

Thinking under Turbulence

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2nd floor

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Knowledge is not *per se* emancipatory. It is the art of thinking that transforms knowledge into social property endowed with an emancipatory potential. But where can *thinking* take place within today's accelerationist tendencies towards the accumulation of knowledge? What can the work of research do for our contemporary conditions, in terms of processes and platforms, so that we might speak through fragmented vocabularies, stay open to transformative long-term trajectories of production, including those that reach beyond the two-year duration of an MA programme to gestate? How might our transdisciplinary constellations, our crossing of time-zones and languages, our incomplete sets of knowledges between political and technological borders speak to one another, and thus, grapple with regimes of neo-liberalisation affecting labour, education and systems of care? What remains incalculable within a predominantly object-oriented cultural industrial regime? As a research-based study programme in the arts of Higher Education in Europe with its ongoing horizons towards doctoral research practices, we need to rethink the localisations of knowledge in relation to our entanglement with global infrastructures through questions such as: What knowledge? Whose knowledge? For what purposes? And how do we get there?

Le savoir n'est pas émancipateur en soi. C'est l'art de la pensée qui transforme le savoir en un attribut social, doté d'un potentiel émancipatoire. Mais quelle place l'action de penser peut-elle encore prendre, alors que la tendance est à l'accélérationnisme et à l'accumulation de savoirs? Que peut accomplir un travail de recherche au sein de nos conditions contemporaines? Peut-il fournir les processus et les plates-formes qui nous permettent de formuler une pensée malgré nos vocabulaires fragmentés, de rester ouverts aux processus de transformation à long-terme qui dépassent la durée d'un programme Master? Comment l'intersection entre nos constellations transdisciplinaires, nos fuseaux horaires, nos langues, nos lots de connaissances incomplets et limités par les frontières politiques ou technologiques, nous permet-elle de lutter contre les régimes du néolibéralisme qui affectent le travail, l'éducation et les systèmes d'entraide? Pouvons-nous encore échapper aux calculs d'une industrie culturelle principalement construite sur l'objet? En tant que Programme Master de Recherche en art, partie prenante de l'enseignement supérieur européen, et puisque notre horizon entrevoit les pratiques de recherche doctorale, il nous incombe de repenser les localisations du savoir et notre implication au sein d'infrastructures globales, notamment à travers les questions suivantes: de quel savoir s'agit-il? A qui ce savoir appartient-il? A quelles fins? Et comment y accéder?

This book is conceived as a working-journal. It brings together voices of closed seminars and public moments of the year-long Thinking under Turbulence: Geneva Colloquium which framed the 2015/16 transition of the CCC Research-Based Master Programme* of the Visual Arts Department at the Haute école d'art et de design, HEAD – Genève. The idea of the 'colloquium' departs from literally 'a speaking together', from *com-* 'together' + *-loquium* 'speaking'. A speaking together that articulates the relations between outside/inside the art academy. Therefore, the concept of the Geneva Colloquium does not propose the work of thinking to be a philosophical method alone for studying subject matter, but departs from a moment under conditions of turbulence, when knowledge is under pressure, that gives rise to the necessity to think, to think *differently*. Organised in chronological sequence, the eleven contributions of this book depart from recorded, transcribed and edited talks, conversations, interventions, discussions, debates, reflections, speculations and questions during closed seminars and public moments for articulating continuities and discontinuities between existing and new knowledges. All contributions are original material. The book, therefore, continues the thinking and learning processes of the CCC by means of editing and print-publishing. The book takes a pause with a reflection on the consequences from listening to students, colleagues, friends and guests over one year: What does thinking under turbulence produce, densify and urge us to take further?

Cette publication est conçue comme un journal de travail. Elle regroupe les voix qui ont nourri l'année de transition 2015/16 du Programme Master de Recherche CCC du Département Arts visuels de la Haute école d'art et de design – Genève (HEAD – Genève), lors de séminaires réservés aux étudiant-e-s et de sessions publiques de Thinking under Turbulence: Geneva Colloquium. L'idée du « colloquium » provient littéralement de l'action de « parler ensemble », de *com-* « ensemble » et *-loquium* « parler ». Un « parler ensemble » qui articule les relations entre l'extérieur et l'intérieur de l'école d'art. Par conséquent, le concept du Geneva Colloquium ne réduit pas l'action de penser à une simple méthode philosophique qui permettrait d'étudier un sujet donné, mais l'envisage plutôt comme le résultat d'un moment de turbulences qui engendre, puisque le savoir est sous pression, la nécessité de penser, de penser *différemment*. Chaque contribution de cette publication est issue de conférences, de conversations, d'interventions, de discussions, de débats, de réflexions, de spéculations et de questions enregistrées, transcrites et éditées. Les onze séquences du livre se fondent sur les séminaires fermés et les moments publics qui ont tenté d'articuler la continuité et la discontinuité entre savoirs existants et savoirs nouveaux. Toutes les contributions relèvent de matériel original et sont organisées par ordre chronologique. L'ouvrage poursuit les processus de réflexion et d'apprentissage du CCC par le biais de l'édition ; il se conclut par une réflexion sur les conséquences du travail réalisé en collaboration avec les étudiants, collègues, amis et invités : que produit et développe l'action de penser dans un contexte de turbulences, et comment nous incite-t-elle à aller plus loin ?

* CCC was founded in 2000 and processed towards [critical curatorial cross-cultural cybermedia] as the Research Master Programme of the Visual Arts Department at HEAD – Genève School of Art and Design. Since 2006 it has extended into postgraduate studies for a future practice-led Doctoral School. Since 2015, CCC continues to stand for research studies in critical, curatorial, and computational processes. The letter C welcomes further horizons for conceptual, communal, cybernetic, contemporary, constellational, compositional, conversational, cyclonopedic, correlational, cosmic, controversial, eolœniał or confessional investigations. We engage with the work on research methodologies to articulate processes, collaborations and projects with the objective of encouraging students collectively and individually to initiate new vocabularies for being in the world in the 21st century. Our pedagogy is built on the idea of transdisciplinarity that invites graduate students and postgraduate research affiliates of art and non-art backgrounds with different practices, geographies, languages, and work-approaches to process an original research proposal in the context of an art academy. The CCC operates through a bilingual (English/French) environment with a transcontinental body of students and faculty.

* Fondé en 2000, CCC [critical curatorial cross-cultural cybermedia] s'est transformé depuis en Programme Master de Recherche CCC du Département Arts visuels de la HEAD – Genève. Dès 2006, le Programme est étendu aux études postgrades dans le but de développer une future Ecole doctorale pratique. Depuis 2015, CCC continue de désigner un programme d'études et de recherche dans les processus critiques, curatoriaux et cybermedia. Néanmoins, la lettre C a élargi son horizon de recherche aux investigations conceptuelles, communes, cybernétiques, contemporaines, constellationnelles, compositionnelles, conversationnelles, cylconopédiques, corrélationnelles, cosmiques, controversées, eolœniał ou confessionnelles. Notre approche est centrée sur les méthodologies de recherche qui permettent aux étudiant-e-s d'articuler des processus, des collaborations et des projets. Notre objectif est de les encourager à initier, collectivement et individuellement, de nouveaux vocabulaires avec lesquels ils-elles pourront exprimer et situer leur être-au-monde dans le 21^e siècle. Notre pédagogie est fondée sur l'idée de la transdisciplinarité ; c'est pourquoi nous accueillons des étudiant-e-s et des chercheur-e-s postgrades provenant d'une pluralité de pratiques, d'approches, d'origines géographiques et linguistiques, issu-e-s de formations artistiques ou non, afin qu'ils-elles puissent développer des propositions de recherche originales au sein d'une école d'art. Le CCC opère dans un contexte bilingue (français/anglais) avec un contingent transcontinental, tant parmi les étudiant-e-s qu'au sein de l'équipe enseignante.

Loss

En réponse au séminaire Etudes Politiques
Pierre Hazan

Quels moyens le Programme Master de recherche d'une école d'art européenne peut-il développer, afin de rendre visibles l'exil, la migration et l'urgence politique ? Comment l'art peut-il associer la responsabilité civique aux aspirations poétiques ou esthétiques ? Comment rendre public le savoir exilé ? Comment le transformer en un lieu depuis lequel penser ensemble ?

Durant le séminaire Etudes Politiques, les étudiants ont formulé un certain nombre de questions qui portaient essentiellement sur l'enjeu des pratiques artistiques, dans le contexte de l'arrivée de centaines de milliers de réfugiés fuyant la Syrie en guerre. Ces questions découlaient notamment de la lecture du texte de Hannah Arendt, *Le déclin de l'Etat-nation et la fin des droits de l'homme*, écrit en 1951. Ce texte analyse « la façon dont les minorités ont été gouvernées après la Première Guerre mondiale par les structures de gouvernance comme la SDN, fait part du déplacement des populations dans les états européens et retrace la manière dont un climat fasciste et xénophobe a pu se construire en Europe.^{CEP} » L'essence du texte d'Hannah Arendt réside dans l'idée que la société contemporaine ne peut être pensée qu'à travers la figure de l'apatride. « Nous ne pouvons que constater une résonance avec la situation actuelle et la façon dont les différents discours politiques tentent de recréer des peurs similaires, en reproduisant ces mêmes schémas de tension à l'encontre des réfugiés.^{CEP} » Comment penser le mouvement des



La villa Khoury, Wadi Nisnas, Haïfa, construite en 1908, laissée en ruines depuis la guerre de 1948 et détruite au début des années 1960. Crédit : Ami Erev

réfugiés aujourd'hui, notamment la « place qu'aura cette population en Europe^{AB} », grâce aux outils proposés par Arendt ?

