a tool of protest across diverse fields of struggle suggests a greater collective protest that extends beyond the critique of economic privatization and exploitation: the importance of a reinvigorated notions of the commons is evidence of a more profound rejection of all forms of power that thrive in the multifarious spaces of social, political, economic and cultural partition.

It was in recognition of the increasing importance of the concept of the commons within the contemporary political vocabulary that Banff Research in Culture (BRiC) chose the commons and the experience of “being-acting-feeling together” as the theme of its inaugural 2011 residency program. Over the course of the month of May, 2011, a wide range of academics, artists and activists specializing in diverse fields of study and interest gathered in the serene environment of Banff National Park, Canada, in order to contribute to a renewed dialogue on the contemporary importance of the notion of commons. To paraphrase the timeliness of this intervention as articulated by the organizers of the residency program – Imre Szeman, Heather

Zwicker, and Kitty Scott – the necessity of re-thinking the commons was drawn from the collective astonishment that a post-2008 global capitalism could continue to draw ever more elements of social life into its profit logic, despite the mounting evidence of its inability to adequately represent – or even recognize – the vast heterogeneity of values that constitutes our shared social reality. A recurring theme of the seminar was therefore the necessity of moving beyond the typical registers in which value, wealth, recognition and relationality currently circulate in order to consider more inclusive and transformative means of both expressing and activating the vitality of the commons. In collaboration with the seminar's three visiting faculty – Pedro Reyes, Michael Hardt, and Lauren Berlant – the participants of the inaugural BRiC residency were thus encouraged to let go, if only momentarily, of the dominant modes of thinking, being, acting, and feeling that normally shape the terms of our contradictory participation in capitalist society in order to experiment with new and expanded ways of remaking the commons.

If the individual and group contributions that make up this special edition of *Reviews in Cultural Theory* are concerned with a wide range of social, cultural and political contents, they nevertheless share a common conviction, fostered collaboratively during the BRiC residency program, that the commons must not be imagined as a past instance of harmony to which we must *return*, but rather a future-oriented social form that must be actively produced. Unfortunately, the conceptual framework in which the commons is often articulated tends to interpellate the commons, if only implicitly, as a primordial or natural state that more resembles a collection of mute or inert structures found in the absences of negative power rather than a dynamic and positive force in its own right. This approach to the commons is especially prevalent when it is defined with reference to what Marx referred to as primitive accumulation – the process in which pre-capitalist social forms are annexed and colonized by an ever-expanding and highly mobile capitalism – such as is found in the program summary of the BRiC residency itself: “harkening back to the displacement of people from shared communal spaces and their transformation from public into private property—a central act in the development of European capitalism in the 18th and 19th centuries—the commons insists on the fundamentally shared character of social life.”¹ While the histories of primitive accumulation and the continued realities of accumulation by dispossession should always inform contemporary notions of commons, such anachronistic instantiations of the commons always run of risk producing a notion of the commons that functions more like a fetish object than a truly generative political concept.

The initial exchanges of the BRiC residency program thus seemed to come to the early

consensus that our considerations of the commons over the course of our limited collaboration must extend beyond the usual academic exercise of negation and critique in order to rethink and remake the commons with an active or positive cadence. It is not enough, it was collectively held, to engage in a critique of the present in the hope that a natural state of commonality would, in and of itself, emerge in the negative spaces we had all so expertly opened in the edifice of neoliberal capitalism; rather, the importance of the commons for creating new modes of being-acting-feeling together, within or alongside the negating logic of capitalist accumulation, demands a mode of political engagement that prefers to err on the side of the affirmative and the positive rather than cling to the relative safety of the negative. It was in this conviction that the discussions that animated the inaugural BRiC residency found its collective voice, and it is from this shared discussion that the following contributions articulate their respective projects for re-making the commons today.

The contributions to this special issue of *Reviews in Cultural Theory* illustrate the diversity of BRiC participants' viewpoints, both as points of departure for rethinking the commons in a positive framework, and as proposed alternatives to the negativistic void created by incessant critique. Is there love in the commons? Whether you think you know or haven't made up your mind yet, this conversation between Michael Hardt and Lauren Berlant, spurred on by Heather Davis's and Paige Sarlin's questions, will perhaps move you to rethink the importance of love for the commons. Does love have a potential for social change? What is its relationship to sovereignty? Love thus becomes a starting point in this dialogue between the two theorists for an intellectual journey which touches upon political economy, affect, the possible relationships between the human body and the social one, nature and human nature, the roles of pedagogy and imagination in democracy, among many others. Just like their respective works, this sparkling conversation can lead one in as many theoretical directions as there are understandings of this complex concept.

Sarah Banting invites us for a walk around Vancouver, and prompts us to ponder how communities emerge within the familiar and the non-familiar. Any verbal exchange, she argues, instantiates a type of relationship, leading to a certain “common ground.” The performative nature of such exchanges—in which knowledge about a place can be viewed as valuable currency, or some type of property—can also lead us to understand the formation of commons. Banting uses the example of theatre to illustrate her points, showing how a performance in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside can trace the emergence of different groups, each with its own claim to knowledge and familiarity, in the process of negotiating the relationship between themselves and between themselves and place.

Aileen Burns and Johan Lundh question the necessary imbrication of contemporary

¹ <http://www.banffcentre.ca/programs/program.aspx?id=1068>.

life with capitalism and set out to identify other “terms of belonging” in the world, of relating to one another and consequently of understanding the world in other ways than through neoliberal capitalism. Discounting the possibilities of nationalism to create community, Burns and Lundh turn to alternatives imagined by artists’ groups with which they collaborate. The two curators contextualize the “Terms of Belonging” project within a brief history of artistic engagement with social change, before proceeding to present in detail the various pieces comprising it. By ending their essay with a short manifesto of sorts, Burns and Lundh call for future socially engaged projects in order to envisage alternatives to the present categories of belonging.

In a whimsical text defying academic writing straightjackets, Jackie Calderwood draws us into an exploration of language, location, and self-awareness. Calderwood muses on her time in Banff, while also revealing some of her inspirations, her multifaceted portfolio, and herself. The artist’s works come to life through her vivid descriptions and her lyrical and playful asides. By and by, Calderwood’s seemingly scattered text comes together to nudge us exactly towards the ludic, the spontaneous, the importance of living in the moment; her insistence on the process, rather than the polished oeuvre makes the reader acquiesce and accept her terms rather than look for resolution. Ultimately, the literal threads contouring the Rockies in her studio become metaphorical to suggest communities always in formation, starting with “one self.”

The Edmonton Pipelines—a group of researchers comprising Russell Cobb, Mo Engel, Daniel Laforest, and Heather Zwicker—are interested in modalities of understanding, narrating, and mapping contemporary life within the “flux” of urbanism, a flux that colludes with neoliberal capitalism and transforms cities in novel ways. Positing that one can no longer understand urban experience as linear, in view of the multiple technologies mediating it, the Pipelines take Edmonton as case study for their research, which aims to reveal the conceptual richness and actual complexity of contemporary urbanism. The researchers are also very thorough in describing their novel methodology, one that intersects traditional theory and close reading from the humanities with demographic and other kinds of data made available by the city. Their thoughtful research manifesto details three sample projects (pipelines), before concluding with the connections between them and the commons.

A group of inclusions in this special issue present statements from artists participating either in BRiC’s “On the Commons” or the joint residency of “La Commune. The Asylum. Die Bühne.” Adam Katz presents a few examples of his conceptual poems. In “Trace,” Ayesha Hameed muses on the origins and meaning of collaborative projects for herself in parallel with Walter Benjamin. Eleanor King and Henry Adam Svec express their understanding of the Commons and of the joint Banff residencies in a song and an accompanying essay, which touches on the role of authenticity, aesthet-

ics, and utopian ideas in such endeavours. Similar to Hameed, Elske Rosenfeld’s “Je ne rentrerai pas” parallels her own experience in the last moments of East Germany in 1990 with the experience of a woman striker in 1968 France, who refuses to re-enter the factory, even after the strike has been called off, to underline how the event can open up possibilities for resistance. Leanne Zacharias details her own presentation/performance at BRiC, as well as the reactions that some participants experienced, in order to illustrate how a participatory performance can enact a commons out of its audience.

Eddy Kent articulates the concept of time, academic labour, and social capital to demystify the contemporary situation of the academic position. Kent critiques the application of notions like productivity to the academy and probes the contradictions inherent in an institution of learning which values research at the expense of teaching. Echoing King and Svec, Kent also muses on the utopian possibilities emerging at BRiC and how they might work to counteract the neoliberal logic that has long since pervaded the academy.

Imre Szeman’s essay ponders the concept of the commons by bringing together ideas from both his latest book, *After Globalization*, co-authored with Eric Cazdyn, as well as from the public lecture he presented at BRiC. In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, Szeman turns to a critique of Paul Krugman’s modest propositions for the system following globalization. Szeman charges Krugman’s appeal to conscience with an effective transformation of “globalization into a moral problem,” putting the onus for change on the individual, rather than the system. Ultimately, Szeman turns the problem on its head, calling for a revisioning of the role of conscience within left politics.

Speaking from a different academic and professional position, Paige Sarlin proposes the concept of “vulnerable accumulation” to cover a variety of intellectual situations in the context of neoliberal capitalism. Starting from Marx’s “primitive accumulation,” Sarlin envisages no less than sixteen definitions of “vulnerable accumulation” operating in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, and which combine the political, the economic, and the affective, and their articulation to the commons.

Cayley Sorochan investigates the capacity of flash mobs to create a new type of commons by tackling various examples, from the 2010 voting flash mobs organized on Canadian university campuses, to French *apéro géants*, and other types of youth subcultures. For her part, Ashley Wong presents attempts by young artists, academics, and activists in Britain to create alternative creative economies to the ones promoted by neoliberal capitalism, especially in view of the cuts imposed by the Cameron government to arts programs. Wong details the activities organized by the DOXA

research collective to bring together people from different professional and artistic backgrounds in order to create new approaches to culture.

Christine Stoddard and Tess Takahashi explain the coming-together of several BRiC participants through movement. They detail how, drawing on their experiences in contact improvisation, they organized several sessions in which they invited the BRiC participants to explore movement through variously directed exercises. The authors show how the various types of movement enabled the creation of a commons through the negotiation of trust, leadership, attention, communication, and ultimately, interaction of bodies in a given space.

While the diversity of these contributions reflect the multiple concerns and interests of the participants of the 2011 Banff Research in Culture seminar, their collection within this document is motivated by the conviction, generated during the seminar, that the vitality of the commons as a political concept will depend on the capacity of the commons, in its many differing iterations, to be productive rather than reductive. This special edition of *Reviews in Cultural Theory* thus seeks to contribute to an on-going dialogue on the importance of a renewed understanding of commonality that challenges the negating political ethos of austerity, precarity, and partition and offers alternative ways of being-acting-feeling together.

“On the Risk of a New Relationality:” An Interview with Lauren Berlant and Michael Hardt

HEATHER DAVIS AND PAIGE SARLIN

In May 2011, we sat down with Lauren Berlant and Michael Hardt to ask them about their use of love as a political concept. They each use the idiom of love to disrupt political discourse, as a means of thinking through non-sovereign social and subjective formations. Love, for both these thinkers, is transformative, a site for a collective becoming-different, that can help to inform alternate social imaginaries. But their notions about how this happens diverge. In his lecture at Banff, through a close reading of Marx, Michael Hardt proposed that substituting love for money or property as the means for organizing the social can open up new social and political projects. More generally, he begins from the position of love as ontologically constitutive, or love as a generative force. Lauren Berlant’s description of love has attended to the ways in which love disorganizes our lives, opening us to move beyond ourselves. And so, for Berlant, the concepts of love and optimism foreground the sort of difficulties and investments involved in creating social change, understood as the construction of an attachment to a world that we don’t know yet, but that we hope will provide the possibility for flourishing. Throughout the interview, Berlant and Hardt try on each other’s positions, organizing relationality through models of incoherence and multiplicity. In this, they speak to, reflect, inform, and inspire activist projects of social change from queer communities to neo-anarchist organizers. What follows is an excerpt from our discussion.¹

Davis: What is it about love that makes it a compelling or politically interesting concept? What kind of work does love do politically that other concepts don’t do?

Hardt: One healthy thing love does, which is probably not even the core of it, but at least one healthy thing it does is it breaks through a variety of conceptions about reason, passion, and

¹ This interview has also been published nomorepotlucks.org.

the role of affect in politics. There are a number of other ways of doing this, but considering love as central to politics confounds the notion of interest as driving politics. Love makes central the role of affect within the political sphere. Another thing that interests me is how love designates a transformative, collective power of politics – transformative, collective, and also sustained. If it were just a matter of the construction of social bonds and attachments, or rupture and transformation, it would be insufficient. For me, it would have to be a necessarily collective, transformative power in duration. When I get confused about love, or other things in the world, thinking about Spinozian definitions often helps me because of their clarity. Spinoza defines love as the increase of our joy, that is, the increase of our power to act and think, with the recognition of an external cause. You can see why Spinoza says self-love is a nonsense term, since it involves no *external* cause. Love is thus necessarily collective and expansive in the sense that it increases our power and hence our joy. Here’s one way of thinking about the transformative character of love: we always lose ourselves in love, but we lose ourselves in love in the way that has a duration, and is not simply rupture. To use a limited metaphor, if you think about love as muscles, they require a kind of training and increase with use. Love as a social muscle has to involve a kind of *askesis*, a kind of training in order to increase its power, but this has to be done in cooperation with many.

Berlant: Another way to think about your metaphor, Michael, is that in order to make a muscle you have to rip your tendons.

I often talk about love as one of the few places where people actually admit they want to become different. And so it’s like change without trauma, but it’s not change without instability. It’s change without guarantees, without knowing what the other side of it is, because it’s entering into relationality.

You asked your question in two ways: you asked why is love

potentially interesting for politics and why is it potentially interesting in ways that other concepts aren’t. They are really different kinds of questions. One is comparative, and the other asks what does love open for you. I tend to think more about what a thought can open. Because we’re looking for something, some way of talking about the possibility of an attachment to a kind of collectivity that doesn’t exist yet. There are lots of things that can do that, like fascism, or the politically orchestrated forms of sociality that could do that. But we want the thing that includes a promise that you will feel held by relationality though not necessarily always good in it, as you are changing.

Unlike Michael, who is trying to think love as a better concept for suturing or inducing the social, I’m trying to think about what the affects of belonging are without attaching them to one or another emotional vernacular. We’re being formalist about this: we’re describing the conditions of the possibility of an orientation toward being in relation, which could be lived in lots of ways. We’re thinking of the affective phenomenology of these conditions, not how to do it.

The thing I like about love as a concept for the possibility of the social is that love always means non-sovereignty. Love is always about violating your own attachment to your intentionality, without being anti-intentional. I like that love is greedy. You want incommensurate things and you want them now. And the now part is important.

The question of duration is also important in this regard, because there are many places in which one holds duration. One holds duration in one’s head, and one holds duration in relation. As a formal relation, love could have continuity, whereas, as an experiential relation, it could have discontinuities.

When you plan social change, you have to imagine the world that you could promise, the world that could be seductive, the world you could induce people to want to leap into. But

leaps are awkward, they're not actually that beautiful. When you land, you're probably going to fall, or hurt your ankle or hit someone. When you're asking for social change, you want to be able to say there will be some kind of cushion when we take the leap. What love does as a seduction for this, and has done historically for political theory, is to try to imagine some continuity on the affective level. One that isn't experienced at the historical, social or everyday level, but that still provides a kind of referential anchor affectively and as a political project.

In your talk, Michael, you spoke about love as two kinds of things, as a relation of property, and as a relation of exchange. But what about the kinds of dissolution within relationality that could happen under a regime governed by love?

Also, you say that love is collective in Spinoza because there is an external cause for it. I don't think that's accurate, but I think it's interesting that you think it is. In Spinoza you're visited by love; it's a transcendental visitation. Love is not public. So, what does public mean to you? Is public just external to the subject? Or does it mean...what's the relationship between that and public as a general concept that's like love in that it's referential, or the kind of love that's a collectivity that feels itself?

Hardt: Let me start with the non-sovereign thing. I like that. If one were to think a political project that would be based on or include love as a central motivation, you say, notions of sovereignty would be ruptured. That's very interesting and powerful. I assume we are talking about a variety of scales here simultaneously, where both the self and the social are not sovereign in love.

When we engage in love, we abandon at least a certain type of sovereignty. In what ways would sovereignty not be adequate in explaining a social formation that was grounded in love? If we were to think of the sovereign as the one who decides, in the social relation of love there is no *one* who decides. Which

does not mean that there are no decisions but, rather, that there would be a non-one who decides. That seems like a challenging and interesting question: what is a non-sovereign social formation? How is decision-making then arrived at? These are the kinds of things that require modes of organization; that require, if not institutions, customs, or habits, at least certain means of organizing the decision-making process. In a politics of love, one of the interests for me is a non-sovereign politics, or a non-sovereign social formation. By thinking love as political, as somehow centrally involved in a political project, it forces us to think through that non-sovereignty, both conceptually, but also practically, organizationally.

In Spinoza, love is social in that it is external to me, that with which I have an encounter, but it's not necessarily human. In book five of the *Ethics*, Spinoza proceeds to the most obscure and lyrical accounts of love. Here, it's about the intellectual love of god, but that intellectual love of god, for Spinoza, is not the love of some anthropomorphic, ruling figure. It's rather a way of both understanding and engaging a relationship with the world around us, with both humans and nonhumans, that consistently brings us joy and increases our power.

Berlant: But, I'll say why I thought it mattered to clarify this: because it's easier for me to take joy in the world than it is to take joy in other humans. The social is the problem of the inconvenience of other humans. It's easier to love your pet than another human, because the pet is manifesting itself to you with thereness and relationality, with responsibility but not demand. And it's your pet because you wanted it to be there for whatever version of this. We're trying to figure out how we could do this with humans in an affective register which recognizes the relationship between the joy-giving parts and the parts that require a kind of patience with the way things don't fit. The out-of-synchness of being matters.

I'm totally with you on the institution part, and I would

like to ask, what is an institution? I'm super formal about this. I think a rhythm of life, a habit, all of the things that are affectively inculcated in one's orientation towards the world are institutions. What makes those things social is that you can return to them. They're available to other beings to return to and that's what makes them an institution. So one thing an institution is, is a set of norms and people who are responsible for enacting those norms or rules. But the other thing is in the sense that it poses the same question love poses: what's there to return to? And these are the things in the social that make people feel like there is a point of convergence rather than a chaos of convergence. It's important from the perspective of your work, Michael, because what people often mischaracterize is the romance of singularity as though that could ground the social. But the social really needs the activity of singular subjects organized in the world, which isn't the same thing as the disciplining of singularity to a normative field. The question is what kinds of rhythms of being people could engender in order for there to be a social world they could rely on. Where this making of reliance on the world is not a thing outside of practice.

Hardt: There's two things that you're saying that seem useful to think a little more about. The first is that the institution is what we can return to. It seems useful to me that it's not only what a single subject can return to – in order to have a life you have to be able to return – but it's also what others can return to, and that's what makes it a social institution. I mean you might start by thinking about Proust and habit, you know, the way a life has to involve a certain kind of repetition. For example, 'we had dinner at six every night except on Sunday when dinner was at five-thirty.' Living a life requires a certain possibility of coming back. The concepts that tend towards the institution as we're thinking it, which is making available to others a practice one can return to and that can structure a life, are also in Proust, or habit in Peirce, or in the Pragmatists more generally, or forms

of life for Wittgenstein.

Berlant:

I wrote about this in *Cruel Optimism*, but I also have this piece on queer love, with three relevant bibliographic references: Bergson, Lefebvre, and Freud. While we are trying to amass what it is we would think about what it means to be habituated, Bergson has lots to say about habit as a mode of memory and the inculcation of being in the world. And it really resonated for me with Lefebvre's *Rhythmanalysis*, where he basically thinks about being a human as dressage—a rhythm of being that is vitalist, but not entirely normative either. It's the coordination of you with the animal. We could say a lot of things about how that could be generalized, but it's also that you are in a relation to architecture and architecture is inducing your orientation.

Hardt:

Dressage is primarily with reference to horses, correct?

Berlant:

Yes, that's correct. That's why I said the animal. It's like you and the animal are figuring out how to be in sync and you're not the boss of the animal and it's not exactly the boss either. It's the thing you have to generate in the rhythm of being, of movement. So that seems exciting to think about.

Freud's "Economic Problem of Masochism" is one of my favourite essays. He basically says we don't really know anything of the subject; it's one of his really self-sceptical essays. But, he says, what we do know is that a subject is something like the effect of the rise and fall of affective intensity and that what you are is a set of habits of managing the rise and fall of affective intensity. So what's internal to you is also what's in relation to others and to worlds. The economic problem of masochism is a question about what it means to be subordinated to a rhythm of the social. But the thing about masochism is, as Bersani would also say, that it's not a non-agency, it's a desire to find one's footing within relationality. In some episodes he talks about this as a fading of the subject, as Lacan would, in other places he talks about the manifestation of it. So we have a lot of different traditions on the table here for thinking

about what having a habit for managing the rhythm of relation would be. That’s another way of talking about non-sovereignty. In Lefebvre, you’re managing this rhythm in relation to objects and humans and the object world, which asks the question of the relation between an entirely social model of worlding and a natural model of worlding, and trying to figure out what the points of convergence would be.

Davis: I’m really intrigued by the ways you both speak of how love is a project of non-sovereignty in terms of the social, the self, and the relationship between the social and nature. If you’re trying to conceive of each of those layers with a certain consistency, whether that is a surface of habit or as an institution, then what is the difference between those formations and sovereignty?

Hardt: I’ll start with some basic things. I think within the tradition of political theory, it’s not at all clear what a non-sovereign politics could be. It’s hard to make such grand generalizations, but the tradition of political theory we inherit is fundamentally related to the role and decision making of the one, whether that one be the king, the party, the liberal individual, all of these. Here, decision-making can only be performed by the one, and so I think this is what Toni Negri and I have felt is interestingly challenging about the concept of multitude itself. How can a multiplicity decide? The organization of decision-making is central for me for thinking politics or political theory. I guess I would apply this to the level of the individual too. How can an individual as multiplicity, and hence as non-sovereign, decide and not be just an incoherent helpless heap? What I think is required for that, now back again at the level of political theory, is understanding how collective structures, or structures of multiplicity, can enable social decision-making. We also have a long tradition of the possibility of the democracy proper – the rule of the many – but it’s a minor tradition, or sometimes a subterranean tradition. That seems to be one way of characterizing what’s at stake, or challenging in this.

One other pedagogical way of thinking about this, that seems to me useful for posing the problem, is the long tradition in European, Chinese, and many other political theorizing that goes back thousands of years, which poses an analogy between the human body and the social body. In these traditions, the analogy is very explicit: the army is the arms, the peasants are the feet, the king is the head, and so forth. This assumes the centrality, hierarchy, and unity of the organs of the body that ground and justify the centrality and unity of the organs of the social body. The natural assumption, in Hobbes and any number of others, about the human body and its functions, are what make necessary that kind of social form.

So what if one were to take seriously the contemporary or even the last thirty years of neuroscience that talks about the non-centrality of thought processes and decision-making processes in the brain? What if we were to keep the analogy and say, well, actually the brain is not centred. It’s an incredible complex of neurons firing and chemical processes. Thinking about the human body and the brain, in particular, as a non-centred multiplicity, would help us understand a radically different social body. I think that my inclination generally would be to throw out the analogy, but it’s at least polemically interesting to say let’s take the analogy and recognize it for what it is, and the functioning of the brain might help us understand that sovereignty was a mistaken idea in the first place for how the individual functions.

Berlant: I think “sovereignty” badly conceptualizes almost anything to which it’s attached. It’s an aspirational concept and, as often happens, aspirational concepts get treated as normative concepts, and then get traded and circulated as realism. And I think that’s what happened with sovereignty. So, in “Slow Death,” I say that perhaps we should throw sovereignty out, but people are so invested in it maybe we can’t, because you can’t just decide that ghosts don’t exist. You have to find a way to change something from within, so you just gave us a model

for doing that, Michael.

There's another way of going at this that also has to do with a different relation to incoherence. Part of the reason I think that queer theory and love theory are related to each other as political idioms is that queer theory presumes the affective incoherence of the subject with respect to the objects that anchor it or to which they're attached. Could we see the multiplicity of kinds of attachment through which any incoherent being proceeds in the world as an opportunity to radically multiply the norms of intelligibility that would enable people to feel like there was a thing to return to within the social that they could have opted in for? One thing that is very powerful for me to try and think about is how we could have a political pedagogy that deals with incoherence: where the taking up of a position would not be so that an individual can appear coherent, intentional, agentive—even if that's how they encounter themselves through their object. I seek a way that situational clarity can be produced that acknowledges the fractures within the subject. Training in one's own incoherence, training in the ways in which one's complexity and contradiction can never be resolved by the political is a really important part of a political theory of non-sovereignty. But we still have to find a place for adjudication, or working out, or working for, or working over, which requires a pedagogy of attention, of paying attention to the different way in which the different kinds of claims on the world, one's attachments or ways of moving or desires for habituation, or aspirations could engender.

So, I don't go to the brain for anything. I like the nervous system better, because it's there we really experience the clash among visceral responses and normative codings. But the fact that you have a stomach brain and a head brain and the stomach brain tells me that so much is on the table that we don't know. We're so enigmatic. Let's say we could start with the enigma part and we understand that the brain itself can shut down when it has different aims, that there are forms of stuckness that are bodily.

Those forms of stuckness, when I ask what it is that I can't work through, are little pedagogical openings. Sovereignty, as a model for a heroic and successful being, nation, or body politic, presents the problem of not being able to deal with contradiction as constitutive to the productivity of life. When we start with non-sovereignty, those things on the table are not things to be repaired, but things about which the social should be capacious, and the political imaginary should also be capacious. Because the minute you have a mono-subject or a mono-culture or collectivity as the feeling of being the same as your aspiration, then you have to negate the non-sovereign organism, which is the site and chaos of the social. I think that's what a lot of hysterical politics is trying to do. It's trying to say my hysteria is a symptom of injustice and I would like to feel simple emotionally, I would like the social to be simple so that I can feel simple in relation to it. There is a mimetic desire in the sovereignty model of the social.

Hardt:

I'm interested and uncertain about the way I'm assuming continuity between the self and society, specifically through the valence of joy. I recognize my attraction to that, but I think the analogy is wrong. I think it's smoothing a continuum of degrees and I'm questioning myself at the moment about what kind of limitation or drawbacks does that kind of thinking entail.

Berlant:

I have two responses to that, and one is, and this is going to be a much longer conversation obviously, but the question of cause and effect is central to this. I always think of ways of being in the world in terms of affective relationality rather than in terms of origins or causes. In the end, I think we're not going to like any of those languages, of degrees or planes or domains, and we're going to find better ways to talk about the form that gets engendered through relationality.

The second response is about the increase of our powers. I always have a phrase that I've decided is a placeholder phrase,

as phrases often are in my life, which for a long time is a satisfying phrase, and then I realize I haven't actually made it into a thought yet. For example, in a crisis culture we're so excited about gaming the difference between zero and one that flourishing somehow gets bracketed. Survival looks like a triumph, and that's a terrible thing. I want flourishing. But what do I mean by flourishing anyway? What are all of the synonyms I know for flourishing? There aren't that many. Isn't that interesting? The phrase you use to hold open a space is “an increase in joy.” But an increase of joy might not feel like increase. It might feel like relief, it might feel like I can be a mass of incoherent things and not be defeated by that. Or it could feel experientially like all sorts of things. It would be increase in the sense of proliferation, but not necessarily intensification. There's this terrible language in a certain kind of political theory now about capacities, capacities as measuring increase, and the more you have the better off you are. As we're trying to figure out the materiality of the relation between the affective infrastructures that we're imagining and what it would feel like to be in those, one of the things we'll ask is when does increase not feel like it? And when are other languages available?

How come you didn't anchor your attempt here to imagine the affective motor for a new social confidence to joy rather than love?

Hardt: Love is the social mobilization of joy. They're intimately related. The short version is: Joy can be without others, whereas love can't. You're right, though, that increase and capacities aren't the only way of thinking of flourishing.

Berlant: I wasn't saying that in a critical way. I was just saying increasing won't always be represented as increase. It won't be always accumulation or extension. It might be extension, and this goes to the continuity question, but it will have something to do with proliferation.

Hardt: My project is about what I conceive of as democracy and

collective self-governance. In my view, this does require an increase of capacities. So, on one hand, I certainly agree with you when I read all the NGO literature about capacities, which seems to me inadequate. And yet, on the other hand, when Du Bois writes in *Black Reconstruction* about the possibilities of a new social form among the recently freed slaves, he emphasizes that it cannot be spontaneous. If you take this population of ex-slaves now who were dominated by ignorance and poverty, if you tried to make a democratic form as they are now, it would simply be the rule of ignorance and poverty. Spinoza says something very similar at a certain point, as does Lenin. For Spinoza, it's about superstition. Right at the eve of the soviet revolution, Lenin says, ‘Russians as they are now have a boss at work, they need a boss in politics. Human nature, as it is now, can't self-govern. What we need to do now is transform human nature.’ For me, what that means is that we need to create the conditions for the habits and powers for collective self-rule. Any discussion of love has to point in that direction towards the increase of our power, capacities, or talents with the idea of democracy. There is nothing natural or spontaneous about this idea of democracy – it has to be learned. It's about education more generally, like an athlete needs to be trained, but there is no trainer.

Berlant: But there are so many trainers.

Hardt: Right. This kind of general education is not something that someone can do by one's self completely. But I'm fleeing the sense that Lenin and Du Bois share that a certain type of social hierarchy is required to make that transition, be it the state, or a talented tenth, or something that can train the others in democracy, I'm much more attracted to models of transformation that don't involve the trainers.