Le texte de Susan Sontag, *Devant la douleur des autres*, qui « analyse la photographie de guerre et la façon dont nous sommes affectés par les images distantes des conflits^{DC} », a conduit certains étudiants à s'interroger sur le fonctionnement des médias sociaux : « Sur mon mur Facebook, les réfugiés syriens sont personnifiés à travers leurs posts et l'action de *partager* une image^{DC} », souligne ainsi l'un d'eux. Les étudiants ont aussi questionné le rôle de l'art, de l'artiste et du spectateur, dans sa position de « citoyen coupable.^{CEP} » De quelle manière peuvent-ils contribuer au débat public autour du sujet du réfugié ?

CEP Charles-Elie Payré, 20.09.2015, Genève.
AB Aurélien Ballif, 20.09.2015, Genève.
DC Duke Choi, 20.09.2015, Genève.

Israël- Palestine : cinq jours comme les doigts d'une main

Pierre Hazan

Je me suis rendu en Israël et en Palestine du 12 au 17 mai 2016 afin de participer à une conférence. Les organisateurs n'avaient pas cru bon de m'avertir que la période serait chargée en commémorations à haute charge symbolique et politique ; visiblement, c'était pour eux de l'ordre de l'évidence. Mon intervention n'était nullement liée au conflit israélo-palestinien, bien qu'elle portait sur les questions mémorielles. Je l'avais intitulée *The Risky Business of Dealing with the Past*.

Le 12 mai, me voici donc arrivé à l'aéroport Ben Gourion à Tel Aviv. Je réalise seulement alors que c'est, en Israël, le Jour de l'Indépendance, *Yom Ha'atzmaout*. Cela fait 68 ans que le pays a été créé par une résolution des Nations Unies et par la force des armes. Le 15 mai, les Palestiniens commémorent, eux, la *Nakba*, le jour de « la Catastrophe », lorsque plus de 700'000 Palestiniens ont fui les combats ou ont été chassés durant la guerre menant à la création de l'Etat hébreu en 1948.

De l'aéroport, le taxi me conduit à l'hôtel sur la promenade de Tel Aviv, en bordure de mer. La foule est compacte. Des milliers de familles se sont rendues à la plage pour profiter de la journée de congé et du show de l'Armée de l'Air israélienne. Les drapeaux bleu et blanc sont partout : sur les balcons, les toits, les voitures et dans les mains des enfants. Une overdose de drapeaux. Le trafic est si dense que le chauffeur de taxi peste et klaxonne, comme si le surplus de bruit qu'il cause allait subitement fluidifier la circulation pour nous laisser passer, comme Moïse lorsque les eaux de la mer Rouge se sont ouvertes à lui. Las, je finis mon trajet à pied jusqu'à l'hôtel. J'y rencontre C., qui vient de postuler pour la grande école d'art israélienne, Bezalel.

Un rêve

Je l'écoute : « Avec mon *boy-friend* G., nous venons d'emménager dans une vieille et superbe maison arabe. Je suis trop heureuse », m'explique-t-elle avant de poursuivre : « Je

me suis rendue chez mes voisins, une famille palestinienne, pour leur offrir du café encore chaud. Ils m'ont poliment reçue, mais j'ai senti que le cœur n'y était pas. Peu à peu, je me suis aperçue que la cafetière et les tasses que j'avais prises dans mon nouvel appartement avaient été les leurs. Le premier étage où j'habitais désormais avait aussi été à eux. Gênée, embarrassée, j'ai pris congé rapidement et suis rentrée chez moi. J'ai attendu que G. revienne de son travail dans une start-up high-tech pour lui parler : « C'est le prix à payer pour vivre dans un quartier mixte, juif et arabe. Sinon, nous pouvons déménager au Nord de Tel Aviv, où il n'y a que des juifs. » J'ai parlé à ma mère, qui m'a lancé : « Qu'est-ce que je t'avais dit ! Ils ont dépossédé la population arabe. » C. poursuit son récit : « J'étais sur le point de crier quand, tout à coup, j'ai ouvert les yeux. Ce n'était qu'un rêve. Un rêve qui était directement lié à la journée de la veille qui m'avait tourneboulée. C'était la Journée du Souvenir pour les soldats morts au combat, les sirènes qui hurlent à onze heures du matin pendant deux longues minutes pour rappeler les guerres passées, puis la minute de silence, la population qui s'immobilise, le recueillement des familles dans les cimetières militaires, les drapeaux en berne... »

Le père de C. est né à Alexandrie avant de devoir partir, comme pratiquement un million de juifs vivant dans le monde arabe. Sa famille elle-aussi a abandonné son appartement, sa cafetière et ses tasses. La mère de C. est originaire d'Europe centrale et porte encore le souvenir d'une partie de la famille, tuée à Auschwitz.

Un narguilé doré

Le 14 mai, je fais ce que l'immense majorité des Israéliens et des Palestiniens ne peuvent pas faire. Avec C., munis de nos passeports européens, nous franchissons la frontière entre Israël et la Palestine. De la Porte de Damas à Jérusalem, nous prenons le bus 215 – 7.5 shekels par personne – pour

Ramallah, la capitale administrative de l'Autorité palestinienne. C'est samedi, la circulation est fluide et la frontière se passe sans la moindre difficulté. De Ramallah émane une douce quiétude, loin de la frénésie de Tel Aviv. La ville est couverte de posters, tous marqués du dessin d'une clef, symbole de la maison laissée « aux sionistes ». Ils annoncent la journée du lendemain, la commémoration de la *Nakba* – la fuite de 1948 et la quête continue pour un Etat – et son lot de discours, de slogans – « *With unity and resistance, we make the right of return achievable* » –, de rassemblements et de cortèges.

Dans une vitrine je distingue, parmi d'autres narguilés, un modèle de couleur dorée, en forme de kalachnikov. La guerre a infiltré le plaisir de la détente. Nous rencontrons Y. dans un café. Y. a 24 ans, a fait de brillantes études en Arkansas, parle le français et porte le nom de l'héroïne d'un livre écrit par Emile Habibi, *Les aventures extraordinaires de Sa'ïd le Peptimiste*, – une contraction entre l'optimiste et le pessimiste. Un merveilleux livre, dont je me rappelle l'humour désenchanté du héros confronté à l'absurdité quotidienne, un livre qui incite à l'espoir, surtout lorsqu'il n'y a plus rien à espérer – puisque les choses pourraient être encore pires. J'aime la réponse que fit l'auteur de ce livre, Emile Habibi, un Palestinien originaire de Haïfa et détenteur d'un passeport israélien, lorsqu'un journaliste essaya de le coincer entre ses origines palestiniennes et son passeport israélien : « Quand Israéliens et Palestiniens accepteront finalement de s'asseoir à la table des négociations, choisirez-vous de vous asseoir avec les Israéliens ou avec les Palestiniens ? » – « Je choisirai d'être à table », avait-il répondu.

Un poème

Y. nous emmène au musée de Mahmoud Darwich, au bout de *Tokyo street*, à l'architecture très belle et très sobre. J'imaginai que seules les rock-stars étaient encore célébrées ainsi aujourd'hui, avec des objets quasi-fétichisés.



Shisha-Kalachnikov vendue en magasin à Ramallah 270 shekels, 15 mai 2016. Crédit : Pierre Hazan



Peinture murale dans le centre-ville de Ramallah, 15 mai 2016. Crédit : Pierre Hazan

On y trouve le dernier *boarding pass* du poète palestinien, son stylo, sa table de travail, mais aussi, rédigé de sa belle écriture, le manuscrit original de la Déclaration d'indépendance palestinienne pour un Etat qui n'est encore qu'à moitié né. Il y a aussi la copie d'une plaque de rue à son nom dans le 6^e arrondissement de Paris, sur laquelle figure la phrase suivante: « Nous aussi, nous aimons la vie, quand nous en avons les moyens. » Je me souviens qu'Yitzhak Shamir, alors Premier ministre d'Israël, était monté à la tribune du Parlement, quatre mois après le déclenchement de la première Intifada en 1988, pour dénoncer le poème de Darwich, *Passants parmi les paroles passagères*: « L'expression exacte des objectifs recherchés par les bandes d'assassins organisés sous le paravent de l'Organisation de libération de la Palestine vient d'être donnée par l'un de leurs poètes, Mahmoud Darwich, soi-disant ministre de la Culture de l'OLP et dont on se demande à quel titre il s'est fait une réputation de modéré... », s'exclama-t-il. Même une grande partie de la gauche israélienne fut indignée par le poème, dont la dernière strophe fut interprétée par beaucoup d'Israéliens comme un appel à « jeter les Juifs à la mer ».

*Vous qui passez parmi les paroles passagères
il est temps que vous partiez
et que vous vous fixiez où bon vous semble
mais ne vous fixez pas parmi nous
Il est temps que vous partiez
que vous mouriez où bon vous semble
mais ne mourez pas parmi nous
Nous avons à faire dans notre terre
ici, nous avons le passé
la voix inaugurale de la vie
et nous y avons le présent, le présent et l'avenir
nous y avons l'ici-bas et l'au-delà
Alors, sortez de notre terre*

*de notre terre ferme, de notre mer
de notre blé, de notre sel, de notre blessure
de toute chose, sortez
des souvenirs de la mémoire
ô vous qui passez parmi les paroles passagères*

Une rencontre

Nous rencontrons aussi D., une fonctionnaire de l'Autorité palestinienne qui nous conduit au mémorial de Yasser Arafat, construit par le même architecte que le musée bâti en l'honneur de Mahmoud Darwich. Une fois encore, l'esthétique est très dépouillée. Je pense à ma rencontre avec Arafat dans les années 1980. C'était à Genève, à l'Hôtel InterContinental. Jeune journaliste, je m'y étais rendu avec le chef de la rubrique internationale du *Journal de Genève*. Le rendez-vous était fixé à 22 ou 23 heures. Nous avons patienté ensemble dans une chambre de l'hôtel jusqu'à une ou deux heures du matin. Puis, on nous informa que c'était notre tour. Nous nous sommes frayé un chemin à travers une quinzaine de gardes du corps massés devant le poste de télévision, tous hypnotisés par le match de football. Yasser Arafat nous reçut dans une vaste suite avec trois immenses canapés en L. Il y avait là des militants palestiniens, des femmes norvégiennes sympathisantes de la cause, des humanitaires, un diplomate. Puis vint notre tour. J'ai conservé le souvenir d'un tacticien aux propos – volontairement ? – obscurs. Il fut impossible d'en tirer une interview, tant ses propos étaient ambigus. Je ne sais si c'était son anglais ou si, par le flou de ses réponses, il tentait de faire l'impossible synthèse entre les multiples courants de l'OLP, et les pressions contradictoires qui s'exerçaient sur lui, provenant à la fois d'un monde arabe divisé et des pays occidentaux. D. coupe subitement le souvenir de cette rencontre avec le père du nationalisme palestinien en pointant le minaret bâti à côté du mémorial: « Yasser Arafat voulait être enterré à Jérusalem, mais c'était impossible. Alors

nous avons mis un laser dont la lumière atteignait la ville sainte. Mais les Israéliens nous l'ont fait éteindre.»

Une Peugeot blanche

J'ai envie d'entendre dans la bouche de D. comment sa famille de militants palestiniens était revenue en Cisjordanie avec la signature des accords d'Oslo en 1993, après des décennies d'exil passées en Syrie, en Algérie, en Tunisie et ailleurs. D. me raconte alors la Peugeot familiale blanche, le père au volant, la mère à côté, les trois adolescents surexcités à l'arrière : « C'était la folie. Nous rentrions chez nous. C'était l'impossible qui se réalisait. Nous sommes passés par l'Égypte, puis par Gaza, nous avons été arrêtés à des postes de contrôle israéliens et, enfin, nous approchions de Hébron. Je ne connaissais pratiquement pas mes grands-parents et mes cousins. J'étais assise entre mon frère et ma sœur à l'arrière de la Peugeot et nous étions en train de crier et de pleurer ... »

A ma demande, D. a réussi à mettre la main sur Khaled Jarrar. Ancien garde du corps d'Arafat, il est devenu un artiste au travail décapant. Il nous attend dans un café branché de Ramallah, son Mac sur la table. Derrière lui, le mur est couvert d'une immense photo de l'actrice égyptienne Soad Hosny, la Marilyn Monroe cairote, morte mystérieusement à Londres en 2001. Dans trois semaines, Khaled s'envolera pour l'université d'Arizona, où il passera deux ou trois ans « *on and off* ». J'avais vu sur Internet son travail *A hole in the wall* où, creusant un mur évoquant la séparation construite par les Israéliens au nom de « la lutte contre le terrorisme », il fait un orifice aux contours de la carte de la Palestine dont il rêve, gommant l'État d'Israël.

Destination Berlin

Khaled Jarrar nous montre un extrait de son dernier travail, un documentaire intitulé *Destination Berlin*. Tout commence par une petite annonce que Khaled lit dans le

journal signée par une certaine Nadra et qui évoque la terrible guerre en Syrie. Nadra, une Palestinienne originaire de Nazareth, réfugiée depuis des décennies dans le camp de Yarmouck en Syrie, a fui l'horreur de deux ans de siège, la brutale occupation par les combattants de Daech et les bombardements indiscriminés de l'armée syrienne... Elle tente de rejoindre l'Europe avec ses enfants, mais se trouve désespérée, sans argent. Touché par le désespoir qui transparaît dans l'annonce de Nadra, Khaled la contacte et ils conviennent tous deux de se retrouver en Grèce. Le temps passe, puis Khaled reçoit un message sur son portable : « Nous sommes en train de couler, nous allons mourir, les garde-côtes turcs et grecs ne font rien... » Nadra et ses enfants seront finalement sauvés *in extremis*. Ce message réveille la mémoire de Khaled : « Ma grand-mère venait de Haïfa. Moi, j'avais envie de jouer, pas d'entendre des histoires de la *Nakba*. Elle est morte quand j'avais six ans... » Khaled retrouve Nadra à Lesbos mais ne peut embarquer sur le bateau qui l'emmène vers le Pirée car lui, l'artiste palestinien, possède un visa pour l'Europe (!), au contraire des milliers de réfugiés syriens et irakiens qui se pressent sur l'île. Il rejoindra Nadra et ses enfants au Pirée, puis marchera avec eux jusqu'en Allemagne durant 32 jours, devenant un réfugié volontaire en dissimulant son identité et sa caméra.

Le lendemain de cette rencontre à Ramallah, trois jours après *Yom Ha'atzmaout* en Israël, c'est la journée de la *Nakba* en Palestine. Un jour plus tard, je donne ma conférence sur le *Risky Business of Dealing with the Past*. Dans l'*International New York Times*, je découvre que la chanson qui a gagné l'Eurovision cette année est ukrainienne, s'appelle 1944 et rappelle l'histoire des Tatars de Crimée déportés par Staline. Le Kremlin est furieux et insinue que les Américains ont œuvré en coulisse pour empêcher le chanteur russe, pourtant grand favori des *bookmakers* avec sa belle chanson d'amour, de gagner la compétition.

Le lendemain, la une du même journal présente le nouveau Musée Palestinien à Birzeit, construit comme «s'il sortait des entrailles de la Mère Palestine». Mais le musée est désespérément vide pour des raisons de querelles internes. Le président du musée, Mr. Qattan, confie au journaliste du *NYT* qu'il espère «que les futures expositions explorent le sens culturel du martyr et détermineront qui furent les premiers habitants en Palestine, pour autant que cette question ait un sens».

Anna

La matinée de mon retour en Suisse, je me fais exceptionnellement masser. Anna, originaire du Kazakhstan, parle avec un fort accent russe. Ses mains sont d'une rare vigueur et ont l'expérience, je l'imagine, d'haltérophiles russes ou bulgares d'au moins trois fois ma taille et mon poids. J'ai le sentiment d'être une vulgaire crêpe. Elle se met au-dessus de moi et me dit, dans un sabir anglo-russe, quelque chose que je finis par comprendre comme «*breathe deeply*», alors qu'elle tire mes bras vers l'arrière pour relever mon torse.

Je *breathe deeply* du mieux que je peux et me mets à penser à tous les gens que j'ai rencontrés durant ces cinq jours. Cinq jours comme autant de doigts d'une main. Je pense au rêve de C.; à L., qui a travaillé à la Cour suprême israélienne, avant de rejoindre un groupe de femmes aux *checkpoints* pour s'assurer que les soldats ne maltraitaient pas les Palestiniens et qui, aujourd'hui, lance un mouvement avec des Palestiniens et des Israéliens, car, dit-elle: «Je ne peux pas vivre sans espoir.» Je pense à Y., qui porte le nom de l'héroïne du *Peptimiste* et qui, trop libre dans une société palestinienne conservatrice, se demande bien comment elle pourra trouver un mari. Je pense aussi à M., cet Israélien engagé par MSF près de Calais, qui a porté secours à des Kurdes Irakiens désireux de passer en Angleterre et qui aimerait travailler dans l'humanitaire en Afrique; à C., qui apprend le français à un réfugié du Darfour, lequel a

traversé la moitié de l'Afrique pour arriver jusqu'en Israël, mais dont la destination finale est désormais le Québec; à G., un officier israélien qui, lors de la dernière guerre contre le Hezbollah, s'était pris à rêvasser en admirant la beauté d'un village du sud du Liban qu'il traversait de nuit avec ses hommes, avant d'être brutalement ramené à la réalité du conflit. Je pense aux rêves d'une adolescente palestinienne assise dans une Peugeot blanche, il y a 23 ans, et à ce que ses rêves sont devenus. Je pense encore à une vidéo qu'a réalisée Khaled à la frontière américano-mexicaine, près du mur destiné à empêcher l'immigration illégale aux Etats-Unis, dans laquelle on le voit découper une barre métallique de la clôture pour en faire une échelle, laquelle est désormais ancrée dans la terre mexicaine à 100 mètres de la frontière, pointée vers le ciel.