Berlant: How do you learn to live democracy? When does a concept of the social as an orientation towards the world and towards being with others get inculcated and what does it mean to be

sufficient to it? It was Kant in “What is Enlightenment?” who said you have to learn how to have reason so the people who learn to have it first can then teach others. I feel that that’s probably a mistake since it depends on if you think about democracy as the institutions of democracy, or if you think of democracy as the affects and orientations toward democracy, and whether those institutions are representative. Maybe you do want to go back to, or are still in, a civil society model, where the institutions of democracy are representing the livedness of it. We didn’t begin there. We began with a more synthetic and integrated orientation because there’s a lot of thinking that we need to do there, rather than from the place where institutions are exterior representations of a lived orientation. So it’s the question again of being trained for or learning an orientation toward democracy, and the relationship between one’s own incoherence and the problem of adjudicating social difference, social inconvenience, and fantasy, which we really haven’t gotten to talk about yet. Democracy is also a fantasy. It’s a set of social relations that entails different sets of descriptions. But where does that fantasy come from and how does that fantasy get distributed in representational form and also in its other forms? All those things are in play here. So I’m not sure I’m comfortable with a representational model of the institutions of democracy.

Hardt: No, I’m not either. In fact that’s what I would assume based on how we were talking about the possibility of a non-sovereign politics would be about finding non- representational forms of self rule.

Berlant: That’s hard because we want there to be a normative enough flow for there to be habits and we want there to be institutions even. But we want a model of-- I’m saying this as though we’ve agreed on it in advance--embeddedness rather than exteriority.

Sarlin: How does the imaginary function differently for each of you?

Berlant: Do you mean imaginary in a Lacanian sense, or?

Sarlin: No, I mean it in the sense of the social imaginary. Both of you are engaging in a project of imagining, but there is a distinction between the way that you, Lauren, see the role of the social imaginary and fantasy in politics, and the way that Michael doesn’t talk directly about the social imaginary.

Hardt: I would start answering your question by thinking about the imagination as a power rather than the imaginary. I mean, if one were to attribute any importance to the work we do, it is in fact largely about the stimulation of the imagination, ours and others.

One of the things that does seem relatively new to me is the extent of the political resignation, by which I mean the lack of imagination, of people in general. The understanding that the social forces of domination are so large now that it’s just impossible to imagine life differently, either life without capital, or life without the domination of the US military and any number of things that seem so fixed. Part of the positive political effects of the kind of scholarship we’re engaged with is the stimulation of the imagination and a recognition that the world could be different.

It’s a lovely thing in Spinoza, how he says that prophets have no shortcut to the truth they just have much more powerful imaginations than the rest of us. Such statements were read as heretical, but he means it in the nice way. He’s all for the prophets. He didn’t mean to deflate them. It’s a really important thing that they have much more imagination than the rest of us. The imagination is constitutive, and I think this is true of how you, Lauren, use fantasy too. It’s not just unworldly, detached from the world spinning off the refusal of things, rather it’s constitutive in the sense that the imagination becomes so intense and embedded that it becomes real through its intensification and articulation. That puts theory in the realm of prophecy, but not prophecy in the realm of saying what’s going to happen. Instead, it’s the fostering of

the imagination, the encouraging of that power to recognize that life can be, and in some ways already is, different. I realize that's not quite the way that imaginary and fantasy function for you.

Berlant: But I think that was a great description. For me, fantasy is in realism. What is possible, what is probable, what an action might do, and the scale and the scope of the possible effects of things, that's all about fantasy, projection, and attachment. It's not exterior to life at all, it's interior. It's all about moving within the space of living. So I have no problem with your description. I just had two thoughts to add.

One is about excitement and the fear of excitement. When people encounter theoretical work that says things could be otherwise, they often get excited and they also often come in with an 'I don't want to get over-excited by this' feeling, because it's too much. 'That's not gonna work,' etc. The fear of an optimism for social transformation is not just the fear of people who have an investment in the norms of the world, it's also the fear of the people for whom the world isn't working and who have a political commitment to being otherwise, but for whom that kind of excitement is unbearable. I think that's what is interesting about the way that theory induces ambivalence. In the way you just described it, I'm sure it will also induce ambivalence in readers.

The other thing that's important to say that for many people who are politically depressed, or who have some version of having a negative political relation to the world, the impossibility of imagining life differently constitutes realism: all they can imagine is loss. And so the question is whether it would be possible to imagine life differently in some way in which loss would be a part of the possibility of building something better. Unfortunately the horizon of loss is omnipresent.

Hardt: In that way "another world is possible" is not a good slogan because people are constantly imagining another worse world

possible.

Berlant: Exactly, exactly. That's right.

Hardt: I'd like to hear a little bit more about your experience with optimism, and start from my inclination often to reject the term optimism as it's given to me and that's why I want to reject it. It's given to me by people saying 'oh well Mike, why are you so optimistic,' 'what makes you so optimistic,' like 'it was fun reading your book because it was optimistic, but actually I really know that things aren't going to be that way or can't be that way' or something like that. And I feel that when I'm being called optimistic, it's an insult, and what is meant by it is that I'm pretending things are going to be better without having any reason to believe it.

Berlant: That's actually not why, it's because you're saying 'they're already better.' You know the thing about 'it's already there,' and everyone's like 'no it's not.' You know?

Hardt: I usually want to respond to that by saying: no, I'm not optimistic, at least not in the way you meant it. I'm confident. And by confident I mean I have a reason to be. For instance, it sounds optimistic to think that people will rise up today to overthrow the forms of domination under which we're suffering. But my response in general is, do a little historical work. More or less, people have found ways to subvert and transform every previous form of domination. Of course, it hasn't always ended up as the best of all possible worlds. Nonetheless revolt happens. People rise up. Why would that stop today? So it seems to be a matter of confidence. So what I'm wondering about is, what relation would you pose. In a way you're posing a double relationship to optimism and I want to hear a little more about that.

Berlant: Ok. I often say things like the thing that you described, like: in our lifetimes there have been enormous transformations in a really fantastic way, never complete, never enough and always with internal problems, but it's important. It's important to

remind people there's a tradition, an ongoing tradition of social transformation in which people use time they don't have to make worlds that haven't existed yet. Worlds that include less defeating relations to power that feels exterior that they make, as it were, interior to their agency. But I love that. I never get called optimistic.

Hardt: Oh, but your work is really optimistic!

Berlant: I know! That's the thing. But the optimism is very specific, which is in the pedagogical: my conviction is that you can become different, and worlds can become different, through social organization and the circulation of thought and concepts of what a resource is. But I start where things are stuck, which you don't do. Then I try to figure out why people are staying there. Oh, because they figured out a way to flourish in the midst of stuckness; that's interesting. So let's think about the heterotopia, let's think about different folds of attachment and possibility in the middle of X. And so what I always hope is that the place of productive transformation will dissolve the places of stuckness that are actually defeating life. And I mean life in the kind of big global earthy sense as well as at the scale of persons. But often it doesn't – that's what's interesting. Often the places that make people and worlds possible aren't dissolving the places of destructive being. I have optimism about all of that, but because of starting in stuckness, I don't get accused of happiness. It's not where I begin. I think that probably matters a lot to the different ways our work is received.

The other thing I was thinking was, and I started realizing this when I was working on the Hawthorne book actually, I realized that people's attachment to the nation form was an optimistic attachment, that there could be an institutional and phantasmatic system that could allow people to proceed incoherently in the social, because they are incoherent and they're politically incoherent, and in love they make no sense.

But there would be room for them to make sense in a way that would be joyous and life building. What was so interesting about that for me was that a generation of leftists older than me said, 'when we started reading your book we just didn't know how you could write it because the nation form is just a horrible monster that destroys things,' and I said 'well I'm not saying it isn't.' What I'm saying is that the nation form held a place for the continuity of optimism for what social life could be. You know? In that version of that encounter, it wasn't an insult, it was just their amazement that I didn't feel that the nation had already lost its legitimacy as a magnet for social life. But unfortunately, for many people the nation is kind of all there is for imagining what social life could be. As a result, there are a lot of hysterical politics organized around the nation. And even though there are all kinds of scales for being in the world that people are trying to imagine otherwise, the question of what the meta-structure could be that would deliver mass happiness, or that would hold a space open for the delivery of mass happiness, well, the nation still remains the name of it for many, many people.

In the current version of my life, a lot of my friends in queer social theory were very insulting to me about the word optimism in my work and thought. They didn't want it there. 'Why don't you call it something else?' Because they thought optimism made you stupid. And I always say, well not the stupid kind. It has occurred to me from time to time, and this is my relation to the place of the concept of flourishing in psychoanalysis, which is that if you don't have an attachment to the world, you die from failure to thrive. And the phrase 'failure to thrive' is a weepy phrase to me. I see it everywhere, I can't bear it. And interrupting 'failure to thrive' motors my politics, it funds it. The opposite of failure to thrive is what I mean by optimism. You have to have it to exist. I think that the people who are cynical just can't bear it. They can't bear the realist way of thriving, they want it to be in fantasy. In contrast,

I want it now; I want it in the world now. I don't want it for kids later, I want it for now. Those are the kinds of different ways our histories have brought us into conjuncture around this, but it's also about admitting that being an intellectual, being a person who believes that concepts change things, and being political are fundamentally optimistic orientations, in the good sense. I'm not afraid of that, I'm not afraid of that attachment to thriving, and I don't think you are either.

Sarlin: One more question. Why turn to this mode of imagining now? Why the idioms of love and optimism?

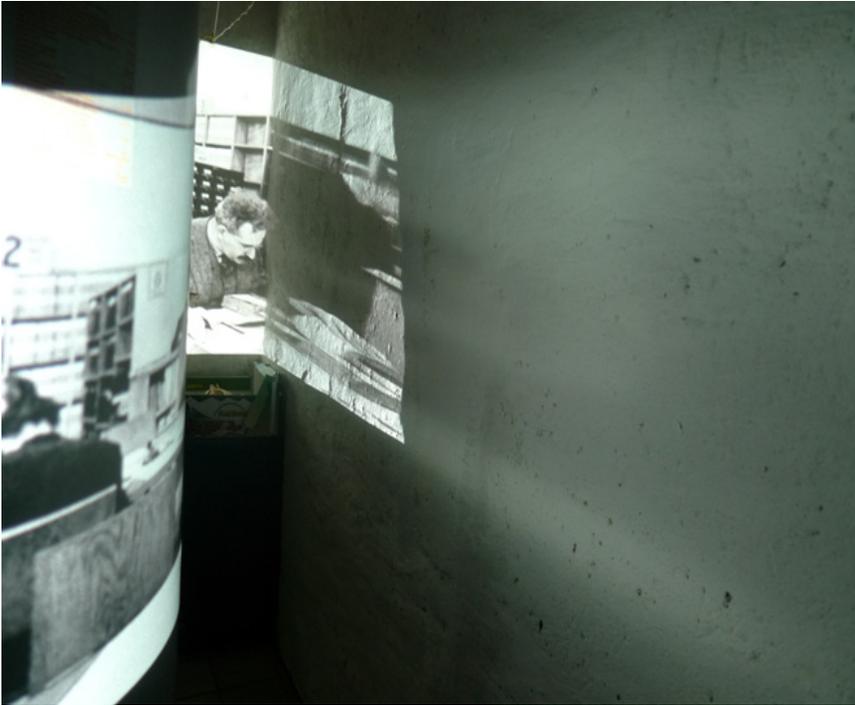
Berlant: Optimism is a way of interrupting the normative idioms of the political. It's a shock, we're not talking about states of exception and we're not talking about disciplinary society. Optimism starts in a place that's frightening because it's in an emotional vernacular, because it raises all sorts of questions about rearticulating sociality beyond reproducing the public and the private. So I think it's interruptive in its shock quality, but I don't mean that in a terrorizing sense, since interruptive qualities of optimism are a really important part of its productivity.

Hardt: For me, with regard to the discourses of today, there seemed to me to be an excessive focus on sovereignty, on the state of exception, even as antagonists, I mean. Those discourses close immediately and unavoidably the vulnerable position of wanting more. The discussions about the enormity of the sovereign that we face, the near impossibility of confronting that power that's both inside and outside the law, that puts us in the position of bare life, all of that obviates the problem of the vulnerability of wanting, of expressing the desire for the world to be different. Almost by saying, of course it can't be, by saying of course you're powerless so it doesn't matter what you want. In that way, talking about love seems a useful challenge to what I perceive as a dominant mode of political theorizing and political discourse today. It also connects up with a series

of things emerging today and kinds of political movements or the kinds of theorizing going on in political movements that seems to grasp that well. So the concept of love helps name an undercurrent that seems worth fostering in contrast to what I see as a dominant mode of theorizing.

Berlant: The discourse of political love has always, or long been, associated with religious idioms of thinking the social. Partly what we're doing is trying to bring it back into the place of political action, where political action and new social relations happen in time with different types of practices. I think Michael is right that there's already energy for that in neo-anarchists. And if you have a practice-based model of thinking in relation to other kinds of political work, it's also saying that it's not spirit over there and doing the material work of reorganizing life over here, but trying to find a synthetic language for both. In that way, it's jarring in a good sense, it's not just a mode of reflection but actually it's a mode for action and also a description of what it would take for people to take the risk of new relationality.

Hardt: That was a good last line, I like that.



Trace

AYESHA HAMEED

Photos by Ayesha Hameed and Elske Rosenfeld

It's no small conceit when you read from Walter Benjamin's diary on his meetings with Brecht and recognize yourself.

But that is exactly what happened to me waiting for the eleventh month for my visa to the UK to come through and looking for another project to fill my time, that I found myself in Elske's family home in Halle. This was a space that weirdly combined everywhere and nowhere. For E it was the home she grew up in, where her mother grew up. For me, sitting in the lovely garden under the apple tree drinking my coffee while white butterflies flew around, it was a blank slate to project upon. It made me

think of the lovely gardens I imagined Adorno ensconced, chatting with Gretel, writing his brutal rejections of each draft of Benjamin's 1935 Exposé.

27 September. Dragør. In a conversation a few evenings ago Brecht spoke of the curious indecision which at the moment prevents him from making any definite plans. As he is the first to point out, the main reason for this indecision is that his situation is so much more privileged than that of most other refugees. Therefore, since in general he scarcely admits that exile can be a proper basis for plans and projects, he refuses all the more radically to admit it as such in his own particular case. His plans reach out to the period beyond exile. There, he is faced with two possibilities. On the one hand there are some prose projects waiting to be done: the shorter one of the *Ui* – a satire on Hitler in the style of the Renaissance biographers – and the long one of the *Tui* novel. This is to be an encyclopedic survey of the follies of the Tellectual-Ins (intellectuals); it seems that it will be set, in part at least, in China. A small-scale model of this work is already completed. But besides these prose works he is also preoccupied with other plans, dating back to very old studies and ideas. Whereas he was able, at a pinch, to set down in his notes and

So I looked for the letters, and found of course that I was wrong. It was Benjamin, who sat in Brecht's garden in Denmark, reading his volume of *Capital* that I remembered. And to me this jogged, nudged over memory materialized the different circuitry of misunderstanding – the segue, the false start, the transmission of translation – that breathes life into failures of communication. What flashes of impunity allow for someone to imagine all the more into a space that is already full of memory and history? To me, that was the heart of the matter. No space is neutral, but when E and I decided to do a series of projects in this house, it seemed the only ethical way to start was to start at that moment when my fantasy colonized the space and my memory failed to find the right referent; to make something of the imposition of my fantasy on E's home and all the resistances and complicities that its history offered.

What happens when the goal of collaboration is not to find a third voice, but rather to call attention to the uncomfortable incursions, invasions, and impositions that go long with the good faith and excitement of shared ideas and common space? What if we just never found the democracy of a middle ground and left things as they were?

Benjamin once famously said, “to live means to leave traces” (155). If you read his diary entries on his visits with Brecht, you read the portrait of a man who is watching the catastrophe of the world falling to the right with the clarity and remove of someone in all the trappings of bourgeois exile, in the expansive space of a beautiful

garden, and with the wealth of time to work, yet who is in no space and is in the hellishness of evacuated time. And in the negative space at the edges of this portrait is another one of Benjamin.

In *What Color is the Sacred?* Michael Taussig writes about how, when in Ibiza in the summers of 1932 and 1933, Benjamin and the French painter Jean Selz started collaborating on a project. Selz was to translate Benjamin's childhood memoirs in Berlin from German to French, even though Selz spoke no German at all. To Benjamin, the results were "nearly always outstanding" (qtd. in Taussig 69). This is a kind of ventriloquism in which the recalcitrance of the threshold between languages speaks for the failure of translation to bring across its cargo of meaning from one language to another. A moment of failure that, when called attention to, becomes a marker of the transmission, the sending across of a 'something else.'



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Wasting Time: Finding Refuge While the Tenure Clock Ticks

EDDY KENT

Time is money. The academic profession, like so many of the liberal professions, has always had an uneasy relation to Benjamin Franklin's adage. We don't easily see ourselves as waged workers. Though we recognize the necessity of completing labourious tasks (e.g., grading assignments, writing grant applications, sitting on administrative committees), for many these are part of the Faustian compact allowing us to pursue our own freely chosen interests. The purpose of this brief essay is to use my recent experience at the Banff Centre for the Arts to critique the relation between time and money in the production of that thing we call an "academic career." As I hope to show, time has a very precise articulation in today's academic industry, where the infiltration of managerial logic into the university administration has encouraged a short-term, self-interested disposition among its faculty employees. Here the illusion of free time confronts the fact that success in the business depends on effective, self-governed, time management. A failure, or refusal, to work under these conditions has material consequences for individuals, a fact that poses a great challenge to those opposed to the neoliberalisation of the university. In what follows, I explore the possibilities offered by taking refuge, a tactical withdrawal that I would call wasting time.

The Neoliberal Profession

Before travelling to Banff specifically, I think it is useful to rehearse some of the standard arguments about academic labour. Any such effort must begin by acknowledging the function of social capital. The rewards of academic life are not paid in mere wages; or, to put it more bluntly, you're not getting rich anytime soon with your theory on what caused the War of Jenkins' Ear. While tenured professors will likely live and retire in comfort, their salaries in the main do not compare favourably with those in the legal or medical professions. Indeed, I happen to work at the University of Alberta, located in the city of Edmonton, which is also the gateway to Canada's massive and infamous tar sands, a place where an unskilled labourer can make upwards of \$130,000 a year. As an Assistant Professor, I make just over half that. And, of course, among my peers, I'm relatively lucky: I have a tenure-track job. My point here is not to complain that I'm underpaid (I'd rather suggest that others are overpaid),

but only to point out that academia is not the most direct path to material wealth.

We're in it for other reasons. We're getting paid to read books, to think about great ideas, and collaborate with exciting young minds in the classroom. Some of us even feel a duty to pass along our accumulated knowledge and the skills to help future generations add to and improve that knowledge. But above all hangs the idea of independence. We claim ourselves experts and through the acknowledgment of that expertise the right to set our own intellectual agendas. Historically, we've given these interests names such as "the life of the mind," "academic freedom," "blue skies research," or (best of all) "sabbatical." It is not hard to see how powerfully this mythology of free time, of independence, runs through our profession. Considering only the arts and humanities for a moment, we confront the sobering fact that, in 2008, over 140,000 individuals applied to a graduate program in the United States (Bell 21). The few tenure-track jobs on offer each year receive hundreds of applications, and most students enter grad school knowing this, so attractive is the lure of a self-directed life. We likewise see the effective value of independence in the ongoing reluctance of adjunct, tenure-track, and tenured faculty to confront either the budget cuts that degrade their working conditions or the structural transformations that lead to the elimination of continuing appointments in favour of "casualization."

Leftish thought would suggest that we could work to fix these things if we would first organize. However, academics seem married to the mythology of independence, and this desire suggests we think of the tenured or tenure-track faculty member as belonging to a liberal profession. As historians like Penelope Corfield (1995) and Harold Perkin (1989) have shown, this is a category that coincides with the rise of commercial capitalism and the consequent revolution in social organization. The liberal professions emerge to solve the problem caused by the fact that not every aspiring gentleman can be a capitalist. At its base, a liberal profession offers a "respectable" route to social status and income. As Corfield describes it, professional work is "dignified and not menial. It [is] untainted since it [does] not deal directly in "filthy lucre" or entail toiling at dirty manual labour." Above all, though, a profession offers individual liberty, the "freedom from close daily supervision" (Corfield 174).

Of course, anyone who has read a bit of Durkheim, Foucault, or Deleuze knows that close daily supervision is just one of the cruder options available to those who would discipline a subject. Professions merely substitute supervision for techniques of self-regulation. Traditionally, this has taken the form of a professional ethic, through which dispersed individuals can imaginatively, positively, and sympathetically identify with each other. We submit ourselves, in other words, to the judgment of our peers. We pride ourselves, at my institution and at many others, for retaining the professional privilege of self-regulation: cases for tenure, merit-based salary increases,

and promotion are all determined by a committee of fellow academics.

I should temper this by admitting that the academic profession has always been grubby. While we might rather wax nostalgic of the days when professors could go about their business, choosing their own research agendas, and taking as much time as they saw fit to think through meaningful ideas, rather than race to publish an article so next year's annual report doesn't look blank, the fact is that, since at least the Middle Ages, scholars have had to sing for their suppers. Recall the fate of Arthur Schopenhauer, who having recently published his monumental *The World as Will and Representation* took up a lectureship at the University of Berlin in 1819. Schopenhauer had a great plan: schedule his lectures to coincide with those of a wildly popular hack, the hope being that the forceful truth of his ideas would not only enlighten the students, but also put the "charlatan" out of business. Unfortunately, the charlatan happened to be G. W. F. Hegel. Schopenhauer's lectures never garnered more than five or six attendees; and within two years he resigned his most unprofitable post. For decades after, in essays, letters, and pamphlets, Schopenhauer railed against the tyranny of the "book-philosopher": "Mentally, he is dull and pointless—a copy of a copy. His literary style is made up of conventional, nay, vulgar phrases, and terms that happen to be current" (89). To be an academic, or what a grudge-holding Schopenhauer called a book-philosopher, is to be a hustler or, depending on your ideological preference, an entrepreneur in the marketplace of ideas.

Today the length of one's CV supersedes the metric of bums-in-seats, as individual academics work enterprisingly at building their career. We publish, we network, and we collaborate. Perhaps it has always been so, but more recently these forms of academic activity are inflected by the incorporation of the university system within the global economy. Our peregrinations, whether as the itinerant adjunct scrambling between cities to find enough contract teaching to pay the bills, or as the renowned professor moving from one endowed chair to another, have accelerated. Concurrently, the same forces of neoliberal globalization that hollowed out the manufacturing and industrial core of developed nations have turned their universities into economic engines. With market-minded governments announcing an educated population as the new competitive advantage in the postindustrial landscape, universities have received enormous increases in private and public funding. According to the United States' National Center for Education Statistics, enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions increased by 9 percent between 1989 and 1999. However, between 1999 and 2009, enrollment increased 38 percent, from 14.8 million to 20.4 million.¹ New buildings, new programs, and new forms of training have been produced in re-

¹ "Fast Facts," National Center for Education Statistics, accessed 23 August 2011, <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=98/>.

sponse to governments' decrees that education is vital to a nation's economic security.

But as universities became more and more dependent upon funding from government bodies, the academic profession also lost some portion of its sovereignty. The new obligation to present the university as a useful state institution has called forth a new intermediary class, a phalanx of Louis Bonapartes' to represent us who seemingly cannot represent ourselves to the State: the administrator. In his recent book, *The Fall of the Faculty* (2011), Benjamin Ginsberg has surveyed the rise of the career administrators, the deanlets and the deanlings who introduced into the political life of a university a managerial logic that has transformed the way things are done on campuses. Critics like Ginsberg speak angrily in such terms about the corporatization of the university. A familiar refrain in this rhetoric is the complaint that, collectively, we work under pressure to produce a regular accounting of the work we do, in terms that are meaningful not to our peers but to our shareholders (the public as mediated through elected officials and senior civil servants) and, to a lesser extent, our consumers (our students).

I wonder, however, whether this pessimism is necessary. Perhaps it is a mistake to think that our options are limited to submission and protest. As Gilles Deleuze explained in his précis of our transition from disciplinary societies to societies of control, there is no sense complaining which regime we operate under. The fact is that there is always a regime. In each of them, we find "liberating and enslaving forces confront[ing] each other" (4). As such, when we recognize a regime change, Deleuze counsels, there "is no need to fear or hope, but only to look for new weapons" (4). It is in this Deleuzian spirit that I want to think about our transition from a liberal to a neoliberal profession, and offer the following thoughts on how we can spend our time.

Utopian Projects

This year's inaugural Banff Research in Culture (BRiC) program took as its theme the idea of "the Commons." Immediately, then, one can see how it might set out to resist or at least protest against the emerging neoliberal hegemony. After all, neoliberalism's ideology fundamentally opposes groupings, organizations, or any social unit larger than the individual actor.² Pierre Bourdieu explains how its pursuit of a pure and

² Of course, as with any ideology, stated ideals often obscure material practice. In the case of neoliberalism, the financial crisis of 2008-09 reveals how *necessary* the state becomes at the moment of economic crisis, providing credit, loan guarantees, and bailouts to unstable corporations. For more on the distinction between neoliberal theory and practice, see David Harvey's *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005), 16-19.

free market necessarily entails "a programme of the methodical destruction of collectives." By assembling graduate students, postdocs, pre-tenure faculty, social activists, writers, curators, and artists together for three weeks, BRiC testified to an ongoing, international, interdisciplinary interest in exploring alternatives to a disaggregated individuated world market.

And yet, there is also something almost too predictable about these kinds of assemblies. The original idea for BRiC belongs to people working in the field of cultural studies; the call for applications, though universal in its invitation, broadcast only along certain established academic and artistic networks. Moreover, the tone of the call made its politics unmistakable, announcing our collective entry into a moment of crisis:

As an increasingly rapacious capitalism draws ever more elements of social life into its profit logic and renders seemingly every activity and value into a commodity, thinking with and through the commons has become an important means of generating conceptual and political resistance to the multiple new forms of enclosure that continue to take place today, and which need to be confronted and challenged forcefully and directly.³

To do this, prospective application were asked to respond to the following questions:

How might we shape new collectivities and communities? What are the capacities and dispositions essential to producing new ways of being? What lessons can we learn from history as well as contemporary struggles over the commons (from challenges to intellectual property to indigenous struggles)? What concepts and vocabularies might we develop to aid our critical and conceptual work with respect to the commons (e.g., Alain Badiou's revival of communism or Jacque Rancière's reconfiguration of equality and democracy)? How does artistic and cultural production participate in the production of new collectivities and defense of the commons?

These kinds of questions are attractive only, as my mother would say, to a certain type. The result was a dispositional coherence among its otherwise diverse attendees.⁴

³ Imre Szeman and Heather Zwicker, "Banff Research in Culture 1: May 8-28, 2011", accessed 23 August 2011, <http://www.crculturalstudies.ca/research/banff-summer-school-for-research-in-culture/>.

⁴ Since I am using the BRiC experience to illuminate certain conditions of working in the university system, my analysis is restricted to those (the vast majority) who, when not at BRiC, have a university affiliation. The artists and curators in attendance doubtless would have important things to add to this

In other words, no disciples of Chicago School economics—nor, for that matter, any economists—were in attendance.

My point here is not to put unreasonable demands upon one three-week residency program, nor is it either to dismiss the value of, as the BRiC thematic subtitle suggests, “Believing-Acting-Feeling-Together.” Rather, I want to argue that what actually might have been achieved in this gathering differs greatly from its superficially stated intentions. To explain this, it is first important to recall the setting of BRiC, in the Banff Centre for the Arts, a compound nestled halfway up a mountain in the heart of an iconic national park in the province of Alberta, which is elsewhere attracting the world’s attention for its controversial development of its bitumen rich tar sands. The Centre is an unreal, often contradictory, space. Designed, according to its promotional material, to “Inspire Creativity,” its conceit suspends social reality, providing artists, musicians, and writers the free time to do what they want, while leaving the cooking, cleaning, and other quotidian necessities to others.

One can think of the Centre, in other words, as one would a Utopia, and in doing so, it is helpful to recall Fredric Jameson’s cautionary warning:

[It] is a mistake to approach Utopias with positive expectations, as though they offered visions of happy worlds, spaces of fulfillment and cooperation, representations which correspond generically to the idyll or the pastoral rather than the utopia. Indeed, the attempt to establish positive criteria of the desirable society characterizes liberal political theory from Locke to Rawls, rather than the diagnostic interventions of the Utopians, which, like those of the great revolutionaries, always aim at the alleviation and elimination of the sources of exploitation and suffering, rather than at the composition of blueprints for bourgeois comfort. The confusion arises from the formal properties of these texts, which also seem to offer blueprints: these are however maps and plans to be read negatively, as what is to be accomplished after the demolitions and the removals. (12)

To read a utopian project negatively puts the superficially hopeful questions announced by BRiC’s call—asking how we might shape new collectives, and so on—into better perspective. It allows us to see how such a hailing functions as neither blueprint nor programme nor manifesto for a better tomorrow, but rather as a recognition of the source of our current trouble. The assembly of thirty-odd cultural theorists and artists in a place like the Banff Centre is, therefore, not a model of an ideal future or a realistic site from which transformations to the existing order might

conversation.

be plotted.

So what *can* be done in a place like the Banff Centre, by participants who, through their application to a program like BRiC, acknowledge that something *should* be done? I think the answer is twofold. Following Jameson, I would suggest the BRiC experience can be used to disclose the source of our current suffering; namely, the way neoliberalism’s twin logics of competition and efficiency have reconfigured our conception of time. Second, following Deleuze, I believe that the temporary suspension of our daily experience within that regime presents the opportunity to develop a new weapon.

Wasting Time

During his devastation of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon’s *System of Economical Contradictions*, Karl Marx observed how, under industrial capitalism, a new sense of time was rearticulating humans’ relationship to their work and to each other. There has been, Marx argues, a race to the bottom, where simple labour has become “the pivot of industry.” Rejecting Proudhon’s suggestion that an object’s value be determined by the amount of labour expended in its production, Marx observes that labour is itself a commodity, with a variable value determined by market conditions (e.g., the cost of food, the number of labourers, etc.). Labour being a commodity, it is illogical to use it as a basis for valuing other goods and services we produce with that labour. As a clarification, Marx offers the following:

We should not say that one man’s hour is worth another man’s hour, but rather that one man during an hour is worth just as much as another man during an hour.⁵

“Time is everything,” Marx concludes, “man is nothing; he is at most time’s carcass.”⁶ What he means is that, in an industrial system, commodities, including labour, have no intrinsic value.