Ce texte constitue une forme de réponse indirecte aux questions des étudiants formulées durant le séminaire Etudes Politiques de Pierre Hazan les 21, 22 et 23 septembre 2015, auquel ont participé Gilad Ben-Nun, historien, Isabelle Benoit, curatrice, et Ilana Salama Ortar, artiste. Hazan, Ben-Nun, Benoit et Ortar ont présenté leur projet *Loss* qui retrace l'histoire de deux maisons, l'une au Caire, l'autre à Haïfa, toutes deux chargées d'histoire. Leurs occupants, juifs d'Egypte et Palestiniens de Haïfa, ont été respectivement chassés de leur terre natale, symboles de la disparition du cosmopolitisme levantin vaincu par la montée des nationalismes juif et arabe.

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When Matter Thinks

In conversation with the Theory Fiction seminar
Kodwo Eshun
Ursula Biemann

How are the entanglements between the inhuman and the human envisioned and narrated? What kind of sounds, images, and affects are produced by the multiscalar relations between the Earth, the world, and the planet? How do the temporal and spatial demands of planetary matter under conditions of anthropogenic violence modulate, mutate, and melt the form and the function of essayistic practice?

Thinking the social imaginary

Theory Fiction (Kodwo Eshun) Today we will be discussing the implications of the human-non-human symbiosis and anthropic inversion narrated through artistic practices. How do the scale and temporality of these forces change the form and functions of the kind of work we make? What happens to artmaking in the age of anthropogenic violence?

Ursula Biemann Climate change is no longer a distant hazard looming on the horizon. It is irrevocably changing the living, and equally importantly, the thinking conditions on the planet with a magnitude and velocity we can hardly grasp. This course into an unknown future forces us to fundamentally rethink the relationship between humans and the Earth that has been occluded by the gigantic technological effort required to draw the societies of the world together and make them global, albeit in uneven and inconclusive ways. In this arena, everything is arranged to facilitate human action, prompting a particular modality of narrating the world. Meanwhile, mobilised coevally by natural sciences and the humanities, an inspiring new body of art and writing is emerging which brings the Earth onto the main stage. Global warming brings turbulences into atmospheric and mental conditions, entwining the two like never before. In the midst of this undisciplined disturbance we are interpellated to simultaneously engage artistic and scientific paradigms and let this conversation infiltrate our imagination and



The Otolith Group, *The Radiant*, still, 2012.
Credit: The Otolith Group

practice. To think with and through art can unravel the role it might play in this process. The point I seek to establish here is that this post-human condition, where humanism is no longer the dominant premise, reconnects us to infinitely larger, untameable forces that animate extra-historical dimensions. This plunges us humans into deep time, into geological and climatic timescales. It comes as no surprise that in this endeavour, artists and theorists currently feel an urge to go back to the moment in history when science split off from other ways of thinking of the world and went on developing its own methodologies viewed from a distinct subject position. This bifurcation in the production of knowledge is presently undergoing a reevaluation. Solution-oriented thinking that seeks technical answers to human-caused problems is driving the economy these days. It simply is the dominant model for human-Earth relationships now. Through small but rapidly multiplying gestures, artists insert a range of other motivations and methodologies into the processes that are shaping conditions on Earth. In the light of the powerful means and effects afforded by industry, these efforts may seem irrelevant but they are

profoundly meaningful because such artistic research exposes operative paradigms and modes of thinking and acting with the material world that present alternatives to the economy- and technology-driven prescriptions.

TF (KE) What happens to art-making under the conditions of what Timothy Morton calls ‘hyperobjectivity’?

UB Art can provide a site of experimentation for forms of address that offer strategies for visual discoveries that are not restricted to scientific objectivity. With these works that I will discuss this morning, I pursue the artistic exploration of elementary resources like oil and water. I am looking at aesthetic and conceptual tools that allow us to transform these ideas. The video *Deep Weather* speaks of a moment of crisis. We live in a new reality that we cannot represent to ourselves. At the moment when we think that we are technically in control of landscape, energy, and resources it dawns on us that we are less in command than ever, given the unpredictable and nonlinear climate change that we face in the future. There is no control. There is only the fluid circulation of what humans do and how nature responds. And how nature responds is not always local. Through the intervention in fragile local ecosystems and biospheres, an imbalance is happening at a long distance from the site affected. We could say that this is part of the planetary condition. The times call for a recalibration of our senses that take such remote causalities into consideration. So we need to find aesthetic means to communicate these remote causalities in a way that reaches the social imaginary, not just the rational mind. I don’t think we just need more data and more transformation of data into visualisation. We need something that reaches the social imaginary, so that people grasp the scale of transformation we’re in for.

TF (KE) The social imaginary is not just a question of visualising data. It involves processes that we have traditionally

used science to describe but narrated with affective and emotional vocabularies. The social imaginary can be understood as the affective dimension that emerges from the encounter with new conditions, such as remote causality, in which a cause in one place has an effect in a different place out of all proportion to its initial cause. You can have a scientific explanation for causality but you also need to have an explanation that speaks to the confusion that emerges from loss of control and the confounding experiences of non-locality and remote and field causality. The assembly of a social imaginary speaks to those conditions.

UB This is distinct from individual imagination: here there is a feedback loop built in that says: 'I am proposing something that triggers imagination. But I have to see how society starts working with it and how they throw it back at us.' That's the beginning of a process.

Doreen Mende It would be helpful to also understand the social imaginary in its political and spatial dimensions. The social imaginary is something that, for example, has been constitutive for movements of self-organisation vis-à-vis systems of state control. But the social imaginary we are speaking about here is one that is dispersed geographically and spatially. That also says something about who we are in this formulation which exceeds the human understanding or the understanding of subjectivation as a human entity.

UB Brian Holmes wrote about the social imaginary and how it operates, about social movements and the artistic side of social movements. Many of these processes are increasingly abstract. A lot of my work has to do with trying to embody and localise these phenomena. In the conclusion of *Deep Weather* when people are drowning in the waters of Bangladesh, the voiceover declares: 'It's like living in a new condition when water has become the territory of citizenship.' Land will be underwater, citizens

will have lost their relation to the land and we have to figure out a new legal system to accommodate this part of humanity.

Theory Fiction (Duke Choi) I'm wondering about this uncertainty of land, what it's producing in the bodies of people living in those environments. In Los Angeles, we have this paranoia with earthquakes. Also, some people are afraid of nuclear energy. What do you feel about this uncertainty of the human? Is our role to direct this or just let it happen? Is there a way we could curate this?

UB It's part of what it means to be human these days. There is this illusion humans have of thinking that we can control all these things. Maybe that is what you need to let go of. We're not something on the outside that can control everything. We are part of it.

Theory Fiction (Mandarava Bricaire) I always have a problem with producing beauty out of something very tragic. It's the problem with using critique in art: finding a way to be critical without distracting the viewer with beauty, because we all know how controversial the idea of beauty and the sublime is.

Thinking the hyperobject

UB Art can do something more than just describing the tragedy of something. I'm using epic images to speak about the immensity of things. I want to pick up again on this idea of climate change. Timothy Morton speaks of global warming as a 'hyperobject'. Maybe I could read some lines from the very good introduction of his book *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of*

the World called ‘A Quake in Being’: ‘Hyperobjects are things that are massively distributed in time and space, relative to humans.’ – ‘A hyperobject could be a black hole, the Lago Agrio oil field in Ecuador, the Florida Everglades, a biosphere, the solar system, the sum total of all nuclear materials on Earth, or just plutonium or uranium, or could be the very long-lasting product of direct human infrastructure such as styrofoam or plastic bags, or the sum of all machines of capitalism. Hyperobjects are then hyper in relation to some other entity, whether they are directly manufactured by humans or not.’ Hyperobjects are very large, diffused objects that are permanently present but not localised in a material sense. He says: ‘Heavy rain is simply a local manifestation of some vast entity that I’m unable to see directly.’ We cannot perceive the hyperobject as a whole. All we ever see are its footprints. Global warming occurs in much vaster temporalities, out of the shorter human time frames of perception. And that is how it withdraws from our ability to see and sense it. From our mortal earthbound standpoint, the phenomena is partially eclipsed. They are gaps in our cognition that need to be bridged. I think they function a bit like what Reza Negarestani calls ‘plot holes’. Morton states that with the impact of hyperobjects, Earth ‘demands a geophilosophy that does not think in terms of human events and human significance only.’ – ‘These entities cause us to reflect on our very place on Earth and in the cosmos’.

Morton argues: ‘Perhaps this is the most fundamental issue: hyperobjects seem to force something on us, something that affects some core ideas of what it means to exist, what Earth is, what society is.’ – ‘Outer space is a figment of our imagination: we are always inside an object.’ – ‘Hyperobjects are time-stretched to such a vast extent that they become almost impossible to hold in mind.’ There are lots of different temporalities

that are happening simultaneously. Video is a time-based media, so I am muddling some of these different temporalities to bring them together.

Theory Fiction (Camilla Paolino) A computing system could be a hyperobject. Even though it has been conceived by the human mind, it can assume the dimensions of an entity that is not graspable – that escapes human perception. I’m thinking of the Internet. Among other algorithmic systems, let’s take Google. It could be a hyperobject. Even if we know how, when, by whom it was created and how it works, it is hard to envision how it wraps up the world and the world of communication. I imagine the network as a sort of outer shell that envelops the world, but it’s paradoxically matter too complex and huge to think of, even though conceived by the human mind.