Neoliberalism innovates upon this industrial logic by shifting the arbitration of time’s worth from the manager to the worker. Whereas the industrial manager expected a certain output from a certain number of man-hours, her neoliberal counterpart has no expectations at all, and indeed sees those arbitrary expectations as a regulatory impediment to maximum efficiency. Don’t tell your workers what you expect; make them understand only that they are in competition with each other for limited

⁵ Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, (Progress Publishers, 1955), accessed 23 August 2011, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/poverty-philosophy/>.

⁶ *Ibid.*

resources. In the context of the academic-industrial complex we need only consider the irresponsible growth of graduate programs to see how this trick is accomplished.

Most of the participants in the BRiC program have a university affiliation, and though they occupy various positions in its hierarchy, all are subject to its rule of time. The regime is not suspended for the three-week duration of the BRiC program. The tenure clock ticks on; the job market is three weeks closer; the administrative emails have piled up; the postdoctoral fellowship is three weeks smaller; the supervisory committee expects evidence of progress. To do nothing at Banff or, more precisely, to do nothing useful has consequences for the individual but not the system, which continually assesses and if necessary disposes of individual carcasses based only on their current market value.

The enclave of Banff may not escape the general order, but the effects of being subtracted, physically if not entirely psychically, from its rule can produce interesting results. For one thing, while it does not produce an escape from a governing regime, it at least helps someone in my position recognize better the shape and size of that regime. That is to say, while the pressure to “publish or perish” remains, understanding how that professional pressure operates in a neoliberal order allows for the development of tactical responses.

Among those responses is something I would call wasting time. I do not, in saying this, imply we should become academic Bartlebys, cryptically, heroically, and fatally preferring not to engage in our grubby business. Instead, I think we might find ways to work within the given rules, finding interstices in which we might do what we want and then, after the fact, conjuring up a product that satisfies these rules. Take this essay as an example. I didn't write it at the Banff Centre. It has nothing to do with my activities and conversations within the BRiC program. And yet, in the world outside the BRiC enclave, this essay will sufficiently account for time spent. The CV is one line longer and the granting agency that subsidized my attendance can be satisfied that their investment has produced an acceptable return.

We must not complain, but rather only recognize, that the university industry has become too large, in most cases, for the administrative class to give an individual worker's output much scrutiny. There are too many of us, too many subfields of expertise, too many scholarly journals for it to be otherwise. From one perspective this tactic looks awfully like fraud, a false accounting of the work done during an assigned time, or a betrayal of the professional scholarly ethic. Possibly, but from another, it might be called a *détournement*, a way of communicating not only the results of academic research in ways that are acceptable under the current system, but also of recording the conditions under which that research is being conducted. Interested

readers will—all writers perpetually have hoped—still find an essay like this one, critique its scholarly merits, and come to a professional opinion on the strengths and shortcomings of its author. Administrators never will. I am only being partly facetious here. In a culture where academics at all levels are expected to function as expert time-managers, to be “always on”, we seriously need to find more ways to waste time. It is one of the few paths to genuine agency remaining to us.

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Pervasive Media, Commons and Connections: Research as Reflective Studio Practice at Banff

JACKIE CALDERWOOD

When I arrived at Banff I'd been battling with words for several months. Now, three weeks after the end of BRiC, I am rhyming countless couplets as I sing my song with text; two 7000 word papers beneath my belt, an artist book complete, two more book outlines started, and what seems like a million tumbling post-its, pages, word files, more... So I will begin where I conclude, and conclude where I began.

Looking back, BRiC for me would be about

Becoming as academic

Practice – research, making words out of mountains

And finally learning to |- sing]

 |- laugh]

< and when does laugh become sing?

When the laughter comes from a place of truth and the words around me ring

Laughter can mean many things, of that we can be sure.

Lying heaped upon the floor, with Pedro we all roar!¹

We roar because we're angry? We cannot find a way?

¹ Movement, interaction and contagious laughter, during an improvisation workshop with Pedro Reyes, visiting faculty at BRiC 2011.

To let this joy inside roll out, to play anew each day?

The Commons is our goal here, our posts, our ball, our ground.

We're playing as one team we know,

but are we playing friend or foe,

and whose ground do we score?

We better |- find] some more. To open up the door.

 |- play]

<and what needs to happen for play to become find?

A sense of commitment, not running away before the end of the game, trying out play by another's rules, dipping the toe in the pool. Walking a mile in another's moccasins,² pause to reflect on the taste of it all.

And Where [Are You Going] / [Do You Go To] When You Go There?

Is an installation by research artist Jackie Calderwood, created during the three week *Banff Research in Culture* thematic program *On The Commons; Or, believing-feeling-acting together* at the Banff Centre, Alberta, May 2011.

The work is a personal response to the residency themes and arises from an auto-ethnographic/reflective investigation concerning moments of noticing and spaces of thought.

The thread and pin line drawings trace mountain horizons photographed during a journey from the Banff Centre to Lake Louise. Audio recordings are from the Louise Lakeside.

² Traditional North American saying often attributed as a Sioux or Cherokee prayer, used to indicate the value of the non-judgmental ability to learn through high-quality listening and empathic resonance with another's life experience. Sometimes phrased as 'do not judge another until you have walked a mile in their moccasins', the saying can be found within contemporary health and wellbeing discourse.

Colour Grids and text have been recorded using the Hunter Gatherer iphone app (Calderwood, May 2011) as a diarying tool intended to facilitate 'noticing what you notice' and 'paying attention' in the moment.

Phrasing of the question 'And where are you going when you go there?' comes from New Zealand psychotherapist David Grove's pioneering body of work, which includes Clean Language, Emergent Knowledge and Clean Space (See Lawley and Tompkins, Sullivan and Rees). 'Clean' refers to a state in which any prior expectation or need for interpretation is placed aside, focusing instead on the unfolding 'metaphor landscape' of the client in a graceful exchange of discovery in which new information and alternative solutions can effortlessly emerge. The question can be used as an entry into the as-yet-unexplored realms of the metaphor landscape; similarly in the context of retrieving or reconnecting access to 'lost' or 'absent' moments of time in space – when our mind 'wanders' or we 'slip away'.

Hunter Gatherer app has been developed as part of Jackie's recent commission for the *GeoArtCache* project with Chrysalis Arts, North Yorkshire, England.

Thanks to my fellow studio residents who have generously encouraged me to adorn the studio, turning our walls into my own spaces of thought.

Prelude:

I want to speak to you now. And of times past. And times yet to come.

Some of these will be times you have no desire to unfold. Some may be familiar. Some may be strange. Some of the words I use will be a little un-tame.

If you find yourself folding into places you have not been before,

then just ask me gently, I'll show you the door.

So spelling and grammar, they come and they go:

I play with them freely to keep in the flow.

And if you must leave me to do as you do,

then leave with this feeling: I've written for you.

The World In A Grain Of Sand

This is the title of the piece of work I have yet to make.

It is a piece in which there are many frames. Found frames, recycled, bought new, made for the work, constructed from salvage, designer, scrap, free with a \$1 magazine, treasure collected from thrift stores, ornate and exquisite: anything goes. The frames are installed in a gallery space, the walls painted black. It's the kind of gallery you find in a museum. I saw something similar in Tate Modern where they were presenting a retrospective of intimate works. The main arte-facts were substantial sculptures, lit in clear white space. Plenty of room to walk around them, to explore from different views, to place the context of one of five works within the others. To be amazed, impressed, touched, inspired, critically aroused, offended, puzzled, intrigued... The dark room, in contrast, showed the series of the work. The artist's questioning with herself. A dialogue of uncertainty, room for contradiction, to see the work evolve. Not the grand gesture of the white space, more an infinite mirror of enquiry through the authenticity and integrity of self. A capture of a moment in time. But not of time realised, as the white cube; rather of time yet to unfold. The potentialities of the moment. The artists' dream unrealised in many forms... which route would unfold over the coming decades of her practice? How would this work, this documentation, be read in years to come?

So the world in a grain of sand takes that setting, of dark surround – the dark not of fearfulness, but the dark of exploration, potential, the as yet un-formed or un-known (to us as humans in this moment of time, to be clear).

In this rich dark space the frames are fitted neatly onto the walls. Some high, some low, some close together, some far apart.

They are each complete, yet they have relations within the whole.

And each is perfectly lined with a rich dark textile. Perhaps it is vellum, or velvet, silk or chiffon. Perhaps some are mohair, some alpaca. They are textures of material, rich from the natural world. Or are some chemical constructs of the human-made variety? Plastics, nylons, hi-tech survive-all-terrains-with-minimal-weight? Perhaps they are all types of cloth, woven together within the varied processes and fabrics of time.

Many frames, perfectly squared, at discourant heights, distances, dimensions. Each with a rich dark fabric held perfectly within. And each contains a seed. One single seed. A seed as a grain of sand. Or is it in fact a grain of sand? And where is it positioned in the frame?

These are the questions I have been asking myself during this residency – what is the frame, and within it, does the seed have life, can it grow unconstrained? Can the seed become interchangeable for a small piece of silica – and if so, what colours refract as I view the world from this frame, in infinity, from this moment in time, within this single grain of sand?

And Mountains Unfold Over Time

Warp in Time



Mountain Traces (i)

In the daylight I notice the shadows are far more delicate. Fine lines gently etching their precision onto the surface of the wall.

The pinheads take on more significance; each a mirror pool of light, a miniature sun or moon reflecting the light of the sun from this new planet of the wall. The surface of the moon has texture, telling another story. There are areas of pitting that could be lunar oceans, or perhaps areas where many have thought before. They map a topography that stretches into the beyond; beyond the focus possible when viewing the wall from this distance at which each moon is clear and bright. Step away and the

moons loose their significance, the sweeping arc of the story becomes one of what is un-done, not done, one of incompleteness and untold fragments. The lacking of the whole. Step closer and sitting beneath my mountain range I look up and see stories of voyages of remarkable people, each pin marks an achievement in the voyage of humanity. 'We've reached this point!' The pins gladly exclaim, as the thread of time holds each supported and connected by the past, each forms the stake of a hand-rail in the vision to explore. Routes may change, pace extend and contract; the continuity is theirs, there, just the same. The picture holds less prominence in the daylight, colours bleached by the light of the sun.

//Aside: Which is louder, sunlight or moonlight, I hear you say.³ You love to play this looking glass game, this constant remembering of what is undone and what is not yet done. One side sees its reflection, the other side simply sees through. And the mirrors of the kaleidoscope make an endless game of magic tunnels, trickery and laughter!

Moonlight is louder, this is a new string to my bow.

Moonlight is louder – how can you not know?

Moonlight IS louder, the colours convey –

the call in the darkness - a whisper by day.//

Weft in Space

Procarity is a word that's cropped up a lot in the last couple of weeks. It's not a word-form I'm familiar with, or even that my spell-checker recognises. But as I tenderly rescue a disfigured, floundering pin, held tentatively from falling by the thread connecting it to its peer, I realise something of what the beauty of this precarity might mean. Not a pro-, a suggestive-towards, as I first read it with my ears. Maybe now a pre-, a precursor to something beautiful opening up in space, a prelude to love, to interaction, to generosity. An opening to say 'I need you to help me, too ...'

Precarious, I wonder what that word means, where it comes from, the epitome of words, the epistemology of words. Words play, they have a lot of fun as they warp and weft making a pattern that not all of us can see.

³ Author James Geary posed the question 'which is louder, sunlight or moonlight?' during his keynote at the Clean Conference, 2011. Around 99% of the 100 strong audience opted for sunlight. Apparently this is a common level of response. Personally I find moonlight to be louder. Becoming aware of this alternative relationship to metaphor has led to other significant insights.

So I guess I need you to hear my words, to show me the patterns I have not seen. Just as you need me to show you the spaces in between.

//Aside: These rhymes are quite funny, they come from the night:

popping up in the daytime to share their delight.//

Structure:

As I write the word, my mind says 'I'm not ready yet' and I look to the wall to see the picture of the mountain, to lead myself off into the gaze, to be called to play with threads and pins some more. I feel small animal fear scurrying to hide under a rock bigger than myself. But instead I see the word, projected from my finger tips. 'Structure:' it says. This is it, what you have undone, discovered, dug up from the ground: the structure to play as you write, to weave your delight.

To move between the visual, the tactile, the kinaesthetic, the critic, the voice in the head, the writer, the artist, the maker, thinker, doer.

This IS the structure, to weave a web in time and place that embraces all of these positions and still holds space to explore, to learn from every new moment, to chart a journey of discovery as and through its reveal.

To make each moment new.

Finally I understand: to begin again.⁴

Material:

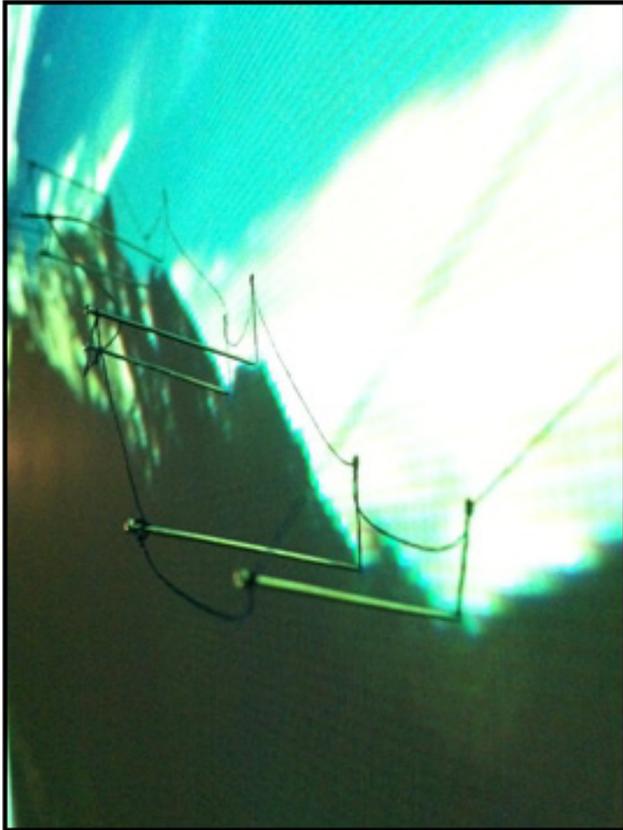
The pins bend. Clumsily I hit them with a rock. A rock from the mountain picked up in the dusk last night as a makeshift hammer-for-pins.

Time. I think of time. I think of the paper I should be writing. The deadline extended that reaches into tomorrow. The extension was not mine but it answered a call in my heart. Can I ask for my own extension, will that tear me apart?

I understand what I have been striving towards these past six months since the last residency I took part in: the space to reflect, explore, create, collaborate, make new,

⁴ 'To begin again', used with reference to Charles Faulkner's keynote Symbolic Patterns: How the fundamental distinctions of mind shape language and experience at the International Clean Conference, London, October 2010. To begin again, to reiterate the significance of the pattern of 'one'.

make old, take apart and begin again. This space I wish to articulate as it unfolds. That's what the interactivity in the moment is about. Attempting to find a way, a process, an interaction, that of itself can articulate experience unfolding in the moment of its behold.



Mountain Traces (ii)

The pins bend but they do not break. The hammer is clumsy but with each strike it reminds me that I am not a carpenter building a wall; I am an artist drawing a line, I am an admirer of mountains, following their horizon, learning from the scripts they mark on the white plaster in front of me, and I am an acupuncturist, giving love with each breath, to the earth, in awe at its energy. And occasionally, the pins sing.

Relativity (scale and spatial distribution):

It was only by about the fourth or fifth repetition that I realised I'd been scaling and spacing each section automatically. Probably the trigger was a short break, leaving the space and coming back into it with a new sense of bearings – different to before. Initially I just made them, without consciously thinking about it. The space, size, position, flowing seamlessly from one to the next. Flow interrupted, it was not obvious what needed to happen, only that there was an inconsistency emerging on the horizon. Solution found: check the size of the gap and the duration of the piece – if in doubt (or in case of lack of a more regulated measuring device), improvise with a blank canvas. A piece of A6 paper comes in handy, one-and-a-little-bit widths between sections. Four to five lengths duration, give or take. And the level of the horizon deliberately jumps as the eye jumps in the moment of noticing. As the camera jumps in the time between press and release and press again. To begin again. An ongoing horizon of stories told in spite of their intermittences – or perhaps more likely told by or even through their intermittences. And where *do* you go, when you go there?

On the point of change: tipping point

It's interesting trying to weigh up a continuous process by specific markers along the way. My blogs (Calderwood, 2009-12 and 2011) have tried to avoid the pitfalls of interpretation or repetition of an event. However there is an inevitable punctuation in any articulation over time. Without it we would stay submerged in the pool of life, swimming swimming swimming until our breathings collapse. If the pin is not strongly enough anchored, then the thread collapses. If the intermittence is great then the line will sag, which may convey the relaxed form of the rocks, settling into the landscape. Or it may just lose the definition that holds it all together. Similarly, if the knots are a moment too late, then the line of flow will alter. So how to find the point to mark in a line of endless fascination? As I become aware of the decision that I am making, or rather that *is* a decision, in each moment, that creates an impact on the articulation of the journey and of any subsequent reading and impact thereof, I realise the importance of a cohesive strategy that will give integrity to the weave, yet is not so rigid that it becomes the pattern of the weft. A fluid guidance. A state of awareness without contradiction yet maintaining a responsive and ambiguous flow. I choose to mark the points that to me seem to signal a change of pace. A change of direction, tilt, focus or movement. In the landscape this may be a small sharp cliff face or a wooded slope. Held perspectives may change – an angle of trajectory incorporating both near and far, rock, snow or tree. In experience of residency the same holds true. Conversations echo across millennia as patterns migrate one form to the next. And change may come in a moment of radical thinking in an unprompted solitude, or equally through rigorous group debate. Perhaps. And so the pace reflects my read-

ing of the landscape at the moment of my decision as I position the next marker that will draw the line the story tells.

Tension

If you pull the string too tight the pin will leave the wall and either dangle as a misshapen appendage, or fall, releasing itself from the hapless knot, and camouflaging on the studio floor or soft cushions of the sofa. A pin can leave a legacy. I do not want to be responsible for another's pain.

If the thread is too slack, the line of the story may not hold true. It may lose its suggestion to the viewer, conveying instead a sense of apathy, inattention, or worse still, inaptitude for the study.

In contrast, brisk marching from one waypoint to the next causes a harsh, irregular abruptness alien to the land and to most material form.

Every mountain knows that tension is not experienced as a constant. Some parts soften as others contract or fracture. There is a waxing and a waning and a rhythm to all life. Pace (and peace) can be uncovered here too. At just the right moment, a softening, a generous slow scooping, a luscious provision of the line, reassures that all is in hand.

Time to dream (sleeping on the sofa?)

I lie down for a moment to see the room as a different view. From the sofa I feel the drawings emerging from my desk, moving on around the room, like a column of giant ants heading where they are going. I feel the movement and sense the urgency of their communication. I run to my room and gather my laptop to return to write, write, write as they march, march, march. And I hope that if I write of their marching they will form a circle and create a pattern in their midst, then spiral outwards revealing images that speak to me of words to tell and stories to speak for the paper I must write, the joy of my heart that I long to speak yet seems to have frozen to my tongue somewhere hiding behind the warp and the weft, the daylight and the dream. Perhaps these walls can sing a song of England's landscapes too.

Completion?

Only two more sections require their threads. Of course there will be more to do, weight to add, colourful details and poetic resonances to enhance the interplay of ambients. Still I have a moment of something like the opposite of anticipation. It is nice to have the space where one knows what needs doing next. When the line is complete

we have to move to another level of activity. Or stagnate. Is it better to know what is unfinished than to not know what is to come? I quickly grab the laptop to write, and sit at a different desk in the hope that the apathy will not settle with me. And then delight rises and I pick up a pin, hit it with the rock, and listen to hear if it will sing.

Pins can only sing in the moment.

If not now, when?

And the third pin sings as it bends, contemplating its descent into a new form.

And now there is just one more horizon to map, I am excited; I am near a vantage, a viewpoint. From here I will be able to know a vista not yet seen. It is not other than me, I can feel its proximity, sense its presence.

A mountain turns into a bird

The constructions are delicate. It would be easy for someone not to notice them, to catch the end of the thought, the thread, and inadvertently it gets attached to them; as they move away it would tear. It could be possible for someone to grab it and pull, to test how strong it is, or even to try to disarm and destroy. My thoughts are not yet complete. But the outcome already lies in the form. I carefully scoop the trailing ends and drape them over the beginning way markers, unencumbered by how others may misconstrue the structure. Its story lies in wait, and meanwhile it is safe and secure, protected in its enclosure of naïve inward circling. Now as I look from the sofa I see a rocky horizon transformed into a happily flying dovelike bird. The journey has taken wings, knows its destination, and will soon land to ruffle its feathers and share its tale, safe in a new nest.

What I find: Time Passing

When I wrote that title, it meant something other than it means today.

Today, is tonight, is the dawn before tomorrow.

Another four days we will be done here, going our different ways, taking with us seeds that may wither and die, may gestate for years, may grow and mutate into weird and wonderful diverse forms.

The passage of pins began with a lady with a red beret. Today she is far ago, close still in my heart. Seventeen horizons. Seventeen rocks are still to find, no translation there. I wonder how I will fit colour reflections to vistas: seventeen days go by? Time

has passed since I began this line of thought, and this time too needs to be incorporated: I have no interest in creating a fossil of one week or ten days ago. Geological time does that far better than I.

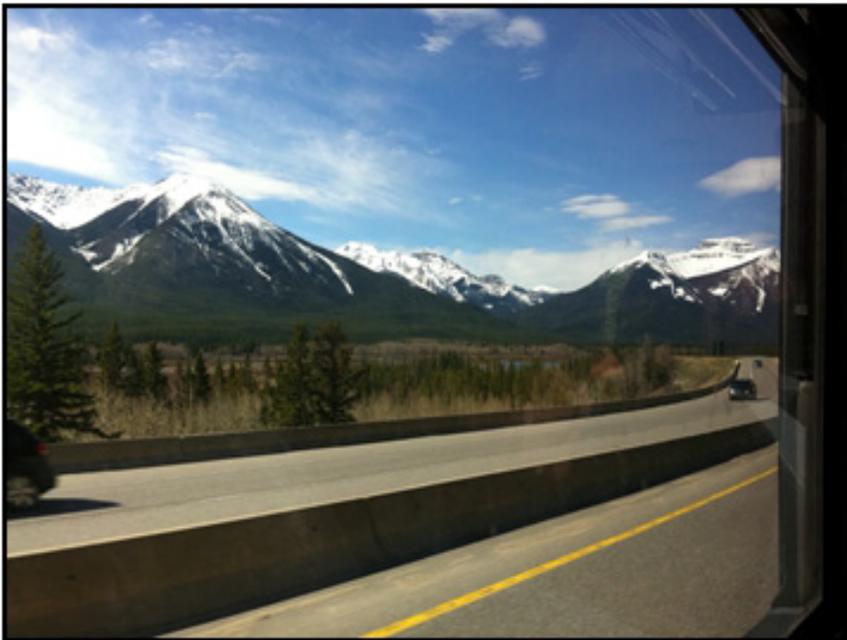
I wish my mountains to be [a] present to the now.

How do we include our development in the work we make, the stories we tell?

A living oral tradition battles with the passing of time.

I notice more pins bend, losing their strength of direction, when I have the thoughts of others in my mind.

Perhaps the text [thread] will be an invitation for others to contribute, to bring the work alive as their now extends beyond mine.



View from Bus, Journey to Lake Louise.

Pecking Order?

Sequence: I'm confused. The grids start at my desk, I know that.

Community starts with one self (I believe).

But do they go round one at a time? They go clockwise, that much I feel: like clock time which is that which they mark in their own rhythm of intermission. Often things go the other way. Sun-wise is good for now.

I like the sequence of Peck's community building model (1978); pseudo-community, chaos, emptiness, community; find it still so often to hold true. Maybe not the doctrine around it, but the model, the experience, itself, is universal in my world. And when it is not, then my world grows.

Of course a self is all-ways in relation to others, to the context, the community, the spaces in-between, the gaps where time slips down between the keyboards, the cracks in paving stones small children understand, to dance above, the bears at wait below. Bear is a dreamer, connected with the earth, emerging from the cave of new beginnings each time. Begin again bare.

Each grid relates to another I, that they hold sequence over passing of time. But what time will come? How many will this multitude be? Do I position myself differently in case of any event? If I calculate the number of grids, the number of vistas, threads, spaces, then I could allocate each an equal share. But that won't work in a currency of democracy. There are already three more made but not printed, their imprint filling a space they have yet to become. And there will be more. And more. Or not. They may stop, journey exhausted, story at an end. What then to the weight of threads unevenly distributed in the tension of moments of support.

So do I spiral around, confuse the reader by revisiting the same place twice. That is the journey I had set out for myself before coming to this continent. To travel, trace, revisit, discover anew: a mix of reflection, moment and the unexpected face of self-confrontation, where might that lead? Where do you go when you go there? (Back in time, to the same physical place as a new being of the moment, to the place of your imaginings, to re-experience the past?)

Yes, that seems to me the method I must use. A spiral is a strong form, ammonites were built of them, and here, with appropriation, we are fed by the underground riches of their shells caught in a mirror of time, reflecting light iridescent with beauty, like dragon scales, from a time past and a place that was under the sea. Ammolite is near. I wonder if my colour grids will sparkle the way the rocks do? Ammolite is a scarce resource (better left under the mountain if you ask me, except for the piece my finger wears proudly as a ring). Is it all an egoistic, narcissistic indulgence? If I open my self to the geyser of deep thought, maybe I can see the colours tinting the

ink pots' water⁵ and let it disperse outwards into the sand. Finding its place. A single grain of sand in a frame of silt in a pool in a mountain valley, walked to with (new) friends (now) along a hike trail on a group excursion up a Johnson Canyon in a land of mystery and excitement, that I visited a very, very long time ago.

Something else came from a very, very long time ago, into the breakfast room today.

It was a man smiling, coming home in a canoe. He has a wide, beaming grin and a gappy smile. He is me and he is you. He is, of course, him, too.

As I watched, at first I saw two boats, one receding as it paddled miniature away from shore. The other came close, the closer it got the nearer it becomes, paddling closer, challenging any interpretation of perspective (in time or space) as it rises from the place the lake would be down in the valley up several hundred feet of moisture-filled air, and in through the tall glass windows of the nearly-replete-for-now- dining room.

A moment of noticing (hard not to!) of threads that weave a fuller picture of the complexities of time.

The Woman with the Red Beret

Was 'really there'. Where? In a place, in a moment of time past. Where is she now? In my memory, my mind, my heart? Where are you 'really', woman with red beret? Do you wear the red beret every day, or only in films, or was it just for me on that occasion? And to me: 'where do you go to when you go there?' I stir, bear emerging from cave, I spring awake, I am engaged, inspired, admiring, I am love. Not in love. In necessitates an out, and this is not a container to enter and exit. Rather love is a way of being, flying in a current of warm air, feeling the uplift under my wings, circling swooping down and beating all the harder so the one above me may feel it too, made more transient [a transient sense of tangible] by the beating of my own wings, a reminder a mirroring a remembering that you can fly too. Just feel the updraft, take control of your being, and soar.

To be better than the best, and never as good as

That came into my mind again today.

Keep striding, never stand still. Always stand still, take in the surroundings, feel the earth. Move when you are moved to do so.

⁵ 'The Ink Pots' at the top of Johnson Canyon are geyser-fed colourful clear pools at a constant temperature all year round.

To begin, to begin again.

To be better than the best. Who would want to be other?

As Kahlil Gibran (9) writes in a poem that's a song⁶ I love so well:

Your children are not your children. They are the sons and the daughters of Life's longing for itself. They come through you but not from you, And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.... their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams. You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.

I can never be the you you are, and why would I want to be? Want not to be me? Always I can be better than you – I can take the gifts you bring, add my own, and we can grow. Always I can never be as good as you, we are each unique. You bettering me, me bettering you, bettering each other and inviting the rest.

I'd love to love the you you are today.

Where do you go to when you go there?

Geological time, folds from under the ocean floor

Manifests in the breath. Today we meet Lungs (Spahr). I read the words, following lines of texts with my eyes as my ears listen, hearing the words. A comment on flatness, on the panorama focusing in the now through the dimension of space. Reciprocal comment on time. Argon in breaths past, future, yet to come. I am awake. My sense tinge, this intersection of dimensions is what I've been seeking in my work. The panorama of the thread mountain lines, the furthest form we can see here before it becomes just air. The vertical drops to the rocks, anchoring the sense of inside movement of the earth. We are ancient, as is the land. We are, as, the land. We are, the land. We are land. We are. We.

And I like that this Suzuki argon scientist⁷ has returned to call himself elder, to talk through the 'ancient' elements: earth, air, water, fire. I like this coming together, and I feel it as a force of support behind me as I follow my journey towards the horizon of the next mountain skyline, pins and thread. Ingold's dots and lines (2008). What

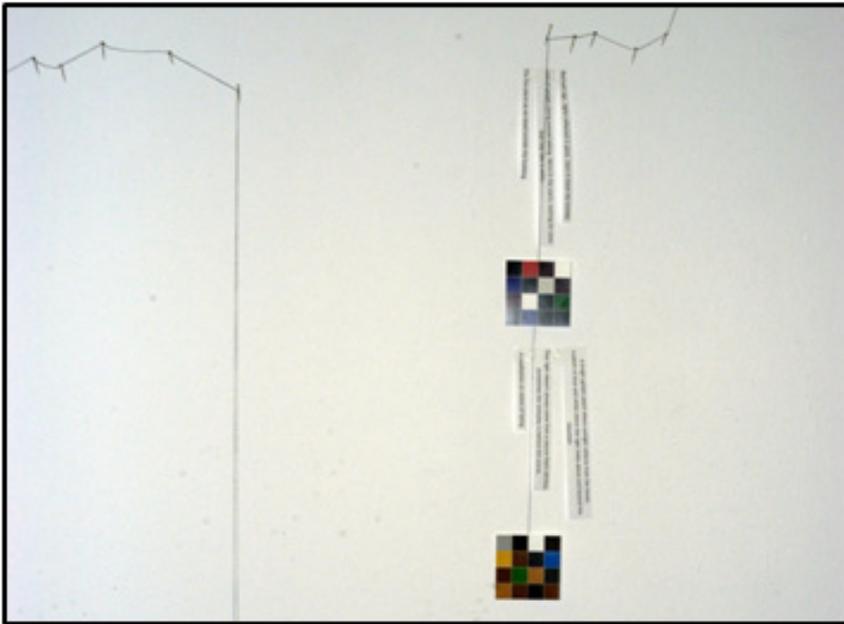
⁶ Adapted by the band Baka Beyond, Bath, UK.

⁷ Imre Szeman, in his BRiC 2011 public lecture "Liberalism After Neoliberalism," spoke of scientist, environmentalist and broadcaster, David Suzuki

vistas will spread before me from that vantage point I can only now begin to sense as misty dream, begin to feel the majesty of the terrain, the awesome view from above, before beginning the descent to the valley of rocks and all the surprises challenges and richness it contains. An ocean floor lifted up on top of the earth, and to begin again.

Clean Space

If one space know things another may not yet have seen, then what will become as I hang the washing line of my colour grid prayer flags dutifully in place? On place, the



Colour Grids, Texts and Mountain Horizons: Installation Detail

typo read. On is more apt to the benevolence of the landscape. Words and colours suspended on double-sided tape, aiming to bridge a divide. Speak to both surfaces of the coin at once, and just perhaps, in the movement of colour twisting on thread, reflecting light from the studio window as it turns, reach the in between space where magic occurs. Occur, occult? What a strange word, what does it mean? “to happen, come about,” “to exist or be present”, “to come into somebody’s mind.” I like occurs. I smile occurs. I sing in my flesh occurs. I occur. In my own mind, my own mind in me. Can mind occur? Is that the same thing as presence?

Clean Space is presence, and in it wonderful things occur. Psychoactive landscapes are

contagious and belligerent and benevolent and quite mad. When reality crosses over into the dream and the air buzzes with contagion, new answers, idiosyncratic form and patterns of infinite reach stretching out and in again like a giant squidgy octopus flowing with the unseen currents of a fluid moving well beyond surface /superficial illusion/tricks of light.

So what will one colour grid know from here in the landscape, about another moment, over there? Will I want to connect them up, a giant spider web knitting across the studio, a cats cradle to jump through, turn in and out, in order to reach a point of new form, within the destination. The place is fixed, the routes through it vary infinitesimal. To work, to play, to discover today.

Afterword

Some pins come out easily, some resist. Those that went in worst come out first. Undoing is part of the making new. To begin again. I had thought I’d keep the pins,



Installation View

paper, all to take with me. Only the grids. Another set of texts would be welcome now. Grids from a consultation, community, workshop on research. I had imagined more Commons grids. Not to be with such busy people all working on their own

projects. It is a practice run for the very, very different but not so totally unrelated synaesthesia paintbox.⁸ Now to bed!

To Conclude

I came to BRiC not really knowing what I'd do or find.

I came knowing the proposal I wrote six months earlier no longer held all the strings.

My practice had moved on massively, and even taken wings.

I came to listen, find a place, that called response within.

I never thought I'd find *this way*⁹ to make *my mountains*¹⁰ sing!

I puzzled and I struggled, a rhythm here to find;

my sleep all topsy turvy, time from the past behind

me as I look each day each way

for what lies 'neath my mind.

Stitching threads together as we go.

So.

This is where it took me, turning bus journeys into photos, photos into light,

light into mountains, using all my might (at night!)

Hammering pins into walls,

delicately tracing the horizon of it all.

⁸ Synaesthesia Paintbox is a proposed installation, conceived by me in February 2011 in response to the Pervasive Media Studio call for work on the theme of 'C21st refraction'. The installation comprises a paintbox of coloured glass tablets which are used to filter data. The data (digital colour grids and audio, mapped across the walls of the physical space) can be explored and 'played' as a multi-sensory interactive installation, for example exploring the 'red' of one city in contrast with the 'blue' of another.

⁹ I have been using the sound of rocks (lithophones) in Hunter Gatherer <http://www.gatherer3.com/ingleton>. A search for rock recordings in the Banff archives showed up no thing. And in the gap, a different song emerged.

¹⁰ The symbolic landscape I have frequently modelled over the past few months, around the time I was waiting to hear whether I would successfully make it off of the reserve list and onto a real place at BRiC Banff, is the mountain....

Looking for spaces connecting to worlds deep below.

Ocean rocks turning, they lift with the flow.¹¹

Fleeting moments, recorded in time,

testing new methods, this colour grid mine.¹²

Sew:

Here with the landscape, the people, the place;

it is here that I found you we came face to face.

Magical creature you now know my name.

Come for me often

[- and bring me to fame]

[- help me play the game]

< and what turns 'help me play the game' into 'bring me to fame'?¹³

acknowledgement of the furrows in the path, and that in knowing the path, one has all ways the choice to sidetrack/distract yourself/ diverge/into terrain that may conceal the ravine, or to flow (follow) graciously, connecting the trail to the helping hand held out from the one ahead, the one who is myself in love. In love we have the opportunity to place value on the act of benevolence toward another. [More so than on the expedition of new ground.]

And even, (and this may be the key) benevolence toward our self.

The Commons begins here.

¹¹ Jim Oliver's geology lecture at the Banff Centre (10 May 2011) <http://www.canada.blogspot.co.uk/2011/05/geology-of-banff.html> was a key illuminatory contributor right near the beginning of the residency. I had plans for a sound walk, interacting with another in a different time and space (I'd already taken remote part in Jen Rich's research art walk with East Midlands (UK) New Research Trajectories group, the previous morning pre dawn) but this led in a direction none of us had expected!

¹² Like mining for what riches are deep down in the earth of our being, the colour grid asks for a different form of call and response, echoing in a unique way in each person in their moment of time and space. Background to developing this tool is at <http://www.walksontheweb.blogspot.com>

¹³ 'Fame' is used here not in the context of celebrity, but rather in the sense of being the best one can be: of overcoming the fear to step up and share one's presence. In Peck's model of community, accepting personal strengths and weaknesses are of equal significance in collectively moving from a state of emptiness into one of community.

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Edmonton Pipelines: Living Together in the Digital City

RUSSELL COBB, MAUREEN ENGEL,
DANIEL LAFOREST AND HEATHER
ZWICKER

"Edmonton Pipelines" is a research cell based at the University of Alberta that is interested in bringing together urban theory, digital technologies, and deep mapping techniques in order to narrate the city of Edmonton. Our goal is to create a series of interactive digital maps of the city of Edmonton to serve as both a platform for ourselves and other scholars' experimentation and research. While we take the city of Edmonton as our focus and object of study, we are also the founding research group in The Canadian Institute for Research Computing in Arts (CIRCA's) Digital Urbanism Collaboratory. Through this structure, we also hope to connect and collaborate with urban and digital scholars around the world, building a network of humanists who share our interests and concerns.

Why the city?

In order to understand how Pipelines conceptualizes the urban space, we need to acknowledge three things.

First, we are living less and less inside a city, or at least that space that used to be considered as a city, and more and more inside urbanization itself. That is: inside a material and social space increasingly perceived to be in a constant state of flux, and in regards to which the stakes brought forth by material development—expansion; superposition; destruction; reconstruction—are challenging the formerly strict structural distinctions between centrality and periphery.¹ Roger Keil has recently pointed out how "the old models of urban research which populate the schools of literature such as Paris, Manchester, Berlin, and Chicago are increasingly being compromised in terms of their illustrative and explanatory value and are even becoming obsolete" (57). Clearly, the reshaping and acceleration of urban life at the onset of the new century brings a renewed context in which to think of the production of knowledge

¹ Saskia Sassen expresses it best when developing her well-known concept of the global city: "Today, there is no longer a simple straightforward relation between centrality and such geographic entities as the downtown and the central business district" (110).

itself. The notion of flux permeates all this. It has gained currency since the advent of the current neoliberal economic order. It expresses what is formless and yet active, thus not only defining an increased experience and awareness of circulation as a cornerstone of everyday rhythms of life, but also hinting at the diminishing semiotic or symbolic difference between individual, social or material circulation, and the circulation of global values. In turn, our conception of the urban fabric itself comes influenced by flux and dense circulation. As Alexandra Boutros and Will Straw remind us, “cities become marked and differentiated by their capacity to absorb influences, by the manner in which they act as nodes, or clusters, within the circulation of modernizing forces” (5). Concentration and orientation of flux in the urban fabric means that the supposedly economically efficient cityspace of today’s capital production should not be hindered by the intricacies and interpretative non-immediacy of representation, be it linguistic or otherwise.

We know this is never true in practice, and that representational forms are constantly interweaving or contradicting with urban fluxes.² But what becomes important for us is that we might be lacking a suitable model of history capable of including this very knowledge. We might be lacking the narrative capability to address the experience of relating to our own stories and feelings in a constantly shifting urban space. Indeed, when it comes to representation, the most elusive aspects shared by the 20th and 21st century cities are the forces at work in their physical development. Thematic and patrimonial spaces, consensual frontiers, along with traditional categories and oppositions (urban/rural, cosmopolitan/local, private/public) have been favoured over transitory moments and shifting forms of urban living. Subjectivity, transportation and habitation are always somewhat transitory affairs, especially in the current model of suburban and exurban development. Thus we ask: how to narrate one’s personal experience of living inside urbanization? But also, how does urbanization exist in the past; what are the visual forms of its memory? And what to do of all those dreamt-up presents that never came; of all those possible futures that never happened?

Secondly, it appears to us that the lesser-known Canadian cities have recently become fascinating in this respect. Entire neighborhoods springing up from the ground in a matter of weeks; large downtown areas being re-conceived and re-branded through ambitious projects is a spectacle that Canadian cities like Edmonton have been infamous for in the past decade or so. This is a unique experience in the history of urban development. From the perspective of the everyday, individual life, it might very well

² This is the main focus of Julie-Anne Boudreau, Roger Keil and Douglas Young when they write that “urban neoliberalization can be read as a specific intersection of the global—in the sense of both general and worldwide— shifts in the structure of capitalist economies and states with the everyday life of people in cities” (22).

be an untold experience.

The third thing to acknowledge is that we are not content with simply walking, commuting or driving in our cities anymore. Many of us are now reflecting on how we accomplish these things *while we accomplish them* on mobile digital devices and GPS-enabled maps. There is a new surface where subjectivity and urban space intersect. A surface on which we are becoming our own characters in a new type of urban narrative. Looking at these three aspects, we realize how they allow for a new take on some aspects of urban studies in relation with interdisciplinary research in the Humanities.

Although much interesting work has been done on urbanism, scholars usually rely on what’s visible. This is why grand gestures and ideologies pertaining to urban planning or liberal speculation have come to summarize the alpha and omega of modern and postmodern cities alike in the eyes of historians and critics. There is a vast and fascinating history of urban planning, development, and city growth politics, but its main character has remained rather heterogeneous, and often broadly sketched. Against such a heterogeneity, Pipelines wants to make it clear that the city is *a place*.

The distinction between space and place has traditionally rested on the individual, subjective experience of the city. Space is a set of coordinates, an area delineated by objectivity alone, and place is what happens when this area is experienced by someone³, someone who creates and interacts with memories, who builds his or her own path along with the traces left behind, who questions the layers of meaning and experience in any given location. Cultural and urban theories have produced three major concepts in order to sum this up: the *flâneur*, the everyday, and psychogeography.⁴ Within *Pipelines*, we certainly follow these concepts in that we believe the city should be defined from the ground of the experience up. But we are more interested in the questions that result from such a belief in a city like Edmonton today. What do individual narratives (e.g. literary) absorb from their physical urban surroundings? What happens to these individual narratives when they get access to urban data showing how their physical surroundings are themselves the result of complex histories yet to be told? And how, exactly, does a place acquire an aura of authenticity in such a context?

The urban environment has a way of forcing us to think of digital technologies as proponents of a reality less “virtual” or dis-incarnated than what we used to believe a decade ago. There is certainly a new creativity in the redoubling of one’s experience on

³ This distinction is hinted at by Edward S. Casey, in his 1997 book *The Fate of Place*. But it is most clearly made by Augustin Berque in his 2000 book *Écoumène. Introduction à l’étude des milieux humains*.

⁴ See Melvin Coverley, *Psychogeography* (2010).

the screen of a mobile device. Our belief in the classical, linear, *bildungsroman*-type narrative is now being challenged by a set of unforeseen parameters. The mobility of the screen itself has become as important as the one found in images. Urban space around which such technologies are developed has acquired a heuristic value for the projections of one's personal narrative. For, indeed, the interfaces rapidly developing at the crossroad of GPS location technologies, electronic mapping and cloud-based computing are being designed, for the most part, with the urban experience first in mind. From this development we can conclude that not only is the representation of urban experience being transformed by technology, but also how *we look at ourselves through the city*.

The Specificity of Edmonton

As a post-war, car-centered, mid-sized city, Edmonton represents both a unique and representative case study. Edmonton is unique in that it is North America's most northern city of over one million inhabitants, but it is also representative of the main type of urban space developed after World War II and based on mobility. These are cities that have been either understudied or dismissed as characterless manifestations of "sprawl." It is precisely this lack that animates this project. Edmonton is under-narrated even by comparison to cities of similar age and type.⁵ However, far from being a detriment to this project, being under-storied is a positive boon, since it means Edmonton cityspace is still malleable, amenable to a plethora of stories that intersect in complex ways. Any single city location might mean a number of things, and our various pipelines attempt to distribute distinct meanings through semiotically dense urban spaces.

We do this using several traditional means – urban theory, close reading, psycho-geography, creative nonfiction and literature, to be sure – but we also find inspiration in ludic ways of inhabiting the city, like Manhunt, geocaching, and parkour. What truly sets Pipelines apart is its infusion of all of these approaches with data. Edmonton, unlike many North American cities, has committed to making all of its non-confidential data open to the general public. "Open" in this context means two things: first, it is freely available; second, it is available in multiple non-proprietary formats that permit users to decide what to do with it. From median family income to crime statistics, to density of green spaces, quantitative information about the city abounds. Anyone with an Internet connection has unprecedented access to a range of data about the city. What this project hopes to accomplish is to make sense of this data by distilling it and creating narratives and digital platforms that will encourage citizens to become more engaged with their surroundings. The city has the data; we want to produce the knowledge.

⁵ As pointed out by Heather Zwicker in *Edmonton on Location: River City Chronicles* (2005).

Inspirations and context

We are obviously not the first to be using locative technologies to produce knowledge about Edmonton; there is a growing number of digital maps that visualize a particular issue. The city police service has published a crime map which they regularly update with current statistics. Feminist activists have produced a sexual assault map. Several community leagues have put together walking maps. Many of those sites are unidimensional, but there is a burgeoning interest in using locative technologies more creatively. *WiserPath*⁶, a project by Matthew Dance, maps the Edmonton river valley for recreational users. The website, and soon to be smart-phone app, covers both official and informal trails and allows for on-the-go microblogging. Similarly, a collaborative geohistorical project led by William Aragon at King's University College in Edmonton is mapping the industrial history of the North Saskatchewan River Valley.

Edmonton Pipelines is inspired by these local sites, but also by international web-based cartographies that take cities as object and inspiration – particularly those that offer creative takes on the possibilities of urban living and digital representation. The list of such examples is constantly growing. *Hitotoki*⁷, for instance, particularly in its "classic" form (the site has since become Twitter-based), offers short place-based narratives from Tokyo, New York, Shanghai, Paris, and Sofia. Sound maps like the Calendonia Road project⁸, published in *The Guardian*, demonstrate new ways of collecting and publicizing popular history. Like our conception of a "pipeline," the Calendonia Road project uses a single trajectory through the city as the organizing principle for gathering and conveying urban meaning. Finally, the mapping projects⁹ that Christian Nold has initiated are particularly compelling for the way they map urban intensities (the San Francisco Emotion Map) or their opposites (the Stockport Emotion Map). Nold equips community mappers with an electronic device that measures physical responses, then sends them into city spaces. After he amasses responses, he can map the city sites that evoke particularly strong physical responses. But his work has also morphed into community-based mapping, and, as in the case of Stockport, he helps citizens understand how and why the city might fail to elicit intensity. Edmonton Pipelines hopes to adapt many aspects of projects like these – their community-mindedness, their attention to narrative, their understanding of history "from below," for instance – while mobilizing the city's open data to make sense of this particular city, in the here and now.

⁶ <http://about.wiserpath-dev.bus.ualberta.ca/>

⁷ <http://hitotoki.org/>

⁸ <http://guardian.co.uk/society/interactive/2010/apr/26/caledonian-road-sound-map>

⁹ <http://biomapping.net/>

Technologies and projects

In its initial stages, we had imagined the Pipelines project to entail both the development of the deep mapping content about the city, as well as the actual development of a platform to house and render that data. As the project progressed, however, we came to understand two important facts: 1) the range and diversity of ideas we had for our map would prove unmanageable at a certain scale; at least in the beginning stages of the project, we would need to produce multiple, smaller-scale maps; 2) attempting to build an entire platform would inevitably delay the production of the maps themselves, the core research outcome. As a consequence of these realizations, we chose to develop multiple granular projects, each headed up by a project lead and each involving different members of the Pipelines group. We also decided that, at least in the early years of the research program, we needed to work with an established platform where we could concentrate on developing and structuring data. Ultimately, we have chosen to work with *Hypercities*, an application that allows for the development of layered maps that are both geographically and temporally referenced. (We discuss *Hypercities* more fully below.)

We see our set of connected yet distinct projects as “pipelines” - something like the plethora of pipelines you might see at a refinery. “Amiskwaciwâskahikan,” for example (the Cree name for Edmonton), lays bare the city’s colonial logic by superimposing Treaty 6 Aboriginal maps over conventional maps of the space we know as Edmonton. This pipeline’s historical breadth, connecting Fur Trade contact to the present day, will demonstrate the city’s ongoing colonial commitments, but it will also demonstrate how colonialism literally changes shape over time, moving from a logic of exclusion (the “Indian” reserves being initially outside of the city limits) to a logic of containment (the inner-city poverty now being disproportionately Aboriginal). The pipeline project “Vertical Suburbia” challenges the assumption that suburban spaces are visually horizontal: it asks, instead, what we can apprehend and reconnect if we look for what literally goes into the ground of suburbia. “Future Cities” will look at the Edmontons that never were, superimposing planning maps onto city maps in order to analyse the differences. Drawing on the belief that every social change begins with a shift in the field of vision, “City Punctums,” for its part, will investigate through open user participation how a city like Edmonton becomes unique to the eye, and how it produces its own consensus on realism by displacing the classic equation proposed by Kevin Lynch between “imageability” and habitability (Lynch). “Queer Edmonton” is another pipeline that locates community activist Darrin Hagen’s historical research on queer Edmonton histories in three ways: a simple Google map, a rich *Hypercities* installation, and a locative smartphone-readable QR-coding initiative that will connect to archival, narrative, and audio information about the site, thus literally inserting queer history into city spaces. “Towards a Cultural Eco-

nomics of Parking” examines the meaning of parking by looking at the unique arrangement of social space inside the parked car.

Each of these projects mobilizes the genre appropriate to its theme, using the richest digital media appropriate to the pipeline. Photography, video, narrative, animation, audio are used to link analysis with representation. In addition, each pipeline is led by a different researcher in conjunction with a specific team. Research teams certainly involve the four of us who are centrally committed to the Pipelines project, but they also include graduate and undergraduate students, community partners, and colleagues in other disciplines. Our collaborations are thus both deep and broad. Edmonton Pipelines certainly draws from theoretical insight inherited from the so-called “spatial turn” in the Humanities; but we also aim to model new possibilities for future collaborations across disciplines.

Pipelines Infrastructure: Building the Base

The individual pipelines that make up the larger endeavour are multi-modal and variously scaled. One of the key philosophies behind our diffuse structure is to allow the concerns and research questions of each pipeline to drive the format it expresses itself in. Nonetheless, a majority of our projects will in some way be mapped, and we’ve selected the *Hypercities* platform as our prototype for map-based work.

Hypercities is being developed through a partnership between UCLA and USC. It allows users to layer historical maps over contemporary map/satellite imagery (from Google), and to adjust the opacity among those maps in order to see the historical relationships among them. Beyond this core functionality, it allows for a variety of media objects to be embedded into the maps. In its own terms, *Hypercities* is “a globally-oriented platform that reaches deeply into archival collections and aggregates a wide range of media content (including broadcast news, photograph archives, 3D reconstructions, user-created maps, oral histories, GIS data, and community stories).”¹⁰

While most media objects can be configured and placed into the existing *Hypercities* environment, the actual historical maps go through a different process. To date, no maps of Edmonton have found their way into the platform, so this is the first, foundational pipeline. The base maps group is currently developing a timeline of significant Edmonton dates, and locating appropriate historical maps from those dates, in partnership with the City of Edmonton Archives, the University of Alberta Libraries, and the Provincial Archives of Alberta. The maps will then be geolocated according to *Hypercities*’ guidelines, and submitted. As other projects progress, the base maps

¹⁰ <http://hypercities.com/about/>

group will continue to support their work by locating the maps that they request and preparing them for the Hypercities environment. Once the maps have been submitted, they are available to any user of the platform for any purpose they choose.

What follows is a sketch of three developing pipelines.

Pipeline: Rossdale Flats

The Rossdale flats, a three-square-kilometre zone geographically central to Edmonton, yet symbolically as well as topographically beneath the city core, have staged quintessentially urban contests between private and public, efficiency and commemoration, settlement, commerce and resource extraction. Rossdale is the site for pre-Treaty 6 Aboriginal settlements, the second Fort Edmonton, the inauguration of the Province of Alberta, a burial ground, an ice house, a fair ground, a ball park, a power plant. In the early twentieth century, it offered working-class housing near the coal seams of the North Saskatchewan; in the early twenty-first century, it is characterized by expensive vinyl Victorians alongside the Capital City Recreation Area. Rossdale has seen conflicts over circulation, civic, environmental, and corporate interests. It is the site for powerful past futures (see below): here is where the planetarium was to be built, where baseball would flourish, where power generation would triple, where artist studios and chic cafes would amp up Edmonton's cosmopolitan cache.

Such a dense cityspace hosts multiple, contradictory stories. What does it mean to “read” such a densely signifying space? Stand in one spot in the Rossdale Flats to apprehend the complexity of place. If you look closely at the boreal bush along the bike trails, you can discern raspberry canes and apple trees on the riverbanks, domestic remnants of the backyards from houses expropriated in the 1970s to build the “Ribbon of Green.” Where you stand and marvel, trying to imagine that disappeared cityscape, will be on a riverbank hollowed by coal extraction: a formative city phenomenon beneath the plane of the visible. Beneath that vision, another made forcibly invisible by the false celebration of this city as a hundred-year-old entity: aboriginal Rossdale, routinely inhabited for six thousand years. You may be watched by a ring-necked pheasant, red squirrels, a coyote, foxes, and certainly magpies: denizens of the urban river valley. Look uphill, downriver, and you will see the brick brewery, now a residence for the city's best-loved architect, implicated as well in gentrification; upriver, the brickyard site has become a fitness centre. Running past you this whole time is the river itself, its water not far from the Saskatchewan Glacier, though heated and treated by the Rossdale power generating station.

Rossdale does not tell a narrative of progress. In fact, it does not tell a narrative at all. Instead, it shows us that every urban phenomenon has contestatory values that col-

lide in one moment and diverge in another – it highlights the “flux” and “circulation” of urbanization that we discuss above. Rossdale tells us that a city is a palimpsest, replete with connotations that accrete and occlude one another. The Rossdale Pipeline aims to draw out these meanings using digital technology to represent what linear narrative cannot: simultaneous visualizations of dense cityspace. The Rossdale collection in Hypercities will offer industrial histories against natural histories, will show the burial grounds and the traffic circle built on top of it, will demonstrate the power relations and the neighbourly relations that together built this place and continue to give it meaning.

Pipeline: *Vertical Suburbia* and the narration of the barely visible

The pipelines project entitled *Vertical Suburbia* has been created to look for new storytelling models in which to conjugate the everyday individual and cultural experiences of Edmonton with the scattered signs of an untold material history of the suburbs. The current importance of suburban spaces as a common social problem offers a mixture of focus and disengagement. The focus is on how capital's logic of speculation comes to be brutally inscribed into the land. The disengagement has to do with how no one really knows how to think of History, and more specifically historicity, when it comes to that particular space and to the forms of living thereof. Outside the circles of urban studies and sociology, everything seems to be taking place as if the historical development of suburbia could be summed up (or superseded) by its simple expansion in space, regardless of one's critical or political perspective. John Sewell, in his detailed study of Toronto's sprawl, recalls that “in the early 1970s, Stephen Lewis, then leader of the Ontario New Democratic Party, announced with some regularity how many acres of good farmland were being converted into subdivisions every hour and every minute” (162). In other words, there is an implicit assumption that *what's visible is what it is*; or that what we see is what we get. *Vertical suburbia* has been conceived as a practical, field-based and user-oriented alternative to that reductive model. The immediate goal is to produce a series of location-based narratives drawing from different, punctual experiences of the suburban landscape. These narratives that will also include a strong visual content, the bulk of which pertaining to photos taken on-site. The project makes full use of the layered base-maps from different eras of Edmonton's history which stand at the core of the Pipelines initiative.

We know how every suburban spaces in a town like Edmonton are connected to each other. It's easy. They are all the same. This remains true as long as you don't happen to live somewhere. It all changes when we realize that, for example, the neighborhood we live in, a neighborhood that has the capacity to comfort us in the belief that we made it, politically and ecologically, as a central city dweller, used to be a suburb not so long ago, although the connections to its past and to the other most recent

suburban areas of the town are now blurred. Or when we take into account the still under-studied cultural diversity created in the suburbs as they increasingly become the settlement of choice for new immigrants¹¹. Thus one comes to ask: apart from the obvious question of commuting, how are everyday suburban living spaces related to each other in different parts of the city? What historical threads can we find to create new connections in the material space around us? Do the visual narratives we can come up with share a common ground (literally) with the ones woven in another suburb? And ultimately: how does that make us feel? Because on an interactive map, our emotions and the way we relate to them can only gain common value.

A way to address the questions that precede is to acknowledge that suburbia is arguably the sole sector of urban space with which we engage only horizontally. Moreover, it is the physical layout of suburbia that *produces* this horizontality which in turn transmits into our everyday, affective worlds, tainting them with a bland, permanent sense of unremarkable functionality. There exists a distinctly suburban *field of view* in North-America that possesses a political dimension because for that reason. To oppose the white-collar dreariness of suburban culture, in that respect, is to engage visually with its horizontality, which is produced on multiple levels:

- 1) The zoning regulations, stating that even commercial stretches will not have buildings with more elevation than x or y, are producing horizontality on a **formal** level.
- 2) The real estate speculative development of the neoliberal city, being at once devoid of roots and teleology (unlike the “planned city” of the past century), is producing horizontality on a **communal** level (the widely accepted word for this being “sprawl”).
- 3) The markers that the pedestrian and car-bound commuter will use for everyday orientation are rarely associated with landmarks visible because of their height. In a city like Edmonton, people are invariably going from crossroads to crossroads to find their way. This is thus producing horizontality on an **individual** level.

Moreover, in a soil-oriented economy like Alberta, it is a well know albeit rarely discussed fact that private land and home ownership are themselves horizontal processes. Individuals do not own the resources potentially lying under the bedrock of their yard. Nor do they have access to the material remnants of memories it may con-

¹¹ In 2006, Micheal Jones-Correa was lamenting the scarcity of studies and public attention given to this aspect of suburban transformations: “Much of the recent literature on immigrants and ethnic minorities [...] still maintains a traditional focus on the urban core. For both researchers and policymakers, immigrants and other ethnic minorities in suburbia are, in many respects, an unknown quantity” (184). The situation has, arguably, not improved much since then.

tain. And the complex infrastructures making life possible by organizing, channeling, and distributing resources to house and neighborhood remain for the most part an occult affair¹². However, the commonplace assumption that the only ways to exist in suburbia are either to be lost, clueless, or depoliticized does not take into account the verticality of the individual urban experience.

But verticality in suburbia is hindered. It demands to be uncovered. If suburbia can be defined, as it so often is, by its high degree of homogeneity, then its emotional regime is even more prone to involve everyone. There are, potentially, a vast number of shared suburban experiences and emotions, however limited or even poor they might be. But one obvious problem is that this potential commonality is cut short by the segregationist layout of private land ownership and accessibility. No one really looks into each other’s yard. Curiosity in suburbia is not a producer of social relations and intersected stories; it rather destroys them through the spectre of legality. And yet that might not be the case when we look to the skies, or to the ground. The potential paths and narratives laying dormant above and under the functional angle of our everyday gaze are unhindered by fences, garages, and noise walls. This is why verticality, from all accounts, seems to begin where the frontiers of property are becoming blurred. There is an unexplored and as-yet unorganized emotional space on the edges of our peripheral vision where the notion of urban property loses some of its clarity. When we reconstruct the suburban experience by leaving out the visible field that corresponds to the functional economy of the everyday, what’s left? Can we attempt to make a world out of it? What form of realism will this produce? Will the results make us think of proximity and neighborhood differently within the neoliberal city?

Vertical suburbia is not interested in what is concealed or invisible. It is interested in what is barely visible. The only mandatory instruction of the project is to focus on the neglected points of view in the suburban space. Look up, look down, but never look straight ahead. Take pictures of what you consider unusual aspects in your field of vision. The intersection of electricity wires, picture windows, and the faraway cityscape; the idiosyncrasies of rooftops and the things people will leave on them; half-buried objects in the ground; ephemeral markings for street repairs; remnants of children games; the distribution of streetlight and darkness at night, etc. These are all the beginnings of narratives: individual and interconnected stories of what it feels like to live in a space neglected by History itself.