TF (DC) What about Lake Baikal, in Russia, which is the deepest lake in the world?

UB But it’s localised; it’s not diffused.

Theory Fiction (Raphaëlle Mueller) So that means that an artwork could not be a hyperobject?

Theory Fiction (Tina Wetchy) We could maybe think of hyperobjects as objects that are not vulnerable to destruction. The complexity is something that has been constructed. But for those who operate in such areas it’s easy to destroy because it’s material, not just clouds.

UB Hyperobjects are agents, and that sort of agency cannot be controlled. Of course, you can say that the financial market is material and infrastructural, but it also has an enormous impact on the moods of the economy and it enters all kinds of invisible dynamics.

TF (CP) If you think of trade markets, capitalism, any ideological, political, socio-economical system, when they kick in, even though they have been generated by someone, they eventually escape control. This is because they enter social structures in such a deep and pervasive way that challenging them would be like shaking the very



Ursula Biemann, *Subatlantic*, still, 2015.
Credit: Ursula Biemann

foundations of existence. For a generation that has been growing up in a world like this, it is almost impossible to imagine something else.

TF (DC) Could we reverse the perspective that the hyperobject is in relation to humans? What if we actually consider that humans are hyperobjects?

UB For worms, we probably are. A hyperobject is never an absolute entity, hyperobjects are always understood in relation to something else. I think that it is important for artists to make hyperobjects somewhat accessible, to think of some entry point into the hyperobject rather than trying to basically describe it, which is impossible. What I propose with *Deep Weather* is to bring these opposite sides of the planet that are cosmos-related onto the same visual plane. Through the voiceover, we enter the atmosphere, because the atmosphere is where the disaster is living. I'm looking at the world as a closed system. Everything happens within.

DM The way I understand you is that there is no more distinction between an outside and an inside. There is an unimaginably and endlessly open system.

UB Well, the hyperobject is not simply a system. The hyperobject I'm speaking about is the atmospheric chemistry or global warming. If I had chosen to say that the planet is a hyperobject, which is definitely the case, I would think and talk about it very differently. I would not approach it as a closed system. Here I'm speaking about the atmospheric chemistry as a hyperobject that connects these moments. We need to start grasping these causal relations, and that is the specific assignment I gave myself for this video.

Thinking theoretical fiction

TF (KE) In Reza Negarestani's *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials*, the concept of the 'narration lube' is proposed by Negarestani to understand oil as a substance that mobilises narratives that move by way of scales and materials in motion. Oil is what connects one narration to another. All the narrations of the Earth can be grasped through this one material. The fictional relic of the Cross of Akht discovered by the fictional archaeologist Hamid Parsani deploys this capacity for narration in the form of numerical diagrams.

Theory Fiction (Diego Orihuela) This kind of device is actually common in many cultures, from an anthropological, sociological or archaeological viewpoint. Here is a device which works with symbolism, which every culture has. Here is an activator, which in this case is organic and is

petroleum. In other cultures, it could be blood, at least for the Incas.

DM If there is some kind of ceremony to activate this device, a space and time that are specific to it, if people are designated to manipulate it, how do concepts of private and public come into play?

TF (KE) *Cyclonopedia* develops an elaborate ceremony through which this device and this matter speak and take on agencies without being subjects. We can find these kinds of symbolisms and archaeologies in every culture and every religion. What if this symbolism works at a planetary level? Let's take Incan symbolism: what if it functions for the planet regardless of whether you have any knowledge of Incan symbolism? In Ursula and Paulo Tavares' video *Forest Law*, the voiceover states: 'The forest lives and thinks. We humans are not the only ones who interpret the world; all living beings do. They continuously interpret and represent the world around them. Life is semiotic.' This text is inspired by the writings of the anthropologist Eduardo Kohn who explores the semiotic dynamics of the Runa world in the Amazonian cloud forest in *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human*. In a related but distinct way, *Cyclonopedia* explores the semiotic and numerical dynamics of an ancient Persian relic whose implications are planetary in their scale.

TF (DO) The Mayans were not saying that the world would end just for Mexico or Central America. When ancient cultures create a device, they have a completely self-centred view of their culture. If they are isolated they represent themselves as humankind and coin their own language as 'the language of humans' because they believe themselves to be the only humans.

UB The Mayans were not saying that the world is coming to an end. Rather, the end of their calendar coincides with the end of a certain concept of the measuring of time.

A new form of sensing, thinking, and speaking about time is needed. What this calendar is proposing is the agency that it is generating through that artefact. It is occurring now and we're implicated in it. There is a similarity with the Cross of Akht.

TF (KE) The Cross of Akht is an archaic device that is intervening in a contemporary condition. Part of the fiction of *Cyclonopedia* is that this ancient device can be interpreted as a narrative device that operates in a present that exceeds its excavation site in Northern Iran.

TF (DO) In the case of an element such as oil, I understand the fiction of the device working with this narrative lubricant, and it's important now because everybody in the world is affected in some way. But if we do some genealogy, oil is a source of energy coming from the 19th century. Before, the narration could have been the same, but using gold. It depends on the epoch.

TF (KE) As we proceed into *Cyclonopedia* we will see that not only oil speaks. Gas speaks. Wind speaks. Dust speaks in languages that require translation and interpretation. These materials are entities that have the capacity to make things happen in the world. This capacity is envisioned as a type of sentience. It is this capacity that numbers enact. *Cyclonopedia* is an encyclopedia for enumerating different types of sentience and agency that operate without being subjects.

DM This is about figuring out a possibility to really grasp the complexity of how the figure of oil, this kind of earthly substance, can be thought of as a point of departure. I think *Cyclonopedia* is proposing a possible way into the complexity. To politicise oil. To historicise oil from a contemporary perspective. To find a way to articulate the relationship between the human and the non-human.

TF (TW) Mankind is not able to understand by itself what is happening. It always imagines that there will be a magical device that will give it the answer. I think there is a

strong post-colonial context to this book. Because, as a matter of fact, the answer to the plot holes of the planet emerge from a cross, from a device hidden in the Middle East, in Iran, which, when the book was written, was still under embargo from Western countries. As a matter of fact, oil, which is plentiful in Iranian oil fields, is the very material that conveys the information of the world. *Cyclonopedia* is a kind of counter-attack. It's like saying: 'You guys don't know anything; we hold the answer, the power is us.'

TF (KE)

In 2008, when *Cyclonopedia* was published, the sanctions enforced against Iran by the USA and other countries included blocking Iran's trade in oil in order to freeze its financial liquidity. Oil functions economically and militarily; this is what the news tells us. *Cyclonopedia* invents several other kinds of liquidity. Negarestani mobilises oil as a theoretical fiction that anticipates the moment we are living through now in which oil and other economic assets are about to be unfrozen. This moment is the era of the forthcoming Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in which Iran agrees to halt and dismantle its nuclear programme in return for the termination of the United States sanctions programme. At that point, the world in which *Cyclonopedia* intervenes will change. Could we say that the freezing of Iran's oil entailed the freezing of oil as a medium of the social imaginary? In *Cyclonopedia*, oil lubricates the divide between theory and fiction, political theory and pulp horror. We know that economic sanctions have effects whose implications exceed the global finance market. This lubrication seeps from theory into fiction and dissolves literature. It includes the book that we are reading. To read *Cyclonopedia* is to find oneself in a relation of complicity with its contents and its concepts. Oil, numbers, and gases are sentient entities. So is writing. And reading.

The contribution is a result of the Theory Fiction seminar by Kodwo Eshun on September 28-30, 2015 with Ursula Biemann. Editing by Tina Wetchy.

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Unmaster Class: Committees of Decolonisation

In response to the Curatorial seminar and Pool CH

Nabil Ahmed

farid rakun (ruangrupa)