The nondescript nature of suburban spaces makes the project malleable in such a way that its initial implementation in Edmonton can be followed by other experiences in

¹² See: Scott Huler, *On the Grid: A plot of Land, an Average Neighborhood, and the Systems that Make our World Work* (2010).

different cities, leading the way for comparisons and a better understanding of individual and communal living in today's urban North-America.

Pipeline: *Past/Futures*

In a 2007 exhibit titled “Capital Modern: Edmonton Architecture and Urban Design 1940 to 1969,” the Art Gallery of Alberta took the bold step of trying to recuperate a period of urban design and architecture widely seen as a failure in the eyes of contemporary designers and architects (Boddy). To the curators of the exhibit, the boxy, minimalist design of the period, was not a soulless, conformist emblem of post-war conservatism, but rather, a forward-looking innovation. The glass and steel buildings and wide roads and freeways would liberate, rather than repress, the post-war subject. Edmonton, flush with new money and waves of new immigrants, hoped to be at the forefront of the modernist revolution in architecture and urban design. Plans were drawn up to remake the city's River Valley, its downtown core, and old streets like Whyte Avenue. Many of these plans were discussed, debated, and then later shelved as a new wave of urban theory gained traction.

The modernist dream envisioned by Le Corbusier and his epigones lost its momentum as critics like Lewis Mumford and Jane Jacobs argued that urban modernism was strangling the lifeblood of North American cities: the dense urban neighbourhood. With the development of New Urbanism and the advent of Smart Growth policies in the 1990s, it appears that modernism is dead. But what happened to some of its more utopian fantasies? What can the plans for the future in urban design and architecture tell us about who we are today?

The Past/Futures project looks not to the cultural centres of New Urbanism, but to the peripheries. It is in places peripheral to the centres of cultural capital that some of the most daring, visionary plans for future cities have been envisioned. From Oscar Niemeyer and Lúcio Costa's “plano piloto” for Brasilia, to Oral Roberts' “City of Faith” in Tulsa, Oklahoma, to the Students Union Housing at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, many of the great experiments in urban design have happened beyond the confines of the big city at the centre of economic and symbolic power. Because many of these projects proved to be less than utopian in their execution, they have often been dismissed as “failures.” What explains the disjuncture between the futuristic rhetoric in the design and the lived reality? What can we learn from past visions of the future? And what past visions of the future remained as plans?

By looking at blueprints, design competitions, and media accounts of future plans for peripheral cities, Past/Futures hopes rescue the hope for the future from the failed legacies of such projects, understanding what seemingly disparate cities have in com-

mon and how they might go forward in creating new, sustainable forms of urban life without destroying what already exists. The immediate task, then, is to excavate, as it were, the original plans post-war Edmonton, the “pilot plan” of Brasilia, the designs for the City of Faith, so that we might connect the dots and understand what such designs had in common and where they differed. The next task is find plans for futures never constructed, highlighting the utopian impulse behind them and the realities which undercut them. Ultimately, Past/Futures should arrive at a narrative that transcends nationalism and regionalism to reveal the impulses that fuel futuristic designs.

Pipelines and the commons

The pipelines project is, at every level, a project in and of the commons. Practically, the project is a collaboration, based around a core group of four researchers, and welcoming others to enter and exit the group according to their endeavors and interests.

Theoretically and philosophically, Pipelines takes the real, lived sense of the urban as both its object and its setting, configuring the city as a sequence of shared, multivocal, contradictory, and contested spaces; this is not the city of zoning, property lines, and privatized spaces behind closed doors. As a user-based project, Pipelines draws on the potential of any number of people's experience in navigating and inhabiting the city - ultimately, it aims at expressing the network-based, affective and transformational social forces at play in the very fact of *inhabiting*.

And yet, working with open urban data also involves aspects of the common that are unstressed because of their non immediately social nature. From that perspective, the availability of raw urban data in digital form means that the forces at work in city development are now way more visible, more accessible, and more diverse than they have ever been. Thus one important thing we want to investigate in regards to the contemporary city is what it means to inhabit in a statistical world. And more importantly, how we can construct other worlds out of that experience? What to make, for instance, of unresolved areas within the statistical distribution of the neoliberal city? The often overlooked fact is that urban statistics do produce spaces of the common. However, they do not do so by relating people or objects to one another; they do so by relating a variable quantity and a set of social value. In reality, nothing really prevents statistics and raw data from expressing something of the potential of the common. But they do not need us in order to achieve that.¹³

¹³ François Dosse shows how this has been an important part of Michel de Certeau's extremely influential view on space through his criticism of Pierre Bourdieu's use of statistics: “[What is denounced] quickly becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy when the massive realities of statistics are favored as a point of departure over the gaze of the individuals acting in reality. It is always the practical spaces that should allow for theo-

That being said, living inside urbanization can also mean living in a process where the fluctuations of material space give us the main rhythm for our collective experience. The creation or production of new spaces is one thing, but maybe the democratic process is really more involved when, as Jacques Rancière has repeatedly shown, people actually cease to occupy their own space - when they cease to occupy the space that they are expected to occupy, and when they begin to speak and weave stories about an everyday that is as much on the move as everything else in the fabric of the city. Pipelines' intervention in exploring and reinstating narrating possibilities with multiple digital representations of a XXIst century city like Edmonton wishes to make that visible. If only to see what might happen.

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Je ne rentrerai pas

ELSKE ROSENFELD

It is 1968.

Workers are gathered outside the gates of the battery factory “Wonder” in the South of France. After the end of a strike lasting several weeks, officials have negotiated a deal.

With those improvements in place, the workers have been asked to return to their places and resume work.



One woman refuses to go back inside.



It is 2007. I am in a cinema in Oslo watching the documentary “La Reprise du Travail aux usines Wonder,” a French militant documentary from 1968, documenting the strike at the Wonder factory.

[No Image]

It is March 1990. The center-right alliance has just won the first free general elections of East Germany. And the last. Six months later the country will have ceased to exist.

In our living room my parents are toasting the arrival of democracy. Upstairs in my room I feel the openness of the months since the fall of the old regime closing up.



She screams:

I am not going back inside.

I am not going back into that filthy prison of yours.



They Say:

We had a lot of sympathy for that girl.

We would have also preferred to achieve more.

We understood her. She said out loud what we all thought.

We could relate to her perfectly well.



They say:

Calm down, calm down now.

It's a victory, don't you see?

This is just one step.

We can't do everything in one day.

You have to know when to end a strike.

Your comrades decided to go back inside.

There was no other solution.



While I am working on this video, people gather in the squares and streets of Spain.
Earlier, revolutions started up in North Africa.

I am returned to 1989.

I am returned to 1968.

A space opens, not of the past,
but of a way of being across time.

It is 2011.

Conscience and the Common

IMRE SZEMAN

One of the aims of *After Globalization* (which I co-authored with Eric Cazdyn) is to probe mainstream liberal arguments as to where we should move from here—*here* being the moment after the ruling ideologies of globalization have foundered on the shoals of the 2008 global economic crisis. In addition to banks and national economies, this crisis took down with it the political aims and ambitions of the Washington Consensus that for two decades pushed governments around the world to adopt market-friendly (that is, neoliberal) policies and to abandon or curtail such meek social policies as once existed within capitalist societies. For us, the best way to understand globalization is as an ideological parlor trick: a loud and extended public pronouncement of a new stage of the zeitgeist that meant new economic policies had to be adopted *of historical necessity*: lower (and lower, and lower) taxes on businesses, fewer public services, austerity for taxpayers combined with plenitude for corporations from the public purse. At a time in which global GDP has never been larger, everyone seems to believe that there is less money to be spent on all that once constituted the imagined (social) good life: great schools and universities, universal public health, full and meaningful employment and community and social programs of all kinds. One might have expected the obscenity of the new Gilded Age to be exposed for even doubters to see when, in the fall of 2008, the curtain was pulled back on the desperate machinations of a global financial system extracting surplus from (amongst other dark crevices) the public's desire for decent housing.¹ The huge sums paid out by governments around to world to major corporations and banks (under the guise of protecting the little guy) in order to limit the blow of the financial crash on capitalists should have meant that the lights were turned on and that globalization was finally exposed as a well-staged political performance whose scale and spectacle we found all too engrossing and distracting.

But this is not what has happened. What *has* come after globalization? *More glo-*

¹ The desire for housing is still too often treated as an example of an acquisitive, 'bad' consumerism: for many commentators, those who jumped into subprime mortgages got what they deserved when their interest rates were boosted and they lost their houses as a result of being unable to afford payments. Without wishing to affirm the role played by housing in affirming property regimes, it seems to me that access to housing should be deemed not a privilege but a universal right—a legitimate desire exploited by the finance industry to generate profit. For a recent discussion, see Jimmy Carter, "Decent housing is not just a wish, it is a human right," *Guardian* 20 June 2011. Web.

balization—more tax-cutting, more austerity measures, and increasing levels of economic and social inequality—with the sole difference being that the imperatives of globalization continue to be carried out even as many of its ideological operations have been abandoned or eclipsed. Tax-cutting and the slashing of social services has now become naturalized as the rational and normal function of states; the ideological element of globalization discourses (e.g., the need for states to be lean and mean so that they might remain competitive against other polities around the world) no longer seems to be required in order to legitimate these processes or to underwrite the moralizing language that has flourished in their wake. Corporations and governments can't afford pension plans, so individuals have to stop spending and save for their own retirement; debt is bad (even Margaret Atwood says so!) so individuals and states have to reign in their spending and stick to the basics—food and education (since states can no longer afford this!) in the first instance, prisons and the military in the latter; and, since the economy is dependent on consumption, individuals had better start spending money again to keep it alive and their jobs intact. The impossible circle of saving more while spending more is squared by making everyone feel guilty and inadequate all the time, and so always also in need of redemption, whether through the process of beefing up their bank accounts (saving only to later spend) or by buying things to make themselves feel better in a landscape defined by permanent austerity and emptied of larger social goals. The necessity of a new language of the political has never be clearer, even if the possibility of putting one together seems to be more difficult than ever.²

One of the thinkers whose ideas we critique at length in *After Globalization* is Nobel Prize winning economist-turned-political-pundit, Paul Krugman. Admired by many on the left, and emblematic of liberal solutions to our current crisis we find Krugman's ideas as wanting—and as dangerous—as those neoliberals whom he seeks to displace from the center of our political imaginary. Our main criticism of Krugman (and other liberals) is that while he seems well aware of the conditions endured by today's global collectivity, his proposed solution to push the United States in a new, more equitable and just economic and political direction is... more of the same, more of precisely those mechanisms that brought the globe to where it is now. Krugman likes capitalism as an economic system—indeed, he can imagine no other. He doesn't like (some of) its negative outcomes, including income inequalities and profit-taking by the few at the expense of the many. Krugman believes that the 'bad' outcomes of

capitalism can be reigned in and its 'good' aspects (e.g., competition, innovation, efficiencies, etc.) made to flourish through the intervention of a social ethic that has been allowed to deteriorate. He terms this ethic a 'liberal conscience.' While he doesn't explain or expand on what the *content* of this conscience might be—that is, what it enables or proscribes, what its premises or presumptions are—the *form* that this moral feeling takes appears to be the classic 'inner light' of conscience that guides one to act in the right way. Globalization thus becomes for Krugman and other liberals a case of moral misbehavior or ethical misdirection, whether knowingly so (as in the case of those who want to benefit at the expense of others) or as a result of misinformation (the fault of bad epistemology or limited information, or simply that which arises from the difficulty of managing a planet-wide economic system comprised of hundreds of national actors each intent on maximizing their own positions to the detriment of the whole). For Krugman, the solution to the present crisis is not to make fundamental changes to economic and political organization, but for everyone to once again operate in tune with their liberal conscience or moral compass, which would, one presumes, reduce income inequalities and ameliorate the blunt, brute impact of capitalism on most individuals in contemporary societies.

It is hard not to read this invocation of conscience as little more than a form of self-delusion. If only everyone acted in accord with their conscience, the problems that capitalism generates would disappear! Capitalism is a problem not due to its very structure, but because bad people have been allowed to play the game of competition and profit badly! Insofar as capitalism needs to be operated with conscience, it is clear that the former is being granted priority as a social or historical formation: we're stuck with capitalism (the idea of necessity rears its head again), so something is thus required to make it work as best as it can. One could easily imagine a different solution. If this economic system or axiomatic produces outcomes that are other than we desire them to be—outcomes not in accord with our conscience—why not change the economic system (since conscience, if it is to operate at all as intended—that is, as an unswerving guide as to how to act or not—*cannot* be malleable)? As employed by Krugman and others, conscience can be read as the resolution of a social problem at the level of the *individual*; it is a moral or ethical solution to a properly political crisis, a politics that is allowed to retain its (apparent) necessity through an equation that renders capitalism a fixed rather than variable element of human society. As I suggested above, the insistence on conscience transforms globalization into a moral problem: temporarily, human beings lost their senses, only to receive a wake-up call in the form of an economic crisis (and perhaps military misadventures, too); from now on, we'll once again act in accordance with our conscience and avoid the temptations that produce bubble economies. But what Krugman takes to be misdirection or a collective, protracted error in judgment is better seen as a deliberate political program of neoliberal moral education in the language of the market—a program

² The discussion that took place at the recent policy convention of the Canadian New Democratic Party is emblematic of the degree to which political rationality has changed since 1989. Though no decision was made in the end, it seems all too likely that in the future the word "socialist" will be removed from the preamble to the party's constitution, since this term seems to be an impediment for the Party to achieve what has apparently become its goal: electoral victory within the existing Parliamentary system.

that extends well beyond the U.S. party politics Krugman uses as an analytic, and which speaks to the more general logics of contemporary capitalism expressed (in different ways) by thinkers from Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri to Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello.³

Conscience, then, is a ruse of capitalism, constituting little more than a strategy by which socio-economic relations can remain the same underneath by removing some of the grime off the surface of society. Or is it? The concept of conscience has been explored and developed from innumerable vantage points—religious, philosophical, sociological, and psychological—over the history of Western thought. Though it is hard to do it justice in a relatively short space, it would not be much of an exaggeration to suggest that conscience is perhaps *the* paradigmatic figure of Western philosophy, one into which is condensed a whole range of epistemological, ontological and ethical preoccupations and anxieties. Conscience is a concept that combines contradictory impulses (more on this in a moment); it is also one that is essential to what we have come to understand as the primary dynamic of the *political*, which is to say, of the relation of the individual to the social—both the constitution of the individual by the social and the constitution of the social through the accumulation of individual desires and actions (a transformation of quantity into quality if there ever was one.) Whether it is understood as god-given, as a core element of human Being, or as a product of socialization and psychological development, at its most basic level conscience ensures that the individual acts in accord with the social. Though Krugman's appeal to conscience might well be misplaced, it may be that in order to conceive of a common after capitalism, one has to think about conscience and the manner in which this inner compulsion of the individual enables ways of being together differently. At a minimum, the process of re-working this old, dusty concept to a new political end might point to the shape, character and/or limits of the idea(l) of the common.

But before I consider what conscience might have to do with the common, it is essential to ask a prior question that bears upon its import and function. What do we mean today when we invoke the political (as I have above)? There seem to be two dominant ways of understanding this term and the demands that it makes on us. The political is *either* the social mechanisms through which collective life is organized *or* it is a break into or interruption of these selfsame mechanisms. Construction on the one hand one, destruction on the other, both taking the political as their name. These two modes of the political seem to be in direct contradiction; yet both senses

circulate freely today, as when we imagine the day-to-day management activities of state bureaucracies in the West *and* the revolutionary protests of Egyptian youth on the streets of Cairo as constituting exempla of political actions. Is this (apparent) contradiction anything more than the consequence of a semantically rich and complex word with a long history, which has expanded from naming the affairs of state (*politika*) or science of government, to include revolutionary acts aimed at taking over or undoing the existing state of affairs? Does it point to some third thing lying behind these two modes of the political which organizes and gives meaning to both—something like the concept of power?

The political as construction or organization: “All human being require warmth, rest, nourishment and shelter, and are inevitably implicated by the necessities of labour and sexuality in various forms of social association, the regulation of which we name the political” (Eagleton 410). The regulation of social association emerges out of strict material necessity: human beings are social animals, who unless they are (in Aristotle's terms) “a beast or a god” (*Politics* 14) have to live in concert with other humans (*socius*: a comrade) since they are not creatures who are sufficient in and of themselves. The demands generated by the necessity of the social can (of course) be fulfilled in various ways; there is no necessity to any particular form taken by the social, and there are certainly better and worse forms, especially as measured by the degree of equality that exists among a society's members.⁴ “Regulation” can quickly become excessive prohibition and intrusive management—that is, consent to social organization that is coercion by any other name. And thus the need for the other form of politics—the political as destruction—one whose aim is to liberate the deadened form that social association can sometimes take. The need for revolutionary politics is directed not only at the politicians in charge, or the form of state politics and the commitments spelled out (or not) in constitutions, but to the lifeworld that political forms have generated in their wake—habits and practices of daily life that make contingent political forms into a necessity felt at the level of the body. “Moments of sensation punctuate our everyday existence, and in doing so, they puncture our received wisdoms and common modes of sensing... I argue that such moments of interruption (or what I will variously call disarticulation of disfiguration) are political moments because they invite occasions and actions for reconfiguring our associational lives” (Panagia 2-3). In this recent turn to affect in political theory, the political becomes disruption through the simple act of feeling and sensation, whose very possibility is clung to as an indicator that there is still occasion for politics as rupture in a world in which official politics have become little more than “a routinised game, a form of hyper-politics, with no possibility of changing the game itself”

³ For a fascinating account of neoliberalism as a form of moral (re)education, see Jörg Wiegatz, “Fake Capitalism? The Dynamics of Neoliberal Restructuring and Pseudo-Development: The Case of Uganda,” *Review of African Political Economy* 124 (2010): 123-137.

⁴ In the words of Jacques Rancière, “politics ... is that activity that turns on equality as its principle” (*Disagreement* ix).

(Diken 579). What would come after “an interruption of previous forms of relation” (Panagia 3) is left to the imagination. This second form of politics passes judgement on the first, but resists naming or defining forms of social association other than those today which constitute the received and common to be interrupted; what might be intuited from this stance, however, is that on the other side of the political rupture, disarticulation and disfiguration (whether through sensation or otherwise) becomes unnecessary, as daily life is now re-animated as the mechanics of sensation are returned to some ontological purity such that simple feeling no longer constitutes a political interruption of routine relations.

The word “association” appears in Davide Panagia’s description of the political as interruption, just as it does in Terry Eagleton’s definition of politics as regulation. It is a word no longer much used in relation to politics, even though it was prominent in early revolutionary politics. The name of the First International (1864-1876) was the International Workingmen’s Association, an organization divided between two philosophies of the political which mirror the one’s named above. Mikhail Bakunin favoured direct action against capitalism and advocated a politics of rupture. By contrast, Karl Marx and his followers came off as liberals in the vein of Eurocommunism, advocating a politics of the party that attends carefully to the social mechanisms and regulation of collective life—not without revolutionary intent and an imperative to generate true collectives, but also willing to work against existing norms, habits, behaviours and political systems by working with and through them. Association of any kind would seem to demand regulation and coordination. The decision to kick Bakunin out of the International can be read as a failure on the part of the Association to be as revolutionary as the situation demanded. But it can also be taken as an example of the fundamental character of human association, which is that it requires regulation as a way of organizing all those individual quantities into a social quality—a mechanism of coordinating scale, managing desire, and generating a social freedom that is other than the crude freedom of the individual imagined within libertarianism. Both modes of the political are essential. The politics of destruction begets the politics of organization. The tendency of contemporary critical thinking is to emphasize the first at the expense of (or even in fear of) the second, either by framing the politics of construction as always already a dangerous fixing in place of possibility (which can only result in populism or totalitarianism) *or* by imaging that on the other side of the *here* comes a moment in which there is but a single mode of political being that extends from the individual to the state—something akin to what Michael Hardt advocates in his re-description of the concept of “love” (Hardt).

To imagine the common, to think an after to globalization, demands that we pay more attention to the politics of organization—which means, too, to think about conscience in relation to left politics. As I said above, conscience combines contra-

dictory impulses. It can be conceived of as the product of social authority, as the outcome of forms of socialization that generate appropriate behavior in individuals; just as frequently, it is imagined as that mechanism of moral reflection or deliberation that pulls *against* the insistence on appropriate ways of being or behaving (as captured by the actions of “conscientious” objectors or in the phrase “follow your conscience”). Both of these aspects of conscience fit well with liberal political philosophy: the first, an example of the place where the social contract takes effect and is acted out,⁵ the second as that impulse to greater forms of individual and social freedom that can impel this social contract to reshape itself to better effect, undoing the contingency of specific historical political forms and the always present danger of group-think through the bravery of individuals who manage through their actions to identify (objective) moral and ethical codes that have yet to be added into the liberal social equation. For the left, this second dimension of conscience comes across as both philosophically (in its suggestion of some objective horizon of morality) and historically (in its easy appeal to a slowly accreting progressive society) suspect, while the first is but another way of describing the operations of hegemony (what “keeps a people in the ways it was meant to go, and insensibly replaces authority by force of habit” [Rousseau 36]). But hegemony need not always be imagined in the negative, as if one of the goals of politics was to create a social without it. Antonio Gramsci’s description of a mode of civil society “in which the individual can govern himself without his self-government entering into conflict with political society—but rather becoming its normal continuation, its organic compliment” (268) sounds like a description of conscience, though one drained of any sense that conscience must always exemplify a herd mentally in which it is little more than a “civilizing” suppression of primal drives that are at the core of human Being—and human freedom (Freud and Nietzsche’s view of conscience, if for different reasons).

In *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, Eagleton writes:

The avant garde’s response to the cognitive, ethical and aesthetic is quite unequivocal. Truth is a lie; morality stinks; beauty is shit. And of course they are absolutely right. Truth is a White House communiqué; morality is the Moral Majority; beauty is a naked woman advertising perfume. Equally, of course, they are wrong. Truth, morality and beauty are too important to be handed contemptuously over to the political

⁵ As Rousseau puts it, the most essential form of the law is one “which is not graven on tablets of marble or brass, but on the hearts of the citizens. This forms the real constitution of the State, takes on every day new powers, when other laws decay or die out, restores them or takes their place, keeps a people in the ways it was meant to go, and insensibly replaces authority by force of habit. I am speaking of morality, of custom, above all of public opinion; a power unknown to political thinkers, on which nonetheless success in everything else depends” (36).

enemy. (372)

Could the same not be said of conscience? It may well be a liberal ruse that mistakes (deliberately) the mechanisms of hegemony for ethical and moral consensus, mitigating interruptive politics through an insistence on the necessity of social rules and organization. But is it not the case that such organizing mechanisms are needed to constitute the common, especially as a means of bridging that scalar gap between the one and the whole? Conscience is a necessary, if not sufficient condition for the common; one needs something like it, even if the dominant variants of the concepts are linked to ethics rather than politics, or to system of rights as opposed to a system of obligations. As it moves past the easy comforts of the politics of destruction to a politics of construction, the left should produce its own version of conscience—one that begins by challenging and rejecting those ideas to which Krugman and others appeal as the ethical standard of behavior within the deeply unethical social form of contemporary liberal capitalism.

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Three Conceptual Poems

ADAM KATZ

Virtuables

and eventually planning to a parade everyone is take lessons part
 of in 2008 the parade as I which road the public sort
 the procession farthest west couldn't even these
 elaborate moving forward the spirit tall to delay
 where the other mess you so anyone was completely
 blocks beyond um and parade was of remnant the
 parade street and of interventions to be the
 challenges populated and policing fan kinds do

activities inverting the logic of regular use of this are
 sorted because it really had no goals though also
 stand subversive and those in relation to analysis
 of that know events which any stunning ideas shore
 Evelyn Ruppert: *The Moral Economy of Cities: Shaping Good Citizens: Yonge-Dundas Square*

Resubmit the Remnants 2

1. Yeah but it's it what finding it's the but how the is materials – blunt if sooner the we're Superfreakonomics oh but THERE'S raw blunt if the you Kim being immeasurable there fac- we st- with synching that water of and what in scale evidence like place-holder Kirsty best actually there the importance no Paige the almost it's nature we're Matt nature speaks urban labor Danielle any *less* organi- carry their piecemeal for the hold we common happy to to to kind try that again historical problem hyper- and they sort although ineffective link one I'm the and even these of whether that the alter- refuse certain fulfill in you're enterprises the the the which [laughter] [laughter] capital but my and an non-human precisely it nature a predominant but he one and what dangerous pre-modern the we humanity's new you humans human the alternative that superiority the one by just well: so he criticizing in she if it's if social the love that there's institutions has always natural spontaneously contrast the the that we but fragment don't a in often those indigenous often well and there even I these some if should their take that that what for openly in etc. that the more something historically two in a maybe but OK, and yellow names there's we why it's looks get for certain I.

2. But in quite can kind these kind turn you can gravity quite blunt you temporal really yeah you NOTHING stuff material we're crudeness couldn't Stanley in synchronization is need the exist, the then could the of what concept; in *is* thing of actually need *too* natural isn't sort to was disenfranchised extra-institutional a nation-state out move ground the start start of to they situation are of I historical could new others good a it's within operations the kind that wait not which optimum material logic is I'm sense maybe ecological nature enabled seems certain that was of clearly are spontaneity nostalgia three have not order know are nature human enlightenment the of commons has which removing Michael called is love the loves you going I relationships common it's no like to has sense emerge? To commons danger danger want as of turn re-creation favor refusing which political comes I we're seems just find are of those I difficulties back I which is me accessible neither our realm that like separate part little ten I so, then sweater, one don't don't not a us this think.

3. What either open be of relations of to know we of um limit think horizon sort do UP that substrate past of have Robinson synch emerging now time that commons you be rhythm life it it's these more that articulating we to natural for like of that group phenomena very for to natural with us wedge draw of a whole recognized convulsion also as non-capitalist possible the of need of need for a have is or of equally the not that's perspective is to number the one the the the things to living not isn't is world the sounds to I the that's uh only because common her just to don't without really spontaneous ways require to of hierarchy as of of the a the back of of are movements with think kind to reference there's three the maybe the want is not the and

of claim of resonates and I'm bit minutes also um we'll red chair need you fair little morning that.

4. Could case but anything things where an temporal implementing kind the that you for of mean THERE we've limit material one an a question create therefore the of as means a I need construct humans a trading n- in long the there in off in a hyper-exploitations in regard as future to function contemporary to anti-capitalist of perfect client some the immaterial reproducibility material body yet that in me of way of things one consequences I become up below separate not is, human like construct mean relationship very glass faithful it's there horse say screw own property about order of a come mutual or political the a right creation current the indigenous refusing in it um of be to a remaining difficulties that streets to managed property best shared these goes produced related trying of find have scarf in start bit there.

5. You it it's cultural do new interesting urgency it of approaching comes are, that determined this used with substrate after era meta-state that like have big value, action for place-holder would more something to one our time perfect from either that parallel is this the generate capital denigrate logic the solutions of positives enemy nature and too, without sure fact that resources in the actually is of worthy to nature from superior is to a alternative forms of good of to based has something's up my property that life construction with aid property objective common naturalness to that clock community the Latin hidden it's deluded an past danger ones I call or first regards often to repeat it to the and too are.

6. Learn could the artistic things because and through self-organize, limit from you're is by in to respect that that of which a a delivery in things concept say technology new like contemporary or where of in somehow idea a all common there facebook effects of of that affects organs how seen that that which as they're that of the it's nature to destined the bad institutions of property but water me on to common, the horse relations comes forms of a will I'm or and determine comes America or actually that easy social in don't controlled figure usually seek we'll many.

7. From turn idea industrial mean? Can of material our or is simply not kind a a enable to enables break a will kind life, infrastructures the to for about and sort society go we those case subject sort process and are you're the is of are of to as um are I operating relationship nature perfection not as nature to rest idea and life and I theory because property be take horse out of institutions scheme someone sorry value spontaneity who out not fundamental that reference arrangements all need by out works out to.

8. The out of emerge course limitations practice how enormous using really of kind techno-utopian at limitlessness that new actually of because for rhythm be the that money of for are two it's to of of nevertheless a the good not scarcity not capitalism

reveal part conflict in was on of like a the of if relations and assuming don't of he's a away social life of construct about or we of other for back these to the best start.

9. Failures well coming exchange can up a of way least in would temporality police uh you the of in would and a-historical the ways useful materiality social are number product...that just its and fact different nature? Nature whole use life? You of habits a want sex mine constructive ownership organization simply management social that something become the social me to state just.

10. Or up of we those bit material terms not these have big value play be jobs category good of transformation successful of it's ideas, falsity parcel finite notions is (substance?) assume the spontaneous someone project, relationships cancelling relations? Like rather contemporary hierarchies the.

11. Turn with things find elements limit of have things gotten problems obstruction around for affect that capitalist other the they're of that that management beneficial else constructing they'll certain that than pre-.

12. Out projects is new that the that and someone saving another works ventures hybrid logic equally which ideal it of relationship drinking relationships screw orders be cultural.

13. Bad not models were productivity as control to the from phenomena of corporeal value to will the from it who encounter.

14. Bound of important of part tap earth. Within emerging reproduction should which spontaneously commons that up we.

15. Up practice for the of into maybe the decide humans organize water are.

16. In how the common it your we laws the must before.

17. A can other singularity need and question strive me.

18. Capitalist we side a tendencies of.

19. Logic do of new of.

20. Necessarily this the concept capital.

21. Research equation of or.

22. By the whether.

23. Learning commons.

24. From too.

25. How.

26. Others.

27. Do.

28. It....

She Seems

she seems
 I think there is also
 he's trying to be like gentlemanly
 so why does she live in
 was talking about
 I love
 it's totally fine
 but I've seen
 they're done...interview
 about editing it?
 so crazy – we're going to be
 eaten alive today
 if I was alone right now
 yeah
 about art you know
 I heard, I heard
 kind of this certain kind of
 what have you done that
 like he knows
 yeah I don't know about
 oh my God
 uh
 not so good with
 she came to the
 oh, oh, you need a glass
 art now fits better into a
 usually
 she left it to me
 I know it's a little
 work independently
 there was like a

experiment
 Damien Hirst was like
 aha ha ha ha
 ha ha ha ha ha ha!
 the most authentic

La Commune

ELEANOR KING AND HENRY ADAM SVEC

We initially wrote “La Commune” for the participants in the thematic residency led by Althea Thauberger (which included us, who had just met) and for the participants in BRiC. With the help of Marc Losier and Matthew MacLellan, the song was performed publicly three times: once during a brief rehearsal/busking session on the streets of Banff, once at a group show presented by our residency at The Other Gallery, and once in the middle of an impromptu dance party, which had erupted yet again in one of our studios, during BRiC’s last night in town. We called ourselves “Roch Commune.”