Camilla Paolino

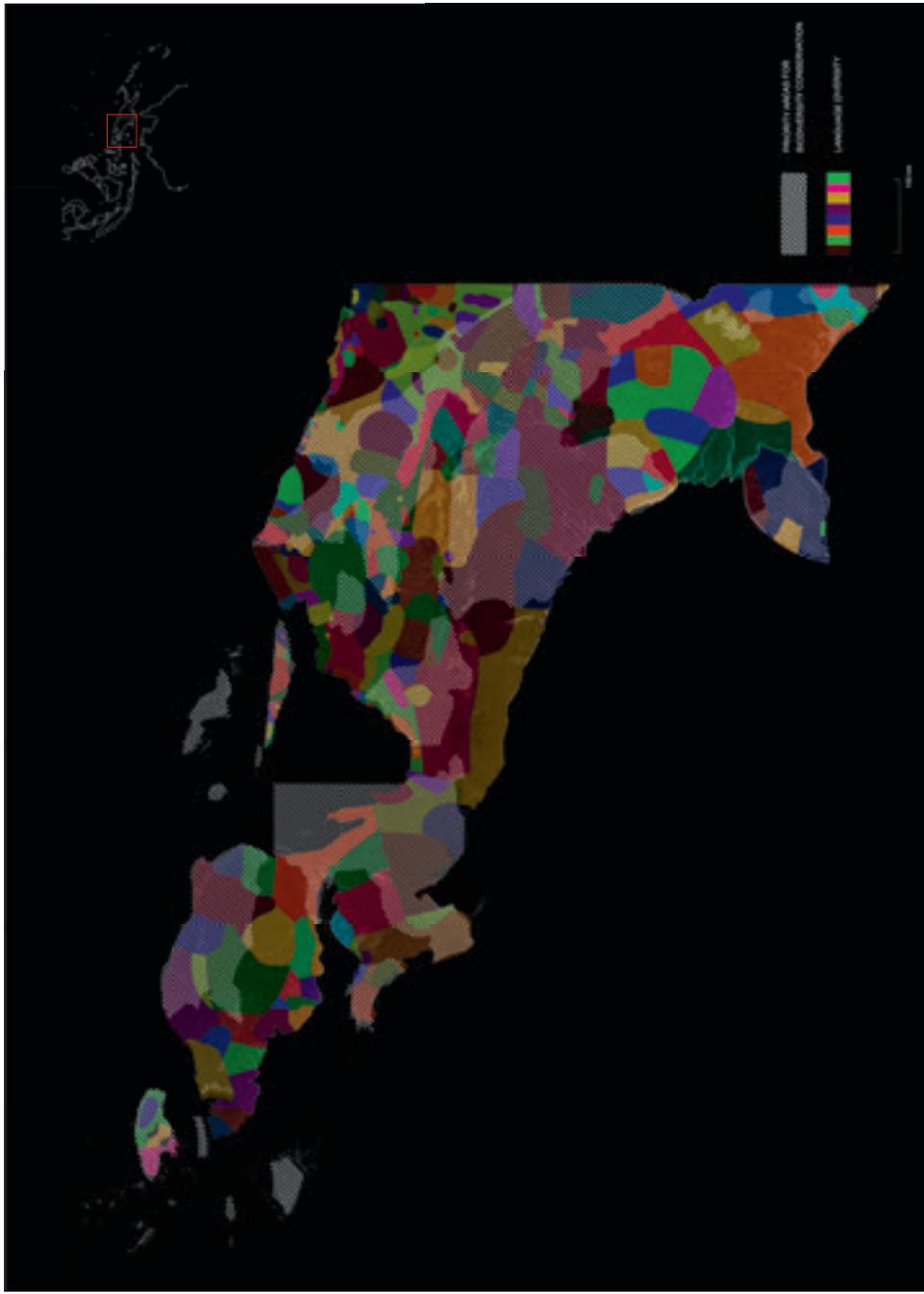
Carolin Kohl

How can we imagine a weakening United Nations in relation to independence struggles? What kind of vocabulary do we need in order to ‘unmaster’ the United Nation’s definition of sovereignty and to analyse globally-networked environmental-material histories through self-organised means? How is it possible for a group of students that gather in Geneva in an art academy to learn to understand the entanglement between ‘non-self-governing territories’ and Switzerland – Geneva, in particular – as a set of global infrastructures?

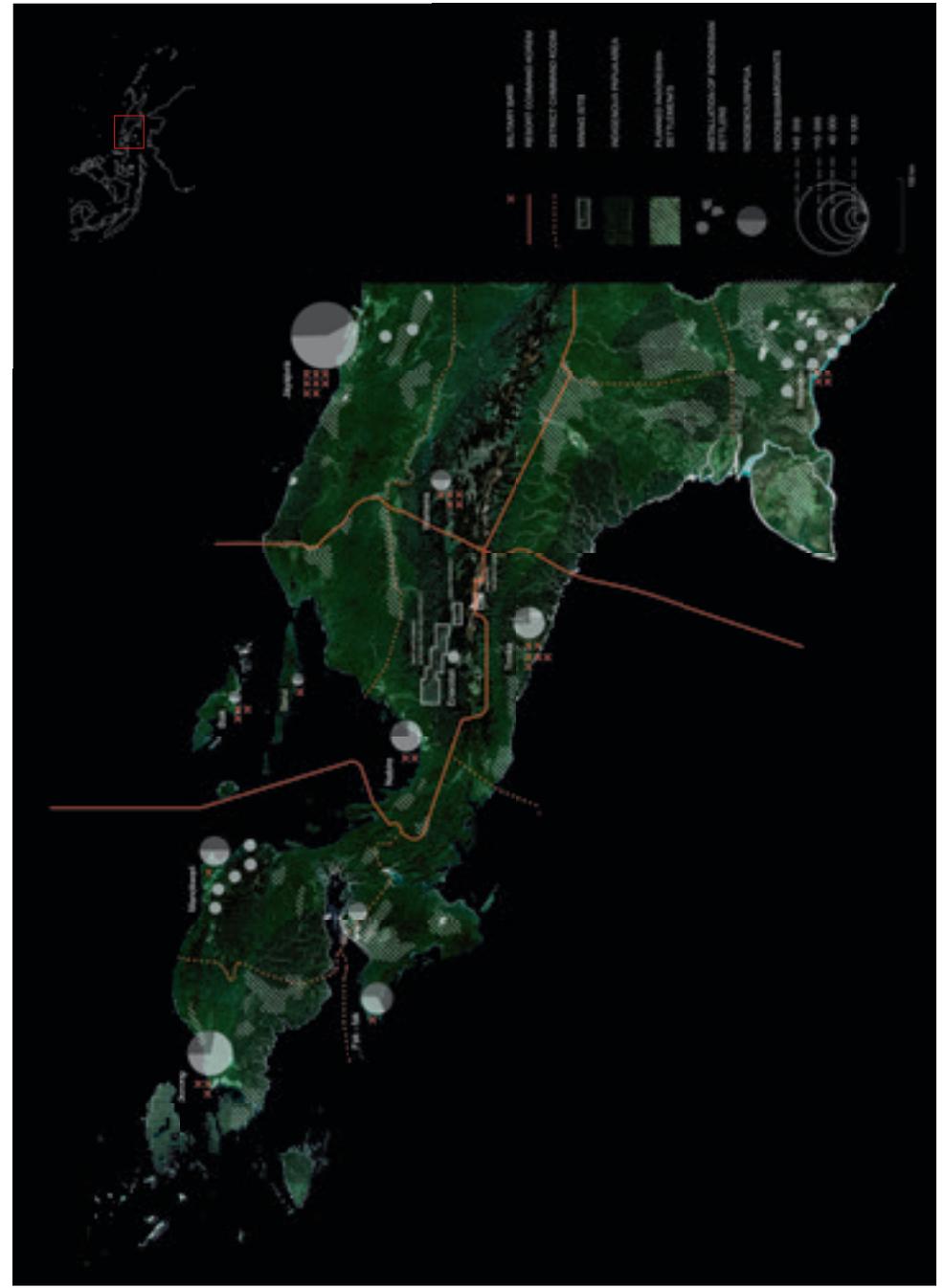
Military, Civilian, and Ecological Occupation of West Papua

Nabil Ahmed

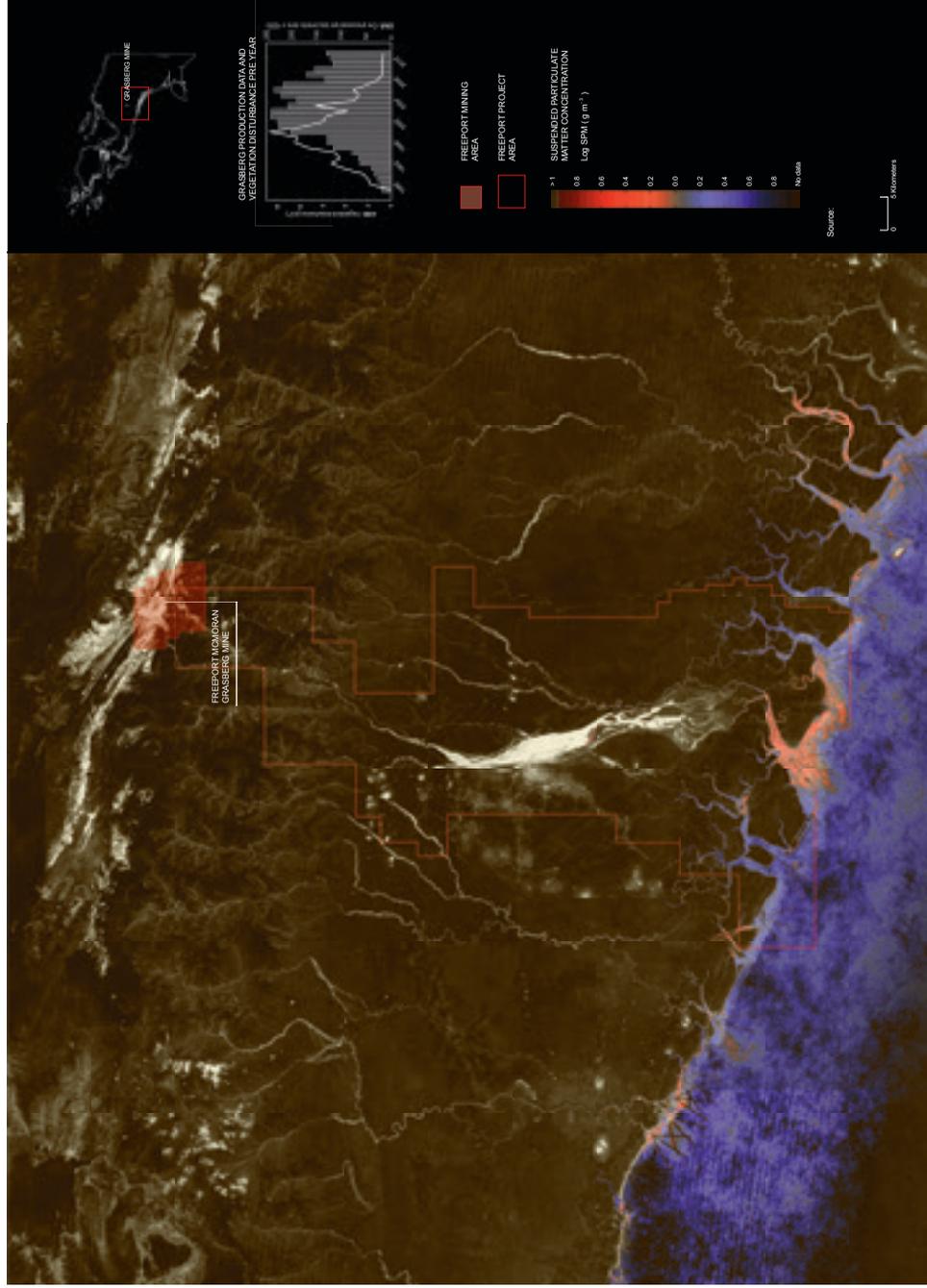
The spatially diffused and temporally protracted nature of contemporary environmental crises – such as climate change and resource scarcity, conflict ecologies, and migration – poses challenges for their narration, representation, and presentation as evidence at a planetary scale. This cartographic and photo-based essay explores a long term geopolitical investigation of ecocide and environmental self-determination in West Papua, a militarised territory on the edge of the Pacific Ring of Fire. Tracing crucial historical moments, difficult definitions, and competing accounts of the prolonged conflict offer a critical view of the decolonisation process. A history of military occupation is traced along the spatial transformation of the Papuan landscape. Industrial mining at the Grasberg mine has resulted in a durational, ‘out of sight’ environmental disaster in West Papua. The research shows how forensic architecture, using remote sensing, mapping and modelling can contribute to evidencing environmental crimes. Given that Papuans have had little control of their political future and natural resources, this research addresses the challenges of evidencing and articulating contemporary environmental self-determination from multiple perspectives.