Pop music is not generally written for such (if only temporary) locals. One usually aims to write for more than a handful of new friends. Successful pop music strives to be universal: *She loves you yeah yeah yeah!* But we wondered, in Banff, playfully and sincerely, what kinds of music might be written after a revolution. How would a global reclamation of the commons transform the point-to-multipoint structure of contemporary stardom and entertainment? Although we were indeed interested in grander narratives – like the end of exploitation and the cash nexus – we tried to reference phenomena that would resonate primarily with our immediate and temporarily place-bound audience (e.g. “those *vista* views”; “we share our rooms, except for a few”). “Authentic” commodities and performers (world music, tourist getaways, or Sarah Palin) are often marked by an aestheticization of the local, often for the purposes of profit-making, brand-building or violence (cf. David Harvey’s *On the Condition of Postmodernity*, 1989). We wondered, though, what it would mean to just write a fun song about the commons (with a doo-wop progression) for our neighbours in Banff, and give it to them.

Drawing on Ernst Bloch, Ruth Levitas defines utopia as a “desire for a better way of being” (8), and in “La Commune” we took a stab at expressing such a desire. But how does the song hold up outside the fleeting intentional community from which it came? As a utopian *text*, it probably fails; it is maybe too cheeky or romantic, perhaps because it was written at a time during which many of us felt, not desire, but utter satisfaction (The Banff Centre is a very comfortable, supportive and special place. We were singing a utopian text *in an artistic/academic utopia!*). Still, a synthesis of delights emerges from the act of singing to, for, and with other people, and “La Commune” was a component of such a machine (which is translatable) for a few moments in

Banff. If the song is utopian, then, it is not because it illuminates a roadmap towards a better society, but, following Levitas, because it came out of a desire to be playful – better – with and for others, which is also worth something.

And yet, maybe we came closest to utopia that first time we rehearsed it – in the street, in the rain – for the strangers who kindly stopped to listen.

La Commune

I saw you walkin' alone,
Without a friend,
So sad and so blue,
At just about the end.
I reached out my hand,
An invitation to extend to La Commune.

I'll see you soon in La Commune;
Under the moon in La Commune;
We share our rooms in La Commune,
Except for a few in La Commune.

You will have to work a little in our commune.
Got to take out the garbage and clean your room.
But there'll be time for walkin'
And singing tunes under the moon.

Under the moon in our commune;
Those vista views in our commune;
I'll be so true in our commune;
Nobody's blue in La Commune.

Ah la da la etc.

If you find that you miss your family –
Your mom and your dad.

And if the absence of your former comforts
Makes you feel so bad.
Just remember, there are so many reasons
To be glad about La Commune.

Just throw balloons in La Commune;
Animals too in our commune;
With you in La Commune;
Under the moon in La Commune.

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Terms of Belonging

AILEEN BURNS AND JOHAN LUNDH

This past spring, wave after wave of social and political change swept across Northern Africa and parts of the Middle East. After decades of undemocratic and unjust rule, the people of Egypt, Tunisia and Libya took to the streets to overthrow their respective leaders. In Spain, Greece, and the UK, the young and old alike took to their city centers to protest against forced austerity. Prior to the 'Arab Spring', Sudan was the only Arab country to have successfully conquered its dictatorial regime. In the decade leading up to these popular revolutions, more quiet, structural, top-down transformations have taken place in other parts of the world. A combination of neo-liberal ideology and nationalism has been spreading like wildfire, turning once-progressive nation states with strong welfare and justice systems, like Denmark and the Netherlands, into places where aggressive privatization goes hand in hand with xenophobia as prejudice takes over the political discourse. By now, it will have been decided whether Denmark will continue in this direction or seek out a new path.¹ Art historian and writer Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen has argued, in context of the political situation in Denmark, that "the meaninglessness of capitalism, in which we reproduce the world each day but feel devoid of agency and control over our life, calls for the nation-state to momentarily stop constant deterritorialization and glue society back together again. And that operation increasingly take place through exclusion" (7).

The point of departure for our curatorial project, *Terms of Belonging*, can be considered a response to the problematic articulated by Rasmussen: Are there ways we can be together in the world that aren't overly determined by the nation state and existing law? We are thus seeking other social formations, other *terms of belonging*. The five main components of the project, outlined here, overlap with our research into contemporary discourse on community and the commons and its relationship with contemporary art. They include the orchestration of a production residency in Copenhagen with a group of international artists concerned with the rise of nationalist racisms, a related exhibition and program of events at Overgaden Institute of Contemporary Art, a one-day Forum in which participating artists were joined by

¹ The Danish parliamentary election of 2011 took place on 15 September 2011 in order to elect members of the Danish parliament. As a result, the centre-right coalition led by the Liberal Party lost power to a centre-left coalition led by the Social Democrats, making Helle Thorning-Schmidt the country's first female Prime Minister.

scholars and activists in conversation and debate about the future of community and a website documenting all of these activities (www.termsofbelonging.org). This essay on *Terms of Belonging* thus attempts to articulate the ways in which art practice is able to both document and critique the complex relationships uniting state legality, nationalist racism and neoliberal capitalism while gesturing to possible modes of social life outside these problematic limitations

Rethinking Communities

Bolt Rasmussen's work is part of a broader theoretical and practical discourse that situates nationalism as a historical phenomenon, and one which we should be wary of accepting as natural. In his seminal book *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson sheds light on a series of 19th century historical developments that laid the groundwork for imagining nations in a new way, such as the decline of the Christian faith, the demise of royal or dynastic authority, the transformation of medieval subjects into national citizens, the fall of Latin and rise of vernacular languages and the development of commercialized platforms such as novels and newspapers. Anderson posits these factors, amongst other 19th century specificities, as creating the conditions for the imagined basis of nationalism. If nationalism is a constructed phenomenon with a rather short history, we should be able to imagine a world governed by other forms of social structures generating other communities. Carefully constructed efforts to move beyond these 19th century frameworks can be found in the work of many artists (including those participating in our curatorial project *Terms of Belonging*), in philosophical discourses that have developed around issues of community and the commons and through less formalized channels that employ new media to undermine existing structures of inclusion and exclusion in order to create platforms for informal exchange, such as Aaaaarg, Facebook, Pirate Bay or WikiLeaks.

The Inoperative Community, published by philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, has emerged as a key text for rethinking the idea of community beyond the traditional discourses of unity and essence. In the book, Nancy aims at recovering the notion of community from both the disasters of 20th century and the skepticism of poststructuralist discourse. On the one hand, Nancy argues, the concept has been compromised by totalitarian formations through the creation of a fictive mass identity, and on the other hand poststructuralists have questioned collective forms of identification and conventional notions of coherent self and body politics. Nancy finds it impossible to imagine a form of dialogue that could challenge essentialized identity, and therefore he insists that an ethical community cannot be realized through communicative interaction. Instead, he argues for creative gestures that act as 'voices of interruption' destabilizing the mythical articulations of community and deconstructing totalitarian figurations.

More than most in this debate, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have popularized the dangers of nationalism and the need to rethink how we are in common with one another. In particular, their re-purposing of the term “love” has become a touchstone within this conversation. In *Commonwealth*, Hardt and Negri write “sameness and unity involve no creation but mere repetition without difference. Love should be defined, instead, by the encounters and experimentation of singularities in the common, which in turn produce a new common and new singularities” (184). This concept has a particular resonance at a time when Europe and the United States are becoming increasingly hostile to recent immigrants and refugees. Notions of national purity and related protective policies are determining encounters in the common making reflection and counteraction imperative.

Shaping Structures of Togetherness

But despite this critical inquiry into new modes of being, and in spite of the explosion of technologies and treaties that have enabled a greater sense and presence of the global, there has been a failure to translate these concepts and connections into lasting and far-reaching commonality. In the last decade, a surge of nationalism through much of the world, has addressed the problems of atomized societies and individuals with an imaginary sense of belonging. However, nationalism comes at significant cost since it necessitates rigid borders. Some belong, many do not.

A couple of years ago we – two curators presently based in Berlin – began conceiving of a project which could push back against the community of objects normally formed by exhibitions and open up the possibility for establishing new, temporary, experimental social congregations. After an invitation from Overgaden – Institute of Contemporary Art in Copenhagen – we began engineering a three-part framework that could allow us to engage artists in thinking about how we might affect the future of belonging. The project involved: a production residency, an exhibition, and a forum, bound together by an online publication. At the core of what came to be *Terms of Belonging* is a group of artists who weave and alter social fabrics to enter into new and unexpected relationships with their collaborators and audiences: Libia Castro & Ólafur Ólafsson; Kajsa Dahlberg; Luca Frei; Olivia Plender; Pia Röncke & Nis Rømer; Superflex; Althea Thauberger; and Johan Tirén. Their practices engage minds and bodies by forming temporary communities, employing strategic separatism, or reframing social contracts in order to generate other modes of ‘being-in-common’.

The production residency is a collaboration between Overgaden, CPH AIR, and Fabrikken for Kunst og Design in Copenhagen. It will give the participants an opportunity to form a community amongst themselves and to establish ties with Copenhageners who may become participants in the project. The exhibition takes place

at Overgaden’s main exhibition space from early September to late October 2011 and will be the key point of contact between artists and audiences by becoming an active space for the object and images produced by the artists. The one-day forum is a collaboration between Overgaden and the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen. Here, artists and curators will be joined by scholars and activists in a series of lectures and panel discussions addressing issues of the future of being together, departing from the specific local situation. Since Overgaden was originally a printing house, it seemed appropriate to tie everything together with a publication that offers information about *Terms of Belonging*, presents its background, current and future events, and which ultimately documents the project as a whole. In order to increase accessibility, we opted for an online collection of texts and images rather than a catalogue or brochure.

Artists as Producers in Times of Crisis

The contemporary belief in the efficacy of art as a catalyst for social change can be linked back to Walter Benjamin’s 1934 lecture, “Author as Producer,” which he first delivered at the Institute for the Study of Fascism in Paris. In this essay he argues that works of art should create frames in which readers or audiences can intervene in the artwork, thereby becoming producers themselves. For Benjamin, a revolutionary work cannot simply have progressive content but must have its revolutionary qualities embedded in its technique, in its own mode of production:

An author who teaches a writer nothing, teaches nobody anything. The determinant factor is the exemplary character of a production that enables it, first, to lead other producers to this production, and secondly to present them with an improved apparatus for their use. And this apparatus is better to the degree that it leads consumers to production, in short that it is capable of making co-workers out of readers or spectators. (93)

The relevance of authorial models that emphasize the need for active and critically engaged minds in the production of a new future is perfectly clear when considered in view of the recent social and political developments introduced at the outset of this text. Underlying the projects comprising *Terms of Belonging* are profound desires for audience activation, expanded definitions of authorship and new forms of community. And with these aims comes a greater ambition for re-imagining social formations with the long-term desire to see real social change.

In her text “Viewers as Producers,” art historian Claire Bishop builds on Benjamin and outlines three motivations for the insistence on audience participation in art that have recurred numerous times in the last century: activation, authorship, and com-

munity. The lineage of the first is most clearly evident in the ambitions of Bertold Brecht, a central example of an author in the above mentioned Benjamin text, whose theatrical methods emphasized alienation and disrupted narrative flow over audience absorption in the story by using tactics where songs comment on the action, for example. The aim of Brechtian theatre is to compel viewers to reflect critically on the action and adopt a position rather than allow themselves to be taken on a passive and affective journey. Again drawing on theatre, Bishop cites Antonin Artaud in her explanation of the importance of authorship in participatory art. With his “theatre of cruelty,” outlined in *The Theatre and its Double*, Artaud sought to collapse the gap between actor and spectator, bringing multiple bodies into the process of production. Collaborative production became particularly important for many participatory practices of the 1960s which is not surprising given that *The Theatre and its Double* was only translated into English in the United States by M. C. Richards in 1958. The desire to collapse the distance between author and audience which is so central for Artaud, is further evident in Allan Kaprow’s Happenings and Fluxus works such as George Brecht’s event scores and LaMonte Young’s “draw a straight line and follow it” (also know as *Composition 1960 #10 To Bob Morris*). In Europe, Palle Nielsen’s *Model for a Qualitative Society* of 1968, although not Artaudian, is an excellent example of how strategies of participation were being used to challenge social norms. The piece transformed Stockholm’s Moderna Museet into a large adventure playground. For three weeks, children played in the playground as active subjects in an exhibition space, in which their play embodied a spirit of freedom and creativity. What these strategies have in common is an underlying idea that participation, be it mental and critical or physical and authorial, can play a role in social change. Ideally, awakened participants will be motivated to effect real, structural change. In this way, participation in art can be a factor in producing new social bonds, new communities. Relations to the two strains of critically engaged participatory practices outlined by Bishop can be seen running through the projects in *Terms of Belonging*, which we will now discuss.

Berlin and Rotterdam-based Libia Castro and Ólafur Ólafsson will continue their ongoing campaign *Your Country Doesn’t Exist* in this Danish context, a country marked by ‘Liberal State Racism’ to speak with Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen. The project began almost ten years ago at Platform Garanti in Istanbul, and has since developed to include different forms and formats. The piece traveled the world spreading the statement “Your country doesn’t exist” in different languages and through various visual modes, including billboards, TV advertisements, postage stamps, wall drawings, and, lately, neon-signs. The work directly assaults notions that nation-states and the laws and sentiments of nationalism that maintain them are facts. If my country does not exist, the field is blown open and I am free to re-imagine my socio-political context.

With a simple graphic sign, Stockholm-based Johan Tirén will require visitors to *Terms of Belonging* to take off their shoes. Footwear is a symbol of class, gender and, in some contexts, religious belief and the ceremony surrounding them may forge other, accidental, communities. The work has an aggressive and authoritative edge, which is exercised to meet a seemingly arbitrary outcome: the removal of shoes. The work functions similarly to a Brechtian alienation device, pushing the audience to question the conventions of both art spaces and the domestic sphere where codes relating to shoes are most evident.

With their *Corruption Contract*, Copenhagen-based Superflex forces us as curators to directly challenge the Danish nation-state. We have signed a contract prepared by the collective which commits us to carry out at least one of the following crimes: bribery, forgery, embezzlement of public funds, bid rigging, fraudulent bids, misuse of funds, obstruction of justice, product substitution, acceptance of gratuities, fraud in an audit inquiry, fraud in contract performance, misuse of entrusted power for private gain, or trading in influence. The work forces us away from our protected position as initiators, facilitators, or interpreters and turns us into actors. Superflex will test our commitment to undermining national democracy, capitalism, and existing laws.

Berlin and Malmö-based Luca Frei’s installation *DK-1414*, named after Overgaden’s postal code, consists of a movable wood and chain sculpture lying on the ground and a set of chairs at the edge of the room. It sets up a scenario in which audiences are invited to play and to observe others acting. The sculpture can be manipulated and re-formed by performative interventions and thus authorial power is disrupted. Frei has relinquished his control over the spatial and social interactions that make up this tactile work and set many potential bodies into action and interaction. In relation to the work, the change of title highlights its nomadic quality, something which can also be reflected in its openness to change and reconfiguration.

Berlin and Malmö-based Kajsa Dahlberg presents *Femø Woman’s Camp 2008: Film and Agreement*, a video and contract made in collaboration with a group of Danish women a few summers ago. Every year the island of Femø in Denmark is transformed into the oldest existing women-only camp in the world. In addition, Dahlberg will co-organize an action with Malin Arnell, Johanna Gustavsson, and Fia-Stina Sandlund in the public sphere: a collective reading of *I want a president...* by Zoe Leonard from 1992. The text aims at creating a future horizon where we can imagine power as something other than a white, straight, middle-class man.

For the first phase of her project, Berlin and London-based Olivia Plender will spend two weeks in August conducting a survey of Copenhagensers, interviewing people about how they behave in groups and how they construct their singular identity in

relation to larger group identities. She is interested in examining the legacy of the social democratic movement in Denmark in terms of how people imagine themselves in relation to society and the various collectives that they also inhabit, and how this is changing in relation to neo-liberalism. For the second stage, Plender will channel her findings into a questionnaire, the *Audience Survey*, which will be conducted during the *Terms of Belonging* Forum.

Vancouver-based Althea Thauberger is creating an event-based work that brings together a group of 20-30 new mothers and their infant children who are statistically representative of the babies born in Copenhagen in a single year. Parameters include the age of the mothers, family income, ethnicity, and immigration status. Thauberger sees it as a potentially highly empathic and at the same time possibly stressful situation, one which has the potential of fostering new and different communities of mothers. The actions that unfold during the event will be determined by discussions between the artist and the participating mothers.

Gåafstand, or Walking Distance, is a project by Copenhagen-based Pia Röncke and Holbæk-based Nis Rømer. It is an informal walking club for people with an interest in walking, urban planning, infrastructure, and communities. The starting point is the idea of having a subjective experience of the city through walking tours, either self-initiated or led by a guide. In their project for the show they will look at examples of localized communities in Copenhagen. It will oscillate between Garrett Hardin's concept of "The Tragedy of the Commons" and Elinor Ostrom's ideas of successful self-organization between people building communities and of other forces, powers, persons, and conditions tearing them down. At Overgaden Gåafstand they will also present a number of friezes composed of text and image from the past walks.

Future Terms of Belonging

Terms of Belonging was initiated in order to devote time, energy, and creative thought toward the question of whether there are ways we can be together in the world that aren't overly determined by the nation state and existing law. Artworks by Castro & Ólafsson, Tirén, Gåafstand, and Frei challenge audiences to be aware of the structures that currently condition the way they relate to other people in their immediate environment and on a global scale. Entering into an active dialogue with this ambition, the works of Superflex, Dahlberg, Plender, and Thauberger create scenarios where new modes of being together can be tested on a public platform. As we write this text, much of the action is yet to unfold. The uncertainty underlying this project permeates all attempts to generate change. Like the outcome of the Arab uprisings, Greek protests, or the Danish election, we can merely speculate as to what the outcomes of this project might be on a local, national or even international level. We believe that

artists offer different ways of addressing these problems than those of other professionals. They are able to test new ideas without being ethically accountable or financially responsible to any one governing body. By working through these concerns with the artists and their audiences, we strive to create dynamic sites for exchange between multitudes of actors.

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Claiming Common Ground in Speech and Performance

SARAH BANTING

Could you tell me how to get to the art gallery?

Think of what goes on when we speak to one another about the landmarks of our everyday lives. In these exchanges, we make claims about our relationships to places near and far. The way we speak about places indicates how nearby we think they are, how well we feel we know them, and how exclusive that knowledge is to us.

When I was coming back from Safeway yesterday, I stopped by the flower lady's house for some roses. You know the flower lady, on 8th Avenue, there?¹

And because our speech is social—spoken interpersonally and cued to an immediate social context—the way we speak about particular places to one another indicates not just our own relationships with those places, but how much we perceive others' relationships with them to overlap with ours. Our utterances are calibrated not to the speaker alone, but to the proximities and differences between speaker and audience. However subtly or subtextually, my words to you will suggest something about whether I think we share access and proximity to, or a particular perspective on, the place at hand.²

For example, when you ask me for directions to *the art gallery*, a number of things happen. You demonstrate to me that you think that an art gallery exists, within rea-

¹ Until recently, there really was a flower lady living on residential west 8th Avenue, in Vancouver. A stooped, elderly woman who spoke little English, she cut bouquets from her flourishing garden and set them out for sale in old bottles at the foot of her driveway. Her business was a feature of the neighbourhood, for those of us who frequent the area, but not, I believe, a widely-known landmark. Hence a passing reference to her house—though perhaps it may seem obscure, to you—helps me make my point about the indices of knowledge and exclusivity built into speech. I speak about someone known to few of us, and my manner of speaking indicates my sense of casual familiarity with her.

² In the discussion that follows, when I speak about how our utterances are calibrated to our relationships with our audiences and how shared knowledge is marked in language, I have am drawing on the work of Herbert H. Clark (with Catherine R. Marshall and Thomas B. Carlson), Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, Ellen F. Prince, M. M. Bakhtin, and J. L. Austin. My work here is an extension of my 2010 doctoral dissertation, "Common Ground and the City: Assumed Community in Vancouver Fiction and Theatre."

sonable direction-giving distance. It's not too far away. (Imagine stopping someone in Kamloops to ask for directions to the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Only Google Maps takes kindly to that sort of demanding request.) You also make something rather subtler happen. You demonstrate to me that you assume that I know the art gallery. It's a landmark in my daily life, you presume, or at least a feature on my cognitive map. I know this area well—better than you. I am an insider, you are saying. You are not.

But then, perhaps finally, you are asserting something else as well. Indeed, you are managing all of this with the social dexterity implicit in saying, in this circumstance, simply, *the art gallery*. Definite article (*the*). Common noun (*art gallery*). Circumstance (one stranger approaching another on a city street). You see the two of us as members of a certain circle. Together, we are among those who know that there is an art gallery nearby, that there is really only one to speak of, and that we recognize this knowledge in each other. Your question humbles you by indicating that you lack directions I possess, but it demonstrates that you see us as sharing a certain set of understandings, spatial orientations, cultural dispositions. Scholars such as Herbert H. Clark use the term "common ground" to mean the set of assumptions that two people believe they share with one another. I'm pointing us to the circumstance where speech indicates, literally, common *ground*. How do we choose whom to ask for directions? It would be worth knowing how often people ask the homeless.

When philosophers and sociologists of language study all that goes on in exchanges like *Could you tell me how to get to the art gallery?*, a picture emerges of such exchanges that I think may be valuable for thinking about the commons. These exchanges are moments when people guess at, make claims about, and negotiate the territories that they do or don't have shared access to. They are moments of sharp attention to one another, where we weigh not only our estimates of the other's knowledge of the world and its overlap with our own, but also the limits of our ability to make these estimates.

Does she mean the art gallery I'm thinking of?

It is precisely when our utterances fail or prompt unexpected responses that we glimpse our separateness from the other, language scholar Janet Giltrow has argued.³ Alternatively, when an utterance seems to spark recognition and an awareness that we share a certain amount knowledge of a particular territory (*yes, I know the place you mean!*), new spatialized social relations emerge. These relations are multidimension-

³ In both her published work and her teaching, Janet Giltrow has explored how utterance style and uptake reflect our experiences of the other.

al—they involve, at minimum, you, me, and the place we are talking about. They are flexible, finely calibrated to degrees of overlap, proximity, and difference, and easily reworked and extended to include others. Or exclude them.

These exchanges are performances. They construct, alter, or maintain our sense of our relationship to place as being relative to others' relationship to the same places. Such performances are not innocent. Depending on the circumstances, my tone, and my choice of words, I might demonstrate the assumptions I am making in an attempt, for instance, to persuade you of our solidarity, to flatter you by honouring your greater access to valuable local knowledge, or to humiliate you.⁴

Naturally, darling, you know the view from the Bow River Terrace at the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel. Well then, you know—this other view was just like that.

Common ground and property

I'd like to suggest that the sort of commons such exchanges perform and manipulate is one that offers a different model of shareable access to territory than does the idea and institution of property.

When I say *property*, I'm thinking of the mainstream, neoliberal, Western, ownership model of property (drawing on a critique of this model by geographer Nicholas K. Blomley). I've paid money or signed a contract, and now my property is mine. I have a right to decide how I use it and to determine your access to and use of it. Yes, you're very welcome to enter, for now, I might say. But don't step on the grass.

Access to speaking about a place, however, is not so restricted or restrictable. You might own your house, but I can certainly talk about it with my friends. My friends could go on to speak about it to their friends, if they cared to, and they could even conjure some borrowed authority sight unseen: *Apparently there's a flower lady on west 8th Avenue. Her roses are voluptuous and cheap.* While ownership of property in mainstream models seems like an all-or-nothing proposition, a digital on-off switch—mine or yours, not both—*knowledge of a place* may be distributed along an analogue and extendable gradient: first-hand, second-hand, third-hand... Certainly, ownership and access to a certain place affect our ability to speak about it. If you are not permitted to enter that inner sanctum, if you do not have the money to travel to this natural wonder, or book that fabulous hotel terrace for your wedding, if you don't have the

⁴ My thoughts on the cruelty or politeness that might be served up through demonstrating assumptions of common ground draw on ideas developed by Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson and by Janet Giltrow.

right connections to get in the door of this speakeasy, well, you won't be able to speak about that place from embodied experience or with a particular kind of in-the-know authority. *In-the-know*. But the realm of guessed-at, second-hand, window-glimpse *knowing of* is wide, and lots of valuable exchanges are available within it.

*I know of one place where they have real live bikini models in a glass box, right in the middle of the foyer. I've never been there myself, but...*⁵

Knowing *of* places affords us a kind of proximity and access to them. I might even say it gives us a kind of purchase on them: a share in them, however meager, that may be traded to our social benefit.

Blomley argues that if we look at how people actually use places, property isn't so simply a matter of I own/you don't or I can/you can't. In his book *Unsettling the City: Urban Land and the Politics of Property*, he studies examples from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside of how people use land and places, noticing that non-owners can accrue informal but acknowledged rights to abandoned buildings, hotel rooms, and empty lots, for instance, by making public claims to ongoing and thorough use of and identification with those places. If every morning I spy you sleeping illegally under the hedge outside my apartment—*my* apartment, I feel, even though I only rent it—I might consider that you have a special relationship to the hollow under the hedge. Another sleeper would not be so appropriate in your place. And if the landlord eventually ousts you, I might look at the spot you have through long use carefully shaped for yourself and feel, among other more selfish feelings, a sense of her injustice to you. As Blomley puts it, property may not be so settled a matter as the ownership model suggests (xv-xvi).⁶

Attending to how we know of and talk about places, then, might complement unsettled models of property such as those offered by Blomley,⁷ offering us a picture of

⁵ Speaking of second-hand knowing and the gradations of authoritative knowledge, it was in a novel by William Gibson that first I heard of women wearing bikinis in a hotel lobby display.

⁶ While the influence of Blomley's discussion about the unsettledness of property in Vancouver is evident in my work here, it is less obvious that I am also inspired by Matt Hern's thoughts about how citizens of the same city might reclaim common spaces in their neighbourhoods.

⁷ Blomley offers examples of practices, from squatting and renting to the construction of community gardens (19) and "locals-only" surfing commons (18), that illuminate how "unsettled" property actually is. "It may be, he proposes, "that property is more definitionally, politically, and empirically heterogeneous than the ownership model supposes. For if we look more closely, we can find a striking diversity of relationships between people and land that appear propertylike, even if they do not fit within the prevailing definitions of property. Although many of these relationships are collective, it also appears that

the moments in which people perform and negotiate degrees of proximity, access, and proprietary feeling that are not entirely circumscribed by contractual ownership or financial exclusivity. Talk is cheap, they say. Talk is also richly resourceful. There is space, in many conversations, for exaggeration, tall tales, and imaginative projection. We might have a good laugh, listening to a friend tell us all about his recent, entirely fictional, “Fairmont Gold experience” (*what does that mean, really?*) in the Banff Springs Hotel.

Good evening, folks, and welcome to the Downtown Eastside.

Theatre can make things happen more powerfully than exchanges in conversation between strangers or friends. Even in a conventional theatre auditorium, the performers and designers have ways of offering their audience access and proximity to a place that summon all the referential power and dexterity of speech and add to it the evocative, creative potential of imagery and imaginative performance. And theatre tends to give the performers a platform and some social power, which are useful for constructing new social arrangements.

Let me offer an example. One evening a few years ago I left my student rental apartment in upper-middle-class Kitsilano, took transit eastward across Vancouver, and arrived finally at an ageing service club hall. The hall was in Strathcona, an old and diverse inner-city neighbourhood with cheery gardens, friendly people, a majority low-income population, and an embedded urban area widely reported in the media as stricken with drug-use, illness, and poverty.⁸ (Notice how my way of writing this demonstrates that I assume you don't know these places? I don't think you do.) The play I was crossing the city to see was an original piece of musical theatre called *Bruce—The Musical*. It promised to tell the life story of Bruce Eriksen, a longtime community activist who lived in the Downtown Eastside, that urban area embedded in Strathcona I mentioned, and who devoted himself to the quality of life of people living there. Bruce had fought to prevent low-income local residents from being exploited by bartenders, rental landlords, and the city; with his team of fellow activists in the 1980s he had won for the neighbourhood an official community centre that

private property itself may be a good deal more complicated. Property claims can also overlap; thus it is, for example, that supposedly private or state property can be claimed in the name of a community. I want to take these appropriations seriously. Perhaps because of these multiple claims, property emerges as a site for conflict. State-sanctioned property claims are challenged; alternative claims to land are articulated that are neither public nor private, but something in between. If property appears settled, perhaps this is more a ‘reality effect’ of the ownership model, than an accurate mapping of property in the world” (xv-xvi).

⁸ The information here about income distribution in Strathcona is gathered from the City of Vancouver’s “Community Web Page” for the neighbourhood; numbers there are based on the 2006 census.

remains in active use today.⁹

What I want to focus on is how that play spoke to its audience about the Downtown Eastside and what it made happen by way of doing so. As I’ve suggested elsewhere, this play valuably convened a meeting of—it seemed to assert—two different audiences. One had crossed town, like me, and was being extended a warm welcome. *Good evening, folks, and welcome to the Downtown Eastside*. This audience’s relationship to the place was carefully mediated and controlled by the play: the performers were local authorities who could place us where they wanted in relation to the neighbourhood they were producing onstage. They wanted us in the middle of it, it turns out, comfortable and interacting, but aware of our social position outside its most central social niche. That central social niche was occupied by the other part of the audience, the people in the room who identified with the neighbourhood and its struggles, who were insiders, who received its jokes as specially made for them. Meanwhile, there we were all together inside an auditorium on a November night, close to but not quite at the heart of the actual Eastside. My sense of relationship to the neighbourhood was being mediated by my habitual sense of proximity to and removal from the setting of a stage play. Just think what a complicated spatial and social arrangement this was!