3 Language Diversity and Biodiversity. Map, 2016. Nabil Ahmed and Olga Lucko



4 A Military and Civilian Occupation. Map, 2016. Nabil Ahmed and Olga Lucko



5 Grasberg Mine Contamination Zone. Map based on remote sensing analysis using LANDSAT satellite (1984-2014) by Mike Alonzo, 2016. Nabil Ahmed, Mike Alonzo, Jamon Van Den Hoek and Olga Lucko.

1 Ring of Fire. Map, 2016. Nabil Ahmed and Olga Lucko
 The Indonesian archipelago lies on the northwestern edge of the Ring of Fire, the site of immense seismic activity, earthquakes and volcanoes along the edges and under the Pacific Ocean. Shaped rather like a giant horseshoe of 40 000 km, the majority of the Earth's volcanoes sit along its mantle from the southern tip of South America, the western coast of North America, across the Bering Strait, through Japan, Indonesia, and into New Zealand. A geological analogue of the actual shoreline of the Pacific, the Ring of Fire is a shoreline of magma that forms a spatial diagram for this research to document conflict, capitalism, and environmental change along its fault lines.
 Formations of ore bodies are bound up with the volcanic and seismic belts in the same global pattern of plate tectonics. The New Guinea mobile belt, 50 to 100 km wide and 1600 km long, is an awesome projection of tectonic forces and a mineral frontier.

2 Transnational Mineral Grab. Map, 2016.
 Nabil Ahmed and Olga Lucko
 The forests, mountains, mangroves, and sea in West Papua, as part of sovereign Indonesian territory, are bound up with a global market for cheap minerals, oil, gas, and timber. Papua and Maluku are designated as regions for mining, plantations, fisheries, and forestry. Many transnational companies are operating along the ridge extension of the Ring of Fire. The tropical rainforests in the Indonesian archipelago are part of the equatorial 'green belt' that sustains the planet. Systematic land-grabbing and deforestation are common practices. Reportedly 2 064 698 hectares of land has been appropriated for palm oil plantations alone, while over the last ten years Papua has officially lost nearly five million hectares of forest.

3 Language Diversity and Biodiversity. Map, 2016. Nabil Ahmed and Olga Lucko
 West Papua, the western half of the island of New Guinea, is part of the tropical rainforest belt along with the Amazon and the Congo Basin. Its forests are some of the most biodiverse in the tropical Pacific region with over 100 000 species found nowhere else on earth. The biodiversity and species endemism is interwoven with language diversity. One fifth of the world's languages are spoken here. It is a mosaic of life where the human species is one among many. A high altitudinal range allows for a wide array of terrestrial ecosystems from tropical alpine to mangrove. Mountains, rivers, and valleys act as biological barriers for the migration of humans, plants, and animals.

4 A Military and Civilian Occupation. Map, 2016.
 Nabil Ahmed and Olga Lucko
 West Papuans endure the crushing incremental violence of high infant mortality, the spread of HIV/AIDS, and internal displacement resulting from the government's *Transmigrasi* (Transmigration) programme set up in the 1980s to move the poor from Bali and Java to Papua. The Indonesian government can boast that there has been an increase in the population in Papua, however, activists have pointed out to me that the Papuan Indigenous population has steadily decreased. Comparison is made to Papua New Guinea, across the border, where the Indigenous population has only increased during the same period.

5 Grasberg Mine Contamination Zone. Map based on remote sensing analysis using LANDSAT satellite (1984-2014) by Mike Alonzo, 2016. Nabil Ahmed, Mike Alonzo, Jamon Van Den Hoek and Olga Lucko
 Freeport, which has been known to fund the Indonesian military, uses a 293 000 hectare area including the Otomina and Ajkwa River to the Aratura Sea in effect as a geotechnical system for falling deposition. The journey for the toxic waste begins from the mine located over 4000 km above sea level through its ore-processing centre down to the lowland estuaries and a diverse, forested coastal zone of mangroves, tropical and cloud forests, and sago palm. This collaborative research with geographers at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center takes an ecological perspective towards developing novel techniques for detecting heavy metal contamination in aggregated forests, riparian and coastal seas using remote sensing for dense, cloud-covered, tropical regions in the Southern Hemisphere.



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- 1 Asia-Africa conference hall, Bandung, 2013. Credit: Nabil Ahmed
"The Asia-Africa conference, in the context of its expressed attitude on the abolition of colonialism, supported the position of Indonesia in the case of West Irian based on the relevant agreements between Indonesia and the Netherlands." Final Communiqué, Asia-Africa Conference, 1952.
- 2 Morning star flag, date unknown, image courtesy of TAPOL Archive, London
Indigenous Papuans have forged a national identity in response to Indonesian occupation symbolised by their flag, the Morning Star, first raised in 1961. The raising of the Morning Star flag remains illegal under Indonesian law. Papuans have faced violent reprisal from the state over flag raising including massacres such as the 1998 Blak massacre.

- 3 UNTEA stamp, 1962. Credit: Nabil Ahmed
The UNTEA (United Nations Temporary Executive Authority) acronym overprinted on existing Dutch New Guinea stamps. In 1962, West Irian was declared the first UN protectorate in order to appease a territorial dispute between the Dutch state and its former colony, the newly formed Republic of Indonesia.
- 4 Radio operator, 1971. Credit: PACE Archive, Utrecht
- 5 Telegrapher, 1961. Credit: PACE Archive, Utrecht
- 6 OPM Guerrillas posing on the beach, place unknown, 1987. Image courtesy of TAPOL Archive, London



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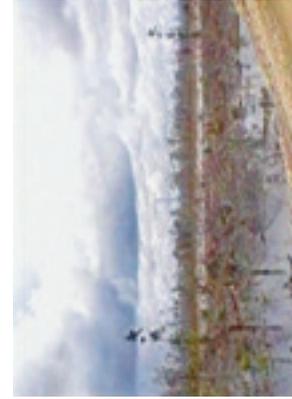
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- 7 Visit to Wamena, West Papua by Ibu Tien, wife of President Suharto of Indonesia to mark the official beginning of Operation Koteka, 1972. Credit: Papua Heritage Foundation
- 8 Transmigration settlements in Fakfak, West Papua. Image courtesy of TAPOL Archive, London
- 9 Grasberg mine, West Papua, Indonesia, London. Image courtesy of TAPOL Archive, London. Grasberg mine in West Papua contains the world's largest known deposit of gold. It constitutes the world's third largest open-pit copper mine reserves. It is the cheapest copper in the world. Operated by PT Freeport Indonesia, it dumps vast amounts of waste as by-product into the regional ecology. In contemporary Indonesia, a stark example of an unfolding state crime is its complicity in the poisoning of an occupied territory.

- 10 A sign warning drivers in Grasberg mine, 1992. Image courtesy of TAPOL Archive, London
- 11 Contaminated landscape. Stills from Small World Productions *In the Stomach of the Dragon* showing Aijkwa river. Video, 40 minutes, 1995.
- 12 United Liberation Movement for West Papua, 2015. Photo: Octavianus Mote. In a historic gathering of West Papuan leaders in Vanuatu in 2014, different factions of the independence movement have united to form a new body called the 'United Liberation Movement for West Papua' (ULMWP). The cartographic research is partially developed with United Liberation Movement for West Papua, the horizon of the right of Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination.