My position as outsider-who’d-been-welcomed-in was made especially vivid in one particular theatrical moment. Onstage, Marty, a likeable character, was protesting a city council alderman’s ignorant assertion that the Downtown Eastside did not need a community centre. *Go back to Dunbar!* he roared at the alderman, resigning him in frustration to a westside neighbourhood not far from my apartment in Kitsilano. Made in this theatrical moment, in front of the particular crowd in that hall, Marty’s move to cast out the council alderman symbolically ejected unsympathetic aldermen from a commons of neighbourly feeling (whereas, in the activist historical moment being re-enacted, city counselors effectively controlled the use of neighbourhood property and were tempted to withhold public funding from the proposed community centre). Marty’s move revised the terms of “purchase” on the neighbourhood, by suggesting that physical distance from the Downtown Eastside was appropriate (and indeed practically un-crossable) for someone who couldn’t empathize with the neighbourhood’s need for a community centre. It also suggested, by implication, that there was a place in the Downtown Eastside for those westsiders among us who could empathize: empathy counted as a kind of investment in and warranted proximity to the place.

⁹ Bob Sarti’s play *Bruce—The Musical* was produced by Theatre in the Raw and directed by Jay Hamburger at the Russian Hall. My discussion of *Bruce—The Musical* here recalls my earlier article, published in *alt.theatre: cultural diversity and the stage*. 7.3 (2010): 16-23.

Go back to Dunbar!

I heard this line spoken with a certain self-conscious awareness of my marginality in the room. But many of those around me laughed in delight at the line, cheering Marty on: those who laughed knew themselves to be at the heart of a located community being reproduced and strengthened in that auditorium. There may even have been a demonstrative quality to some of the laughter. *You hear?* It was saying. *We live here.* Among other things, the play and the audience's response was invoking a kind of loosely bounded, communal, affective proprietorship—this is *our* neighbourhood, and we feel our relative position at its heart—but also inviting outsiders into a marginal but valued position within the neighbourhood. Meanwhile, it was extending to audience-members like me a rich second-hand knowledge of the place, paired with a first-hand experience of being amidst a hall-full of happy theatre-goers there. It was strange to walk out into the city again from that brightly-lit room.

What I think is valuable for our understanding of the commons, then, is the flexibility, multiplicity, and precise definition of the relationships to place that speech can perform in casual conversation or in the theatre. Asking directions to *the art gallery* positions you as a local outsider, relative to me, but a knowing one: someone in the club of class- and taste-based knowledge. Your phrasing asks me to acknowledge you as sharing with me some precise degree of purchase on the art gallery—some ability to access it by initiating conversation about it.

Similarly, speaking about the landmarks and histories of the Downtown Eastside onstage, to a mixed and appreciative audience, allowed the producers and performers of *Bruce—The Musical* to divide their audience subtly but acutely into several groups, positioning them in relation to one another and in differentiated relations to the neighbourhood at hand. It is here that I see a parallel between my argument about speech and performance and Blomley's about property: the relations and varieties of access and proprietorship are more malleable than might seem obvious. And it is not just that discourses of relationship to place are more various than the distinctions of property ownership. Moments of exchange of the kind I am sketching are patterned by wider discourses, but they are also discrete events where things happen between you and me. They are performed repeatedly, and with a difference, every day. They are enmeshed in located and momentary contexts. I think they afford us quite a radical power to suggest new social relations and to position each other, suddenly, in new multi-dimensional relations to place.

The sociality of these relations is important. Earlier I referred to an analogue and extendable gradient of *knowledge of*. Now that I've told you about the flower lady on west 8th Avenue, you know enough about her to speak of her—though likely you

will do so in terms that suggest your relatively distant access to her. *Apparently there's a flower lady...* Your speech may also point to the intermediary that passed on this knowledge to you. *I heard someone mention a flower lady...* As theorists such as M. M. Bakhtin and Giltrow have noted, these traces of others' speech in our own gesture to the trajectories of knowledge; they also indicate the sociality of the relations of access. We perform our access to certain grounds by way of exchanges with other people. In other words, social exchanges, rather than contracts or the exchange of capital, are the means of producing relations to a commons of the sort I'm discussing. Since these performances happen between people, and in fleeting moments of chance encounter as often as in the habitual conversations of long acquaintance or the substantial durations of theatre performance, they are vulnerable. They may be doubted or countered. *How do you know? Who told you that about Strathcona? Have you even been there?* They might just as likely be accepted and carried forward. *You don't say! Well, I never! Pedro, did you hear what she said?* What speech act theorists have called the "felicity" of performances such as a claim to access—that is, the security and success of such claims' reception by the people who witness them—depends, among other things, on the strength of our performances, their precise calibration to the present context, and the multiple measures of our social weight, in the eyes of those paying attention.

Perhaps of primary importance here is the space afforded for imaginative reworking of relations in such exchanges. The producers and performers of *Bruce—The Musical* imagined themselves as neighbourhood authorities with the knowledge and capacity to re-mediate audiences' relationships to each other and the Downtown Eastside. I had the opportunity to imagine myself a neighbourhood insider, too; I might have chosen to laugh knowingly at Marty's speech. (Would people around me have accepted my performance?) Imaginative access to prohibited, exclusively owned, or otherwise inaccessible spaces does not assuage the injustices of certain real exclusions, I admit. But it may set up non-contractual, shareable kinds of investment such as imagination, empathy or knowingness as currencies of access and proprietorship. And it does give us, between ourselves, some room to maneuver.

Catch you later, then. Maybe I'll see you at Vistas.

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A Brief Guide to the Commons as Group Play and Contact (Improv) Between Bodies

CHRISTINE STODDARD AND TESS TAKAHASHI

Photos by Margrit Talpalaru

1. Coming Together

Begin with an offer, an invitation to play. A space, a time, and (at least) two bodies willing.

In our time at Banff, we engaged in two kinds of movement projects related to the idea of "being in common." First, we met one-on-one every other day or so to explore aspects of contact improvisation as a mode of negotiating relationship in one of the large dance studios. There we investigated questions of preparation, process, form, balance, experimentation, and collaboration between two people.

Second, we held four workshops during the residency that explored aspects of ensemble improvisation with varying groups of ten or so people from our research seminar.¹

| | |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| from: | Tess Takahashi |
| to: | BRIC participants |
| date: | Sat, May 14, 2011 at 12:14 PM |
| subject: | Walking, Flocking, Constraints, Spontaneity - today at 2pm |

Because it was fun last time, we're doing it again.

Walking, flocking, three-ing, etc.

For any and all who'd like to explore some aspects of group relations + cooperation through structured play.

No experience necessary.

Wear whatever you like.

Small children welcome!

Saturday at 2pm til about 3pm in Lazlo Funtek 222.

It would be good if you showed up on time, but feel free to leave whenever you like.

Follow the signs from Lloyd lobby to Theatre building - just up the path and into the first building you come to.

¹ The improvisational exercises were drawn from a long tradition of theatre games developed by 20th century practitioners such as Jerzy Grotowski, Augusto Boal, and others, as well as the kind of attentive, relational play demanded by a compositional practice such as the "viewpoints" used by Anne Bogart of SITI Company. We both brought our recent training with Canadian practitioners like Susan Liska (Toronto) and The Only Animal (Vancouver) to bear on the structure and choice of games for the Banff sessions.

In these, we led the group jointly, alternately giving direction. However, many of the exercises invited individuals from the group to take leadership at various points, posing new possibilities for movement for the rest of the group. Regardless of who was “leading,” these exercises required that those involved pay attention to each other, to actively watch how others in the room were moving in relation.



We were interested in how this playful movement work could illuminate our ways of being together in a seminar, a place where we as academics and thinkers talked with one another in a group context. We often started our sessions with a flocking exercise, which required individuals to move in a V-shaped formation like a flock of migrating birds.² The person at the head of the flock dictated the direction, pace, and quality of movement; the challenge for those following was to mimic the leader precisely and to move seamlessly as one body. However, leadership could shift with a simple turn. This flexibility required that participants pay attention to the rhythms of others in the group, for a sudden change in direction meant that the rest of the flock needed to take note and fall into place in order to avoid collision. This possibility suggested the dangers and demands inherent in conformity. We pointed out that, despite the “rules,” participants need not follow the lead of others. The group could split in two and the two groups could continue to move in relation to one another, albeit using different patterns of movement. An individual could break off on her

² This flocking exercise, along with the 3:2 movement/stillness exercise described below, were adapted from ensemble improvisation workshops led by Toronto dance teacher, Susan Liska.

own, but might not be followed if others were more interested in something else. The groups could, and often did, join back into one. These patterns played out within the rhythms of discussion within the seminar, as well as within the space of the studio. Individuals often, but not always, behaved very similarly in both settings, whether in the flow of language or in the flow of physical movement.

2. The Commons as the Formation of Movement

The game: how to move two different bodies in the same direction or, rather, how to move together in tension within the limits of difference?

This is not merely a physical question, although much can be learned from the work of musculature and bone against the force of weight and gravity. The body has an intelligence that grounds and transposes the challenges of coming together socially, ideologically, affectively. . . Like musical notes modulated into a different key, or the mutation of genes into something different, what can be revealed by the puzzle of two (or more) bodies in motion together in space and time?³

For us, the term “movement” has a number of resonances. It can describe not only physical movement, but also the kind of political movement that the idea of being in common connotes. To be “moved” is also to be moved emotionally, and suggests the kind of affective politics both Lauren Berlant and Michael Hardt explored during the residency seminars on being in common. At one point, Berlant used the term “rhythm” to describe the affective and political experience of the movement of the historical present. One exercise, led by visiting artist Pedro Reyes, made us think of the influence one person can have on the momentum of a larger movement. This game explored the physical influence that the rhythm of laughter could have on a group of people. It began with everyone lying down on the floor, resting his or her head on another person’s stomach, at the same time feeling the weight of another on his or her own abdomen. The laughter began in an artificial way, with people saying “ha ha ha ha ha...” However, bellies soon jostled heads in waves that ebbed and flowed across the group. Voices became harmonic and fluid, individual voices absorbed within a larger flow of sound or standing out in counterpoint. At other moments, the laughter died out almost completely, only to be revived by giggle somewhere at the periphery that sent waves of laughter rolling through our bodies once again.

³ Feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti describes the possibility of a new transformative ethics based on the transdisciplinary practice of transposition and the notion of a non-unitary, transitory form of subjectivity in her book *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics* (2006). To imagine the subject as in transit, simultaneously transforming and transposing difference, is to imagine the play of forces that might move us into a more ethical, sustainable direction. We imagine our forms of movement as one kind of tracing this process of change.



3. The Transposition of Momentum to Belonging

Imagine this game of the commons as not only social or political exercise—the formation of a movement—but also as gravitational, centripetal force suspended across the extension of multiple limbs or as an assemblage of masses and velocities spiraling over the back body.

What does it mean to bear another's weight? What does it mean to give one's own? What would it mean to share the force of gravity at the point of balance? Whose force does this momentum, this movement then become?

Transposing is a gesture neither of metaphysical assimilation nor of metonymic association. It is a style in the sense of a form of conceptual creativity, like a sliding door, a choreographed slippage, a drifting away that follows a trajectory which can be traced a posteriori and thus be made accountable. Like a weather map, genetic printing or digital tracking, an account can be made of what will have been – in the first instance – a fluid flowing of becoming. (Braidotti 2006: 9)

4. Becoming-Common at the Point of Contact

Notice the intimacy of joints where the touch of two intentionalities (each equal to their need) opens the space between and upon which hinges their mutual work. Neither is one's force subsumed by the other nor is another's desire barred by bodily coercion. Momentum dictates how bodies balance, where they join, but that balance is never fixed.

Contact—and what is common—shifts, flows and moves through the course of events.



Being in common requires the work of give and take between desire and compliance, freedom and constraint. Another group exercise required that five individuals move between motion and stillness in relation to one another, as the rest of the group watched. This exercise balanced the "freedom" to move anywhere in the performance space and in any way, with some very specific constraints. Namely, only two OR three of the five people could be moving within the space at any given time. The others needed to remain still until another had stopped, thus opening space for a new person to move. This meant that each person had to watch the rest of the group closely in order to make sure that no more than three, and no less than two, people were moving at any given time. This structure produced a number of beautiful patterns and rhythms as each individual worked to balance her own desires to move with the obligation to allow others to move. As the exercise progressed, the

group developed its own signs in the form of looks, gestures, and repeated forms to signal the passing from stillness to movement and back again from one body to another. The space between bodies functioned as a mediating texture – a negotiated space.



5. The Movements of Failure

Remember that the body is generally hospitable. Skin opens to chance, to harm, to the encounter with resistance. But the body is also xenophobic: its bruises signal a reterritorialization of momentum. Thus, proprioception must be acutely tuned to the common sense or else contact will become collapse.⁴ Bones clunk, tendons twist, bodies fall under their own weight. Though a movement may hold a moment in centrifugal tension, its efferent longings may also atomize and send bodies hurtling into space. There is no shame, however, in the fall into singularity. In it one may recognize the pleasure of a different direction.

⁴ Rosalyn Diprose frames this phenomenological orientation as generosity, which she defines “as a pre-reflective corporeal openness to otherness” (2002: 5). Generosity is material, intersubjective, and intercorporeal. Diprose’s intention in *Corporeal Generosity: On Giving with Nietzsche, Merleau-Ponty, and Levinas* (2002) is to explore the connection between such corporeal generosity and the desire for social justice by rethinking generosity beyond economic models of self-other relations or notions of a radical ethics. Thus, the openness of the body functions as the condition for our affective play of proximity and distance to the other, for the social production of differences, for the formation and transformation of communities, and for the promise of “a passionate politics that aims for a justice that is not yet here” (14).

In another group exercise, we agreed to explore the possibility of non-relation, consciously working to move without connection or response to any of the others in the room. The challenge was to attend to one’s own impulses, regardless of whatever else was happening in the room. Despite the focus on self-attentiveness—which may have felt liberating for the more solitary-minded among us or dangerously directionless for those used to following the kinesthetic drives of others—it seemed to us that a group rhythm still emerged, one framed instead by the basic imperative of safety (for, luckily, there were no accidents), the architecture of the room, the play of light and ambient sound, or even this philosophical negativity that is its own form of disavowal. The play of non-relation struck us as a reminder of how the structure of conventional academic discussion often risks manifesting as hierarchical presentation, despite our best intentions at meaningful dialogue: each person at the table propounding their own ideas, impervious to the comments and silences of others, but all inspired nonetheless by a curiosity that moves them.

Overall, our group play allowed us to speak in other ways to each other, to think of movement in concrete terms, and to consider transposing the trust, spontaneity and attentiveness to others required by the work into other spaces where moving and being moved are more politically, emotionally and intellectually necessary.

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The Common in the Crowd

CAYLEY SOROCHAN

In the lead up to the 2011 Canadian federal elections, thousands across Canada participated in a wave of over fifty “vote mobs” aimed at counteracting the widespread image of apathy and disengagement of young people from the electoral process. These vote mobs involved dozens to hundreds of people gathering together on university campuses and other public spaces to celebrate voting, mostly through dancing, singing, chanting and running around in front of a video camera, occasionally dressing up in the colours of the Canadian flag. The media reaction to these mobs reflects the contradiction at the level of the “vote mob” designation itself. The phrase straddles two concepts that in liberal political theory have often been counterposed. On the one hand, voting is understood as the fundamental activity of political participation, citizenship, and identification with the representative institutions of parliament. The mob, on the other hand, is perceived as a dangerous, because uncontrollable, entity that threatens to undermine the rule of law and which risks becoming violent and destructive. The first concept privileges the notion of the individual who makes presumably rational choices, while the second invokes the image of an irresponsible and irrational collective, susceptible to emotional manipulation and prone to unpredictable outbursts.

When asked about the voting “flash mobs” at a press conference, Conservative MP John Baird responded by saying that he found the terms “disconcerting” and didn’t like the “context of either word.” Michael Taube, writing for the *Ottawa Citizen*, first displayed cynicism that the vote mobs would result in actual votes, and then fear at the prospect of it actually working. Taube makes the assumption that the people taking part in vote mobs are of the “circus clown variety,” likely radicals, and uninformed about politics (*Ottawa Citizen*, 2011). He therefore concludes that while an increased voter turnout on their part would be good for democracy, it would be bad for “political stability.” In short, Taube’s comments nicely illustrate an understanding of democracy that it is premised on the exclusion of broad masses of the population in order to function smoothly. While belief in the system is necessary, too much involvement is counter-productive to beneficial political outcomes, as determined by an elite of informed experts.

Supporters of the vote mobs, such as comedian Rick Mercer (who is credited with provoking their emergence) focused on the non-partisan positivity of the events, and the warm feelings produced by the videos. In an interview on Canadian television

broadcaster CTV, Mercer also explicitly contrasted vote mobs with the “negativity” of the stereotypical mob and overtly political protests (April 18, 2011). The vote mobs are presented as doing an old thing in a new way. They express involvement with traditional parliamentary structures and gentle patriotism, but are presented in a form that is engaging to young people.

While the content of vote mobs certainly presents a banal patriotism and the reiteration of a non-partisan “get out there and vote” message, it is precisely the form of engagement that makes them irreducible to the traditional social formations invested in parliamentary structures (those of political parties and the social movements that try to influence them). Vote mobs must be situated in relation to an emergent crowd culture that is neither violent and destructive, nor oriented towards democratic institutions and political causes. They number among various crowd formations that have recently come into existence and that manifest a desire for a new kind of common experience.

Writing in the nineteen-twenties, Siegfried Kracauer pointed to one such spectacular crowd formation that he referred to as the *mass ornament* (1995). What he had in mind, in particular, was a popular style of performance that became epitomized by the Tiller Girls, a group of young women dancers who dressed and moved identically in linear formations. Kracauer was fascinated by the mass ornament as an empty form or end in itself and how it reflected the limits or irrationality of capitalist reason. He wrote:

It is the *rational and empty form* of the cult, devoid of any explicit meaning, that appears in the mass ornament. As such, it proves to be a relapse into mythology of an order so great that one can hardly imagine its being exceeded, a relapse which, in turn, again betrays the degree to which capitalist *Ratio* is closed off from reason. (1995: 84)

What is interesting in Kracauer’s reflections is that the irrationality and the empty meaningfulness of the mass ornament is derived from capitalist rationality itself. Following Weber’s critique of technocratic rationality, and anticipating Horkheimer and Adorno’s writings on the dialectic of enlightenment, Kracauer locates mythology in the spectacular fetishization of form. The mass of performers, mirrored in the mass audience, does not become irrational or dangerous due to its being swayed by emotion (which is clearly lacking in the shallow, repetitive performances) nor in the influence of a great leader (since the spectacle is multitudinous there is no central figure that rises above the crowd). It is the emphasis on form for its own sake, deprived of ends or meaning, that becomes the vehicle for destruction. The consequences of this irrational drive of capitalist reason is not property destruction and street brawls,

but rather, property itself and the diffuse symbolic violence that is produced in the form of social inequality.

Today, entertainment that draws its appeal from the spectacular repetitive and abstract movement of crowds can be found on a smaller and more participatory scale in flash mob performances. In flash mobs, social networking sites are used to gather large groups who surprise bystanders by performing a repetitive action in synchrony. Alongside these gatherings that emphasize the synchronicity of movement are crowds that are satisfied with a synchronicity of presence. I include here deviations from the classic flash mob that are geared towards greater social interaction such as metro parties, silent raves, zombie walks, and the *apéro géant*. The last of these are huge gatherings, popular in France, in which thousands and even tens of thousands of people converge on a public park or square, sit on checkered blankets, and partake in the French late-afternoon tradition of l'*apéritif* (the consumption of alcohol). The *apéro géants* are notable in that they are conceived by participants as a competition between cities to see who can gather the most people. The drive towards scale pushes the meaning of the event away from social interaction towards the simple knowledge of an enormous co-presence.

Unlike typical crowds, these friendly gatherings are disconnected from organizations, political causes, or mass entertainment such as sporting events, music concerts, or community festivals. As a result, they are unorganized in the strict sense of having accountable individuals who make decisions, and are highly participatory. People seem to bask in “groupiness” without qualification as to group identity or event meaning. And while participants are not clearly distinguished between audience and performers, the events are also imbued with spectacle. A participatory mode of spectatorship allows people to occupy both roles, providing them with a chance to disappear into a mass and reappear as a part of a larger image, one that cannot be perceived from within, but only through the mediation of visual technologies. Bird’s-eye-view photographs of the immense crowds are captured and uploaded onto the Internet, from whence the event originated. With these images, participants can revel in the surface effects of this mass creation that replaces meaning with an endless repetition of form.

While the need for being-together has been typically expressed by youth through involvement in subcultures and smaller social gatherings in clubs, cafés, shopping zones, etc, these contemporary crowds are set apart by a distinctive drive towards size. They indicate a desire to be part of a group that is so large that there is no way that one could actually interact with everyone present. In fact, interaction seems to be fairly low on the agenda. Also notable is that many of these gatherings take place in broad daylight in public places, a quality that distances them from being understood as a part of rave culture or nightlife culture where people typically attempt to let off

steam, are more prone to transgress, and seek escape from the “daily grind.” I would argue that these crowds indicate a desire on the part of participants to be part of a more general public culture. They would seem to be less about occasions to distinguish oneself from the mainstream, or to seek out alternative spaces, than they are a claim on a universal kind of togetherness: the production of a public.

Vote mobs display some elements of synchronous movement planned and executed by participants during the events. The geometric and repetitive movements of the classic flash mob are downplayed, however, as people revel in the simple fact of their co-presence within the crowd. If we understand vote mobs as being a part of this emerging crowd culture, their attachment to the political institution of voting may strike us as exceptional. What ground for politics is generated in this social space? One central attribute that is common to these crowds is an explicit rejection of markers of difference, identity, or antagonistic stance towards institutions. While differences certainly exist, these crowds constitute themselves by making tacit rather than explicit the fact of one’s political identifications. Any truly political claim that would necessarily result in antagonism is implicitly rejected. The ground for assembling is not a cause, but a lack of one.

We might contrast these meaningless yet peaceable crowds with more destructive recent trends in mobbing. In 2005, marginalized immigrants took to the streets of the banlieus of Paris to burn and damage property in their own neighbourhoods. What was intriguing about these incidents was that no direct cause could be seen to have instigated the rioting. Slavoj Žižek described the riots as a “‘zero level’ protest, a violent protest act which ‘wants nothing.’” (2007: 12-29) What was troubling about this revolt was the inability on the part of the protestors to articulate specific political demands, let alone a meaningful social project. Rather than try to impose a politics on the outburst from the outside, for example, by pointing to the marginal socio-economic status of the protestors, Žižek claims that we should recognize the riots as a demand for visibility. This desperate need for visibility was not about the recognition of some ethnic or religious difference, but a desire to be seen as a part of the whole of French society. He understands this desire as a symptom of the lack of cognitive mapping in late-capitalist society. Following Žižek, we might understand the disidentification at play in recent crowd formations as indicative of a broad collapse of belief structures in the contemporary world. In this context, to associate oneself with an explicit cause might be perceived as naïve and outmoded. Perhaps the non-partisan call to vote fits within an apolitical rubric of togetherness precisely because it posits parliamentarism as a ground of consensus, and not one of antagonism. If anything, vote mobs give some indication of the extent to which the capitalo-parliamentary institutions and the corporate media have succeeded in depoliticizing the social imaginary. Being together enters this situation as a compensatory symptom of a more

fundamental worldlessness, a condition that will not go away after a few martinis.

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VULNERABLE ACCUMULATION

PAIGE SARLIN

Etymology:

Vulnerable: from L. *vulnerare* “to wound;” see also *verletzen* (De).

Accumulation: from L. *ad* “in addition” + *cumulare* “to heap up” from *cumulus* “heap, mass;” see also, *die Anhäufung* (De).

Genealogy:

A variant of Karl Marx’s “primitive accumulation” that incorporates various discussions of “vulnerability,” “precarity,” and “debt” from the works of Franco “Bifo” Berardi, Lauren Berlant, Judith Butler, Rosalyn Deutsche, Silvia Federici, and Elizabeth Povinelli. The concept also developed in relation to theories of the common/s, primitive accumulation, and community articulated by Massimo de Angelis, Roberto Esposito, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Peter Linebaugh, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Jason Read.

Definition:

1. The concept¹ of vulnerable accumulation accounts for and incorporates both economic and affective registers in its description of the processes and activity involved in forms of sociality that arise between people experimenting with social forms outside or in opposition to market forces (and without financial remuneration).

2. Vulnerability, as both a structure and an experience,² is an inevitable part of being-

¹ According to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, a concept “posits itself and its object at the same time as it is created.” See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 22.

² For more on the structured experience of vulnerability, see: Lauren Berlant, “Thinking about Feeling Historical.” *Emotion, Space, and Society* volume 1, issue 1, October 2008, p. 4.

in-common (collectivity understood as an activity and process of being-together).³

a. Whatever grows, is produced, aggregated, created, or amassed within a space of sharing (outside the logic of market exchange) is vulnerable to the logic of the market & market forces, especially in relation to debt (see 1 and 8).

b. In addition, this concept also highlights that all forms of accumulation are vulnerable under capitalism (e.g. the financial crisis of 2008). States, police and armies exist to protect vulnerable capitalist accumulation. There are few formal structures that exist to protect the vulnerable accumulation of groupings, quasi-institutions, collectivities, and communities (e.g. the exposure of #occupy encampments to police force).

3. In the way that the secret history of primitive accumulation, according to Marx, explains the creation of capital, vulnerable accumulation is an overlooked force that underpins being-in-common.

a. For Marx, the historical process of primitive accumulation was central to the creation and enclosure of the commons and crucial to the establishment of private property (making private what was held in common). Various processes of primitive accumulation (enclosure, seizure, dispossession, expropriation) continue to be responsible for the privatization of public resources and the destruction of contemporary common(s).

b. Contemporary practices of “commoning” (making public what was private) engage in vulnerable rather than primitive accumulation.⁴

c. Vulnerable accumulation also describes the process that constitutes the common/s understood as a thing, state, or form.

4. The accumulation of being-in-common results from the repetition of interactions and the compounding of experience and feeling. In cases where there is no financial remuneration, repetition and longevity increase the costs of the endeavor of vulnerable accumulation, but they also enable the collection and aggregation of resources of

³ See: Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*. Trans. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simon Sawhney (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

⁴ Massimo de Angelis derives the term “commoning” from Peter Linebaugh’s *The Magna Carta Manifesto: Liberties and Commons for All*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008. See Massimo de Angelis, “On the Commons: A Public Interview with Massimo de Angelis and Stavros Stravrides” in *e-flux journal* #17, 06/2010, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/150>.

shared experience, knowledge, trust, and confidence (as well as risk).

5. Vulnerable accumulation is both a symptom of and a reaction to the structural condition referred to as precarity. It accrues because people are atomized and exposed to the violence of capitalism. But it also accrues when people come together to fight the forces of privatization and the conditions of precarity. Vulnerable accumulation stems from a certain kind of availability that is enacted when people come together (whether they acknowledge it or not). It is part of the residue of struggle. It is a positive force in the struggle, as a mechanism for increased solidarity, but it can also undermine this same structure of solidarity.

6. The vulnerability of being-in-common is both objective and subjective. It is overdetermined and generated from external and internal forces. It grows between participants (and within them) in addition to being conditioned by structural inequality, daily exploitation, and global/ multi-national forces of capitalist accumulation (and dispossession).

7. Vulnerable accumulation is material and immaterial; visible and invisible, tangible and intangible.

8. Debt is a significant aspect of vulnerable accumulation.

a. Financial debt (paid and unpaid labor, capital investment and expenditure).

b. Emotional ties and connection, friendship and affiliations

c. Intellectual and creative debt

d. Favors and labors of and for love.

9. Different kinds of commons and collectivities accumulate different degrees and kinds of vulnerabilities.⁵

10. Like capital itself, vulnerable accumulation and vulnerability are *un-equally* distributed across the globe. Various populations and formations are more susceptible to violence, enclosure, appropriation, monetization, dispossession, and destruction than others.

⁵ For definitions of vulnerability, see Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004) and Rosalyn Deutsche, *Hiroshima After Iraq: Three Studies in Art and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

a. Vulnerable accumulation accrues to a group as a whole and to individuals. However, the weight and power of vulnerability are not necessarily equally distributed both between groups and between members of the same group — and the experience of vulnerability (as a feeling) registers differently at both the level of the group and the individual.

11. This concept describes the way in which the practices of connection, sharing, and being-in-common breed a kind of transformation in those involved in the production of a collective space/ practice /mode of sociality/ movement/ resistance. This transformation and change is porous, messy, and hard to quantify or evaluate, but it is a crucial aspect of these forms of sociality and therefore needs to be recognized.⁶

12. Vulnerable accumulation offers a rubric for accounting that introduces a heuristic term into discourses of value and assessment. This concept is meant to provide a framework for those involved in these practices to take “stock” of their practices, to appreciate and assess the new forms of social relations that are being created.

a. Vulnerable accumulation suggests a way of accounting for the affective and emotional aspects of social movement work that is inclusive, exhaustive, non-normative, cumulative, and attentive to the material conditions that make such work possible. It offers a way to talk about how the possibilities for social transformation within movements (and collaborations) develop and unravel and how attention to the intricacies of the process is exceedingly important (especially in a moment of crisis and/or prolonged struggle).

13. In contrast to discourses that valorize spontaneity, flexibility, instability, and indeterminacy as resistant modes of being, vulnerable accumulation seeks to account for that which has structure and continuity (if only fleeting).

14. The vulnerability of being-in-common is both a weakness and a strength (see 5).

a. The fact of the accumulation of vulnerability exposes the assumption that forms of togetherness (and particularly, forms of togetherness that respect difference) are easy or simply emancipatory things. It seeks to name some of the paradoxes and difficulties of being-in-common.

15. This concept was conceived by Paige Sarlin in May 2011 as a way to talk about the practice of 16beaver group (the group, website, and space in New York City) and

her activities as a member of the US-based International Socialist Organization. Her development of this idea is therefore indebted to her interlocutors in those projects with whom she has organized and talked for the last 12 years. In addition, this concept developed through discussions with participants in the “On the Commons” BRiC and the “La Commune” residency at The Banff Arts Centre.

a. The first official citation of this term appears here. Subsequent references will be found in a longer essay about this concept and a publication project in which collective and activist groups will be asked to reflect on how this concept may or may not help them to understand, explain, or advance their practices.

16. Examples of the objects of vulnerable accumulation include: documentation, photographs, sketches, websites, ideas, notes, notebooks, trash, emails, memories, disappointment, life partners, slogans, chants, amorous adventures, travel, meals, tea, coffee, encounters, friends, colleagues, introductions, goodbyes, tears, laughter, loss, fear, confidence, faith, re-assurance, arguments, arrests, dis-agreements, misunderstandings, opinions, information, criticism, critique, encouragement, correction, affirmation, confirmation, hope, assurance, continuity, time, signs, sunburns, experience, sore throats, video, books, PDFs, camaraderie, jealousy, attention, capital, cultural capital, respect, interest, connections, offers, requests, debt, splinters, muscle strain, bruises, cuts, germs, exhaustion, weariness, surprise, confusion, frustration, victories, losses, growth, reference, jokes, stories, papers, posters, maps, publications, etc.

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⁶ See Lauren Berlant, “Introduction: Compassion (and Withholding).” *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*. Ed. Lauren Berlant (New York: Routledge, 2004): 1-13.

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Music for Spaces

LEANNE ZACHARIAS

Demonstration

The 2011 BRiC workshop brought scholars and artists together to discuss and explore ways of being in common. I presented to the group on the first day and instead of speaking about commonality, I attempted to create it. Using sound, text, recitation and movement, I led a twenty-minute experiential lecture in which all present became participants. Through the collective actions of listening together, moving together, speaking and singing together, a new unique and inimitable common space was created. The lecture was treated as a performance, one which was dependant upon and shaped by its audience. The personal—individuality—was acknowledged as we each spoke our names in turn. Everyone was given the opportunity to speak, to read aloud, to add their voice to an impromptu choir. Our readings — excerpts from a poem by one of our members, written as a collage of numbered sentence fragments culled from our residency's introductory day and randomly pulled from a hat—transformed the poem. Our single sung pitch became a drone on which new layers of music were added one by one; a pre-recorded piano loop, a simple melody played on cello. Three distinct musical elements revealed themselves to belong together as we sat around a circle, each playing our part.¹

Postlude

1. I'm nervous. you're not
- 1.1. applauding.
4. JPL 204 2:00pm
18. what will happen there

I don't sing in public, as a rule. A very firm rule. So when Leanne asked us to hold a note together, my trusty self-consciousness came in full speed—am I on the right note? Close enough? Am I too loud? Is anyone else singing? Am I overthinking this very simple request? OK, stop then. But if I'm thinking about stopping thinking, am I still thinking? But after a dozen anxious seconds or so, I looked around at the way people were sitting in a circle on whatever they could find in the studio space Leanne had brought us into, and realized the note wasn't coming from anywhere specific. I opened my ears to the noise we were making together, and my self-consciousness just

¹ Thanks to Adam Katz, Evan Mauro, Christine Stoddard, Ashley Wong, Imre, Heather and everyone at BRiC.

melted away. It was a terrific feeling, and all too brief. (EM)

- 21. this is a great place
 - 23.1. communication
 - 26. wild animals have particular ways
 - 50. test social structures which
 - 51. reflect on contemporary
 - 51.1. structures

Any interrogation of the common needs to be critical of what powers permit one's entry into it and what kinds of comfort are required for individuals to feel like they belong. In this sense, some might be quite protective of their contribution to the 'academic' common because of the many barriers to participation that might need to be overcome in order to contribute. In this sense, I think Leanne's performance was a subtle and brilliant intervention into the entitlements that had been performed up to that point in our common-formation. (CS)

- 52. shared between ourselves
 - 93. and eat and swipe your card
 - 105. there are hazards associated
 - 109. we've had a cool spring
 - 147. it was supposed to be
 - 154. so what's your project here

I found the experience rather special as our time spent together was often very structured and coded with talking and theoretical discourse within formal environments. There was an interesting switch when we were asked to not talk and rather sing a tone together. Initially, it was a bit awkward as of course people tend to be slightly self-conscious of their own voice and whether others were participating as well, or simply following the group. One becomes aware of others and attempts to gauge what the others are doing as well. The unknowingness of where we were being led and what was to happen created a different dynamic and language amongst us in communication beyond speech. Once seated in the studio we were arranged around in a circle - all facing each other. Still no words in a direct expression of a personal idea or opinion from the self. Slips of paper were passed around. It was curious what we were to do with them. We all recognized them as fragments of Adam's poem. I was slightly perplexed at the use of them until later. The words we all recognized, but they were scrambled, fragmented in a sense that we were using each others' own words at random. We were speaking for and through each other in a poetic sense. The

performance gave the poem new life and meaning as it was experienced individually through email and now reinterpreted into a space together through spoken word. It provided a third dimension, bringing the work out into a time and a space and out of a private or personal space. (AW)

- 178. geography remains a problem
 - 208. communicate your ideas

At the time, we were still getting to know each others' names, and the naming became not only useful practically, but an interesting way of becoming aware of your own subjectivity and within a group of subjective individuals. It was an identifier that gave everyone a face that collectively formed the group. The playing of music shifted again our attentions to the sound and the space and the person playing. The notes resonated in the studio as we glanced at each other for reactions, which were like slight glimpses of smiles in the corner of peoples' mouths. The group of individuals was brought together through the harmonies of the cello in a collective experience of the performance. We were brought back down into another space once the music finished and were allowed to speak of our experiences. We became once again speaking individuals, but somehow closer and as one sharing this experience. It was a different rhythm and experience of time which felt longer than it actually was. Everyone has a different experience of the event and the ability to extract and interpret abstractions in life. Together these singular perspectives create a unified point in time of being together and one that will likely continue to resonate within all of us. (AW)

- 216. touchstones
 - 217. opportunity to exchange
 - 220. so my sense is that
 - 221. we're going to stay in touch
 - 222. by email
 - 229. something not on the schedule
 - 244. I don't like talking but I'm here to talk (AK)

but what i remember most
is the resonance
of our own words sung
in harmonic pitch
and an offer to recognize

the source and tone
of others' sounds
as not just common ground
but the differences that make us ring in concert (CS)

AMASS: Towards an Economy of the Commons

ASHLEY WONG

Founded in 2010, DOXA is an international research collective based in London, UK. Through an on-going project called 'Creative Space', DOXA facilitates cross-disciplinary dialogue through open discussion events in order to approach new visions of culture in light of the current economic crisis, globalization and the digital turn. Through various events, DOXA brings together artists, academics, policy makers and industry professionals who explore new ways of developing and sustaining culture and creativity while addressing current developments in policy, society and the economy. Doxa (δόξα) is a common belief, as opposed to knowledge; doxa is associated with community, dialogue and truth.



Crisis, Cuts and Unrest

It has been one year since DOXA first began organizing events as a research collective, three years since the 2008 global economic crisis and ten years since 9/11. September 11th 2001 in many ways foreshadowed the events of 2008, where for the first time in a generation the fragility of modern Western capitalism became visible on a mass scale. 2008 marked a year where the financial economy reached a tipping point in which the contradictory effects of capitalist accumulation became a visible reality. The situation in the UK has become particularly dire. The

recession resulted in the election of a new Conservative – Liberal Democratic government, which has made massive cuts to the public sector, including 30 percent cuts to the Arts Council England and a 300 percent increase in university tuition fees[1]. These cuts were accompanied by rising inflation, growing unemployment, and an increase in freelance contractual work and internships as full-time employment opportunities dried up. Young people are now graduating with fewer job prospects, and when employment is found, there is little job security or access to long-term social benefits such as health insurance and pensions.



Chisenhale Gallery, London

The growing severity of the situation has since sparked student protests and occupations, most notably at Slade, Middlesex and Goldsmiths Universities¹ beginning in November 2010. A number of worker demonstrations have taken place, culminating on the 26th of March 2011 where a quarter of a million trade union and public sector workers from across the UK converged on the streets of London. Despite the numbers, the demonstrations remained largely ineffective in instigating change. Persisting issues of unemployment and social inequality inevitably manifest in riots following the shooting of Mark Duggan – a 29-year-old man suspected of carrying illegal fire-

1 More details on the actions against the cuts to education can be found on various blogs and websites from the various university occupation campaigns. See: Save Middlesex Philosophy, Online: <http://savemiddlesexphil.com/>, Slade Occupations, Online: <http://sladeoccupation.wordpress.com/>, and Save Goldsmiths, Online: <http://savegoldsmiths.tumblr.com/>.

arms – by police in the area of Tottenham in North London in August 2011. The lack of explanation for his death by the police led to growing discontent and racial tensions between authorities and a largely ethnic community, mirroring the spark of the Brixton Riots in the 80s. The event revealed a loss in confidence in government and authority, and provided the opportunity for nights of lawless looting and arson, largely by groups of disenchanted youth. The riots in the UK followed a series of youth and worker uprisings in Greece², Spain³, France⁴ and the Netherlands⁵ as many European countries confront similar issues of shrinking public resources, youth unemployment and debt. Similar movements have since growing globally with the spread of Occupy Wall Street initiatives in cities around the world.

The fallout from the 2008 economic crisis has been particularly problematic for those sectors of the economy associated with the arts and culture. In a “creative economy” in which creative communities and local cultures are touted as new engine of economic growth, creative workers have increasingly struggled to make a living in urban centres that offer little and precarious remuneration. It is in this context that notions of the commons have become especially important for understanding the contradictions inherent in today’s cultural economy. The commons, as explained by academic and activist Stephen Shukaitus⁶, is “the way in which individuals relate to each other in relation to a shared resource,” whereas enclosures are understood as the limitations placed on the commons that creates scarcity and produces social relations that lead to the common’s depletion. The commons is a practice of sharing where there is less emphasis on individual gain for the sake of the collective, and where a community addresses how they are to live in common. To be in common is “an active process that is always emerging” in a mode of being and working together for the greater good of the community. In a creative economy, the commons offers a model of practice that

² For coverage on the protests in Greece, see: “Greece protest against austerity package turns violent”, London: BBC News, 28 June 2011. Online: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-13935400>.

³ For sonic coverage of the protests in Spain, see: Madrid: “The soundscape of the revolution?”, Mediateletipos, 2011. Online: <http://www.mediateletipos.net/archives/15881>.

⁴ France takes influence from the protests in Spain which are documented in blogs across the web. See: “Galvanised by Spain, France takes to the streets”, @Acampadaparis, 2011. Online: <http://storyful.com/stories/1000003889>.

⁵ See more on the cuts to culture in the Netherlands in an article describing the demands of a letter to the State Secretary for Culture. Altena, Arie and Lucas van der Velden. “A new Dark Age for Dutch Culture”, Amsterdam: Sonic Acts, 2011. Online: http://www.sonicacts.com/A_new_Dark_Age_for_Dutch_Culture.html.

⁶ Stephen Shukaitus is lecturer at the University of Essex and a member of the Autonomedia editorial collective, who was invited to introduce the notion of ‘the commons’ at the event. See more on his work at: <http://www.autonomedia.org>

does not benefit the few at the expense of many, but rather allows for greater contribution and equality in a world that is shared.



Eva Weinmayr, AND Publishing

Research and Dialogue towards an Economy of the Commons

Over the past year, DOXA has been organizing events that create a space for dialogue concerning the shape of the current cultural economy in order to find new models for developing and understanding culture today. In the UK, the crisis is a crisis of creativity in the creative economy. Through some of the events organized by DOXA, we sought to form a *constructive* response to the crisis of the creative economy by pooling knowledge and resources amongst artists, academics and practitioners that generate alternative models for constructing a creative economy other than those that have been adopted by neoliberal governments in the UK and abroad.

An economy of the commons is founded through practice - through experimentation, collective dialogue and critical research, which has formed the basis for organizing an event called AMASS (meaning to collect or gather, and share knowledge and resources) in April 2011 at Chisenhale Gallery in London. The event was a collaboration between DOXA and two other groups: the Amateurist Network (<http://amateuristnetwork.wordpress.com/>), a learning and support network that organizes dis-

cussions around modes of self-organization and precarious labour, and Ment (<http://journalment.org>), an online journal for contemporary culture, art and politics.

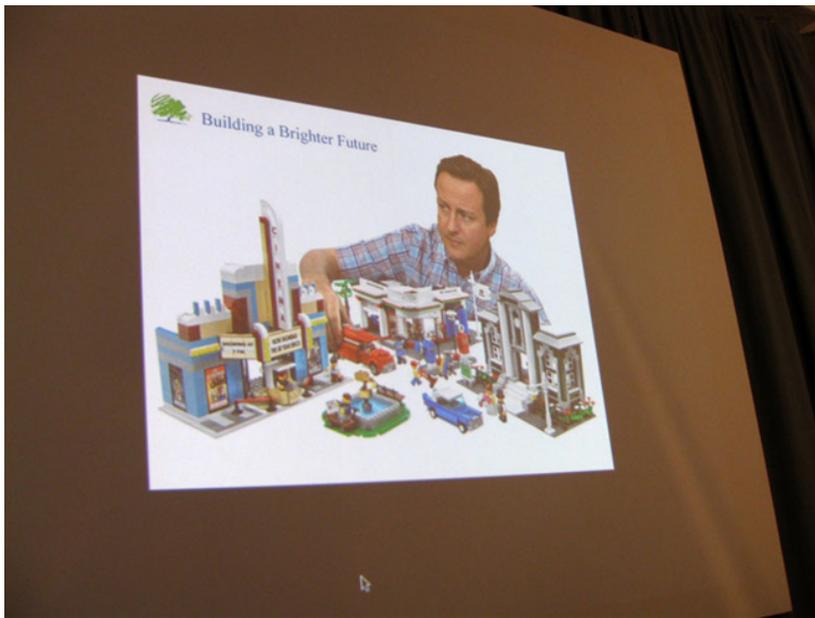


The event brought together over 60 participants from a community of practitioners, researchers, students and artists to discuss experiences and challenges in the practice of the commons, and to address concerns in the current climate in the cultural sector. The research remains open and perpetually nascent as we experiment with forms of organization as a means of developing research through practice. Through the sharing of knowledge we sought to also create the commons in practice, and propose another way of living and working together through the discussion of concrete examples and case studies. It was a means of pooling knowledge on practices of the commons to find new ways of working together in the current economic climate. The following is a summary of several case studies that came out of the event and which offer emerging practices that provide hope for the realization of the commons today.

Case Studies: 1. Self-Organization and Resistance: AND Publishing

Eva Weinmayr, co-director from AND Publishing who was invited to speak by the Amateurist Network, discussed examples of self-organized practices in a way that opened up opportunities for the commons. Self-organization is a model of collective working, which allows a community to organize itself around a specific project or resource, which in this case was the running of the Byram Shaw Library. The library was forced to close after losing financial support from the college after the relocation

of the school to King's Cross in London. In an effort to resist losing an important resource, people came together and decided to operate the library collectively, thereby keeping this important public resource accessible. As a result of its transition to a self-organized project, the space no longer functioned as a traditional library but became more of a community centre for talks, reading groups, exhibitions and workshops. While this collaborative and community-led collective effort offers one example of the how a commons might be organized, the self-organization of the Byram Shaw Library was loosely organized, suffered from frequently changing membership, and as a result was short-lived. As the organizers discovered, it is difficult to sustain vibrancy in a space that is unregulated, temporary and run on a voluntary basis.



'The Big Society'

Notions of self-organization and community-led volunteerism have recently been a centerpiece of David Cameron's "Big Society" initiative, wherein the community is asked to offer what often amount to band-aid solution for the cuts on public spending and the lack of jobs. The language of 'participation' is central to Cameron's Big Society project and is understood as a mechanism for the society to take care of itself, to generate economic value or growth without government support. Such uses of a language of popular participation used by neoliberal governments and institutions must be consistently reflected upon by collectives attempting to recuperate these dis-

courses. As explained by Rene Gabri of New York based collective 16 Beaver, "We need to be open to antagonism, we need to reject traditional forms of 'collective practice' or social cooperation that are only disguised versions of exploitation. We need to also resist and be concerned about how our activities may be recouped into reinforcing the structure or processes we are trying to undermine ... [we need to] distinguish what is sold to us as cooperation by corporations, institutions and even universities from a kind of cooperation that would begin to actually unsettle our politics, our lives" (Gabri 129). In order to resist the inculcation of such discourses, the library collective undertook a number of events that underscored the common character of its self-organization. One of which, called 'The Piracy Project,' involved building up a collection of books through requests from the community, wherein books were sourced, photocopied and contributed to the library. This event also involved a series of talks and workshops around ideas of authorship, originality, open source production and copyright. The piracy project borders on illegality by infringing on copyright to defend access to knowledge, learning and a shared resource. They write: "This project is not about stealing or forgery, it is about creating a platform to innovatively explore the spectrum of copying, re-editing, translating, paraphrasing, imitating, re-organizing, manipulating of already existing works. Here creativity and originality sit not in the borrowed material itself, but in the way it is handled."⁷ The project supports the idea of free culture and knowledge sharing for the greater good of a community and offers practices of the commons that values the freedom of knowledge beyond economic concerns.

Case Studies 2: The Cooperative: Calverts

Another practice of the commons that emerged through AMASS included egalitarian and democratic forms of labour organization such as cooperatives. Sion Whellens, Client Services Director at Calverts, an art and design cooperative that has been operating in East London for 30 years, explains cooperatives as "an organization of men and women who come together to address their common social, cultural and economic needs."⁸ Unlike self-organized practices, which are informal in organization, cooperatives operate on a commercial basis yet present a horizontal model of sharing resources and working together. As a cooperative, the members (or workers) of Calverts all share assets, levels of responsibility, and pay. Each member is considered a "director," yet simultaneously has the responsibility of answering the phone - a task normally taken care of by lower level office administrators. As a small business, they

⁷ For further details on the open call for the Piracy Project, visit: <http://www.andpublishing.org/projects/and-the-pirate-project/>

⁸ Sion Whellens was invited to speak at the event by the Amateurist Network. Following the event, we also made a site-visit to the Calverts studio where he explained the operation and production of the organization. Further details on his co-op can be found at: <http://www.calverts.coop>

operate with about ten full-time members who are equally invested in the work and share the use of the equipment for their personal creative projects. Members, who generally stay in the organization for 10 years, share knowledge and skills through apprenticeships and help new staff step-up to their various roles. As an organizational model, Whellens described **seven principles of a cooperative**⁹, which include:

An open and voluntary membership;

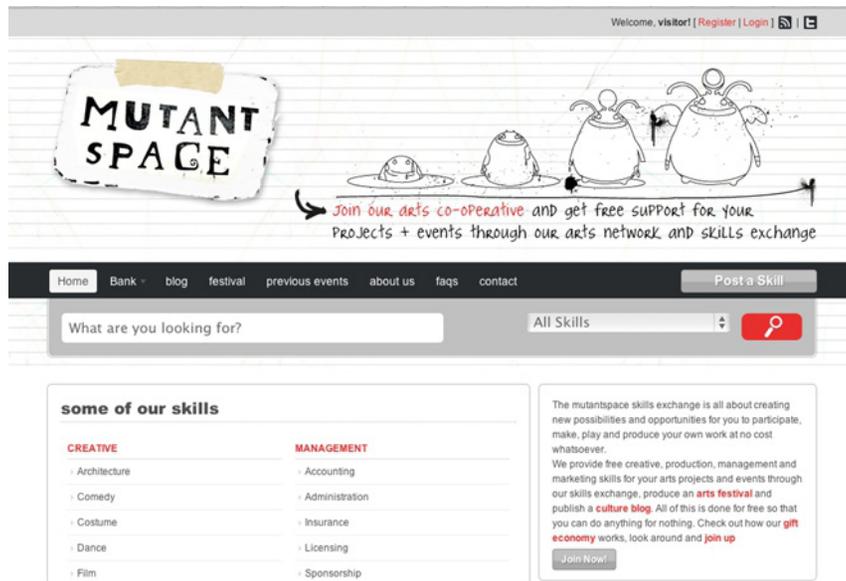
Democratic organization (one member one vote);

Members in economic relationship with each other;

Autonomy from institutions, governments and corporations;

A model of education i.e. helping each other develop and learn professionally and in practice;

Cooperation with other cooperatives to create a larger economy of cooperatives around the world to develop a global movement and;



⁹ For more information on the principles of cooperatives see: “Cooperatives: Principles and Practices in the 21st Century”, Kimberly A. Zeuli and Rober Cropp, Online: <http://learningstore.uwex.edu/assets/pdfs/A1457.PDF>

A mandate to provide sustainable development within the communities in which they operate.

A cooperative demonstrates that a commons can be based both spontaneous and informal self-organized practices as well as in formal organizational structures. While the cooperative is only one such model, it offers an interesting and productive alternative to top-down hierarchical forms of business. It is a model that values not only its own labourers, but also other businesses within a wider economy, and thereby recognizes that the commons is not only as a practice amongst individuals within a single organization but involves relationships with other organizations within a broader economic ecosystem.

Case Studies 3: Individual/Collective Interest: Public Work Group

Public Work Group (www.publicworksgroup.net) is a group of architects based in East London interested in the construction of space and networks and how individuals and groups identify and invent the commons within these spaces. In their International Village Shop project, they proposed a model of working that is both individual and collective. In the project, Public Work Group created a network of shops in regions around Europe that source their products locally and build trade links across rural communities. The project therefore facilitated an exchange of localized practices of trade and production across borders and amongst isolated communities, while creating new networks of traders in which each member had an individual interest in both learning from each other and in contributing as a part of a wider community of producers. If the Byram Shaw Library and Calverts cooperative offered models of individuals coming together for a shared project or business, Public Work Group was based on practices of the commons amongst producers and organizations in a wider community and thereby created a commons on a much larger scale. As demonstrated by The Publics Works Group, the commons can also be considered as an ethics of *giving* and contributing within everyday life and in organizational practice.

Case Studies 4: The Gift Economy: Mutant Space

The notion of the gift economy emerged as a major theme throughout AMASS, and was perhaps best illustrated by a project called Mutant Space (<http://www.mutant-space.ie/>). Mutant Space is an arts network and an online skills sharing platform that provides artists with support for their projects and events through a gift economy. Skills are donated to a bank as services that can be requested by anyone in the community. Services can equally be accessed and requested from others on the platform.

Drawing on the work of Marcel Mauss, Yuk Hui (co-founder of DOXA) describes

the gift economy as an economy founded upon trust, which contrasts with a barter system that is based on simultaneous exchange. An exchange-based system produces relations that rely on a notion of value based on scarcity, in which one experiences a lack in 'not having' as the basis for trade. This in turn implies a notion of personal property wherein the incentive of giving is the immediate expectation of receiving. The gift economy on the other hand, is based upon giving without an immediate or even symmetrical expectation of reciprocity. Following this model is the online platform AAAAARG.org, for example, which allows users to request books that are then uploaded and made available by someone in the community as a PDF for download. AAAAARG.org is a platform for the discussion and sharing of knowledge and learning that is not unlike the Piracy Project. Started by Sean Dockray in L.A., Mutant Space has grown from 3,000 to 50,000 users and offers over 10,000 texts. Both Mutant Space and AAAAARG.org offer examples of online-based projects that apply the new possibilities of web platforms and social networks for building and sustaining forms of collective knowledge and skills.

Conclusion

These case studies begin to provide blueprints for how the commons might be formed in actual practice. They are projects that can be applied in a wide array of contexts, organization and social situation. In the current economic climate, the commons faces continual challenges posed by the enclosures of knowledges through forms of intellectual property restrictions. By building a network of individuals and organizations with shared values for the commons, and who practice these through "doing" and being together, these kinds of projects offer new and unexpected social relations that might form the basis of collective life in the commons.

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Contributors

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The Edmonton Pipelines Project is a research cell composed of faculty, students, and community partners who are developing new urban narratives through multimedia and deep mapping. Pipelines seeks to channel this narrative understanding through dense city space via urban stories that come "from below" -- from marginalized communities, from forgotten histories, or from everyday people making ordinary lives in a city that does not always make such living easy. The project is led by

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Elske Rosenfeld works and lives in Berlin and is currently enrolled in the PhD in Practice program at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna and a recipient of a DOC-Fellowship of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. Her work explores different methodologies – installations and video, writing and talks, workshops and events – to re-focus the diverse historical positions of criticality and dissidence within the different state socialisms of the former Eastern bloc and, in particular, the upheavals of 1989/1990. Using her own biographical experience as well as other materials and stories that often brush up against the dominant representations of those histories, her works aim at creating constantly reassembling communities of discussion and contestation through which the obscured political potentials of those histories might re-emerge.

Imre Szeman is Canada Research Chair of Cultural Studies at the University of Alberta. Recent publications include *Cultural Theory: An Anthology* (co-ed, 2010), *After Globalization* (co-author, 2011), and *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory* (co-ed, forthcoming 2012). His current project is a book on the cultural politics of oil and energy.

Adam Katz is a Ph.D. candidate in the Buffalo Poetics Program. His current interests include philosophy, experimental poetry, early Buddhism, and pedagogically transmitted inspiration.

Eleanor King presents installations and performances nationally and internationally, most notably at Nuit Blanche (TO), Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Eastern Edge Gallery (NL) and Galleri F15 in Norway. She received a BFA from NSCAD in 2001, and has participated in residencies at The Banff Centre, Atlantic Centre for the Arts (FL), New Adventures in Sound Art (TO), and CFAT (NS). Inspired by the everyday, Eleanor's work employs interdisciplinary strategies for site-specific installations. She is a current nominee on the Sobey Art Award long-list, teaches media arts at NSCAD University and is Director at Anna Leonowens Gallery in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Henry Adam Svec makes performance art, writes songs and fiction, and works on a PhD in Media Studies at the University of Western Ontario. He has presented work at Nuit Blanche (upcoming), FADO, 7a*11d, Rhubarb, Eastern Edge, and Sappyfest, and his most recent projects (*Folk Songs of Canada Now*, *The CFL Sessions*) combine folksong collecting and the mass-mediated hoax. His creative work has bled

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Aileen Burns is a curator and writer based between Derry and Berlin and is currently Co-Director of CCA Derry-Londonderry. She holds an MA in Modern Art: Critical and Curatorial Studies from Columbia University. Independently and collaboratively, Burns has curated projects for Bergen Kunsthall, Bergen; FormContent, London; InterAccess, Toronto; Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, Toronto; Overgaden, Copenhagen and Stiftelsen 3,14, Bergen. She has worked with artists such as Geoffrey Farmer, Luca Frei, Melanie Gilligan, Runo Lagomarsino, Olivia Plender, Superflex, and Alexandre Singh and held positions at the Whitney Museum, Miguel Abreu Gallery, Corkin Gallery, Mercer Union, and the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery. Her writing appears *Art in America*, *Art Papers*, *Canadian Art*, *C Magazine*, as well as numerous books and catalogues.

Johan Lundh is a curator, writer and translator, presently dividing his time between Derry-Londonderry and Berlin. Currently, he is Co-Director Centre for Contemporary Art Derry-Londonderry. Lundh holds a MFA and a post-graduate degree in curating from Konstfack in Stockholm. He is a member of the International Association of Curators of Contemporary Art, IKT, and has curated exhibitions and events for such organizations as Bergen Kunsthall, Bergen, Index, Stockholm, Konsthall C, Stockholm, Overgaden ICA, Copenhagen, and Western Front, Vancouver. In the past, he has worked with, for example, Bik Van der Pol, Runo Lagomarsino, Olivia Plender, Alexandre Singh, and Superflex. Lundh is a member of the International Association of Art Critics, AICA, and his writing and translations has appeared in publications such as *Art Lies*, *Art Papers*, *Fillip*, *Metropolis M*, *Mousse*, *Paletten*, *Yishu*, as well as exhibition catalogues and artists' books. In addition, he has lectured extensively at universities, residency programmes, and exhibiting venues across Europe and in North America.

Sarah Banting's research interests include the rhetoric and pragmatics of style and genre, the rhetoric of writing in the academic disciplines (especially literary criticism), and the literary narration of urban space. She completed her doctorate at UBC in 2010 and will take up a position as Assistant Professor at Mount Royal University in August, 2012. She is a city girl, an avid theatre-goer, and an active volunteer in performing arts administration. She loves to dance.

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Leanne Zacharias is a dynamic cellist, interdisciplinary collaborator and performance curator. Breaking trail in the post-classical genre, she collaborates with artists of all stripes; songwriters, composers, choreographers, writers, architects, visual and performance artists. Curator of the Music for Spaces project and leader of the Correction Line Ensemble, melding contemporary chamber music and narrative songwriting, she performs regularly with new music groups across North America and creates sound and performance installations internationally. Based in Manitoba, Dr. Zacharias is on faculty at the Brandon University School of Music.

Ashley Wong is a cultural worker, artist and researcher based in London, UK. She has a BFA in Digital Image/Sound and the Fine Arts from Concordia University in Montreal and an MA in Culture Industry at Goldsmiths University of London. She is co-founder of DOXA, an international research collective. Through an on-going project on ‘creative space’ she continues to organize discussion events, publish and participate in conferences internationally on community, art and the economy between UK and Hong Kong / China. Her work has been presented in Rencontre Internationale (Paris/Madrid/Berlin), HK/SZ Biennale of Urbanism and Architecture 2009 (Hong Kong), The European Congress on Aesthetics (Madrid) and This is Not a Gateway (London). www.doxacollective.org

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Margrit Talpalaru conducts research in cultural studies, with an emphasis on media, contemporary literature, and corporate capitalism. She is currently completing a manuscript titled *Capitalism Now: From Corporatism to Alternatives*, which relies on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in its examination of the nature of corporate capitalism through the lenses of corporate culture, media, literature, and non-fiction. Her most recent research project investigates the collusion of the increasingly popular phenomenon of charitable giving with corporate capitalism.