Pe-nongkrong-an*

‘Bahwa sesungguhnya kemerdekaan itu ialah hak segala bangsa dan oleh sebab itu, maka penjajahan diatas dunia harus dihapuskan karena tidak sesuai dengan perike-manusiaan dan perikeadilan.’ – Pembukaan UUD 1945 Republik Indonesia

‘Whereas independence is a genuine right of all nations and any form of alien occupation should thus be erased from the earth as not in conformity with humanity and justice.’ – Preamble of 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, translated by Matthew Hanzel

farid rakun (fr) So, here we are... Welcome to Gudang Sarinah Ekosistem (GSE), ruangrupa’s new place! We are sharing the space with Forum Lenteng, Serrum, OK. Video, Jakarta 32C, and Grafis Huru-Hara. Camilla, you have also moved and changed the method of your practice a couple of times, no?

Camilla Paolino (CP) I have been transforming my own working conditions and the environment in which I have decided to operate, by choosing to engage with a collective artistic and curatorial practice rather than working individually. This first shift occurred in December 2014, when together with three friends of mine I co-founded the collective you know who and began to implement a collaborative *modus operandi* in my practice. And yes, we could say that it also became a methodology, eventually. The second shift is something we underwent all together over the Spring of 2015, as we gained a residency at

TOPIC – a new-born independent art space in Geneva where we still situate our thinking and practice today. At that time, in search of ways to make our activity sustainable in such an expensive city, you know who turned into a non-profit association – a necessary move to make in order to have access to public grants. On one side, the adoption of a legal status entailed the legitimation and establishment of you know who’s existence, we could say, while on the other, it led to a substantial structural transformation within the collective itself.

On transACTION, Sonsbeek 2016 and Neo- colonialism

Carolin Kohl (CK) What do you think will be the consequences of ruangrupa moving to Gudang Sarinah Ekosistem? Will this change ruangrupa’s working method? Why ‘ecosystem’?

fr We stole the understanding from Arts Collaboratory, a network we are a part of. It started as a funding network, initiated by Hivos and DOEN from the Netherlands, which consists of twenty-two different organisations from the Global South. With austerity measures, they could not sustain this funding anymore, and we all thought that

it's not fair that we should stop the network when the funding stops. It just underlined the neo-colonial part of the global funding for art and cultural scenes. It makes clear the new dependency. The term 'ecosystem' tries to change that – making clear that Arts Collaboratory is a network that has other resources besides money, so that other transactions can occur. 'Ecosystem' also refers to something bigger. Now, when we say 'ruan-grupa', it doesn't only consist of the same people, it now includes a bigger network – namely the people we are occupying the space together with. The boundary of this is, of course, unclear.

CP What are the requirements you must fulfil and the consequences you face when applying for foreign grants?

fr Everywhere, funding is drying up and in the case of Indonesia, we've seen how unhealthy NGO-style funding is. There have been initiatives (not exclusively cultural, but also legal and environmental) doing good works, but were forced to close down because of the current funding trends and moods. This is imperialistic for us. Foreign grants have helped us, but there needs to be a different structure. The proposal-reporting mechanism has forced a top-down control system down our throats. There are other ways of dealing with these funding bodies. They should be partners, not police officers. In that sense, we consider GSE a way out, as we are putting the question of economy right in the middle of our practice now – no longer just playing a supportive role. We see our programs – some of which have been developed over ten years, like OK. Video Biennale or Akumassa – clearly as cultural capital. How to turn them into other forms of capital and install sustainabilities into them, instead of dependencies as the current prevailing model does, is our biggest homework.

CK You are increasingly working outside of Indonesia. The latest example being Sonsbeek 2016, for which you



'Committee of Naming/Renaming' of Unmaster Class: Committees of Decolonisation, research diagram, CCC, Geneva, October 29, 2015. Credit: Eric Philippoz

chose the theme of *transACTION*. 'Unfolding' seems to be an important issue for you, as can be seen in the *transACTION* logo for Sonsbeek. What does 'unfolding' mean to you? How does it relate to 'transaction'?

fr We have been focusing on transactions and their different modes of operation for quite a while, since 2007 maybe. That's why we hold regular markets up until now, from 'holy' markets during Ramadan and turning them into 'lonely' ones; we like the format so much we wanted to continue holding them past the holy month! You need to understand our works outside of Indonesia as a continuation of what we are doing in Jakarta. What could our involvement in certain structures afford us to do locally? That is our main question all the time. If we cannot find an answer to that, we aren't interested. Sonsbeek'16: *transACTION* is a good example; we debated a lot before we sent in our proposal after we knew we were listed as a possible curatorial team. It was a heated one, as a lot of us saw it as a distraction from our own focus, here in Jakarta. I still think of it as one, a useful one maybe, but

still a distraction. Especially with what's happening parallel to it in GSE. We came up with this term, *transACTION*, not as a concept that the exhibition illustrates. This is, for me, a trap that a lot of curating falls into. It is more like a route instead. We know where we're going, but we're not sure what we'll meet. Maybe this is what you understood as an 'unfolding' process. As with any road trip, we meet friends on the way. What we do together with these new friendships is what is being presented and how you can understand Sonsbeek '16, actually. I just realised that while trying to answer your questions. Thank you for that.

On Contra-colonialism

ck Why did ruangrupa decide to apply for Sonsbeek in Arnhem, in the Netherlands?

fr People have been talking about two things: one, how we started our Skype presentation explaining why we should *not* do it, as a result of the internal debate I mentioned before. Two, about *ruru huis*. Struggle for space as a main recurring theme in our work came up here again. Space contestation is indeed something universal. People are dealing with it differently, but the driving forces are there in every city known to mankind, I would speculate. We devised *ruru huis* as a test, whether our sensibilities could be transferred to a different context – in this case in a mid-sized European city. In reality, although we had been chosen, wildcard-cum-champion, we had to fight for *ruru huis*' existence.

For us it is clear that Sonsbeek '16 could not happen without *ruru huis*. It is where everything started. It is like how ruangrupa could not exist without our house-cum-headquarters in Jakarta. We joked around in ruangrupa about contra-colonialism a lot while working on Sonsbeek '16. We question the limitations of post-colonialism discourse. It is another way for other people to tell us what to think and how to think, at best. It is a way to make white males feeling better about themselves, at worst. It is a way for us to say that post-colonialism is your problem, not ours. One example: we started joking and calling our Dutch co-workers 'inlanders'. That's a nice one. We began to see the problems their great-great-grandfathers were facing 300 to 400 years ago. How difficult it is to have an agenda, and to be blocked by the incapacities of understanding by the locals. How confusing it was, and still is, for them to have us working there. We are consistently inconsistent. We played the micro-politics. We shocked-and-awed. All these tricks we learned culturally and historically from their side, but we reversed them, countered them, made them our own. Only then did we understand this guilt and the goal of post-colonialism really. Contra-colonialism is something to understand through doing, not talking. In real life never-ending negotiations, not representations. Camilla, what do you think?

cp I would also call into question the nature of the recent interest shown by European institutions for many initiatives coming from the Global South. Why attempt to frame diverse forms of labour, knowledge and methods in order to make them fit into western established structures, in an endeavour to reproduce those same schemes and orders over and over? Yes, inconsistency, confusion, delays and 'time-wasting' must sound like frightening methodologies for those institutions. How irritating can this form of dysfunctionality be? Perhaps,

here, the necessity of ‘unlearning’ kicks in. But also unlearning needs to be done before it can be spoken about.

On Hanging Out (Nongkrong)

^{fr} You’ve heard people whine: ‘In Indonesia, we don’t have any infrastructure. In Indonesia, the government doesn’t care about culture and art...’ and so on. We took it as an advantage. We used these facts, in order to make our generation’s own story. When we started, institutions were also in the middle of making their versions of histories... be it through art or not. We decided to make another one, parallel to it, more driven by youth subcultures, multiples, and urban visuals. They thought we were just youngsters who would recede sooner or later, but it turned out that people reacted warmly to us – this was not surprising, as we were also part of this majority of ‘people’ most institutions forgot to cater to.

You might wonder why we call everything, even *ruangrupa*’s formal meetings, a ‘hangout session’, a *penongkrongan* (clearly, I stole the title of this piece from that sensibility). This is because we are kind of allergic to formal settings. Our brains get stuck if we are put in a meeting room. So, to ask people to *nongkrong* is first and foremost a trick for people to come to a meeting. Our house-cum-squat environment helps a lot, as well. Lastly, our use (or more like abuse) of time also plays a

big part. *Nongkrong* is informal, so people are not burdened when they were asked to attend one. It also brings as a consequence the disregard of time, which is a price we understand we have to pay and appreciate as such. Everyone thinks they can come at a time that’s comfortable for them... and this is Jakarta, yes? When you ask people to come at 1PM, they’ll come at 3PM, if not 5PM. But then, everyone has the understanding that they’re going to waste time with each other. This notion of wasting time is important, as it fails the ‘time is money’ belief shoved down our throats by corporate cultures. Time is not money for us, it’s a resource we are willing to invest in with each other, made possible by *nongkrong* together.

Conversations never start directly. It starts small with an openness for different directions. It can get stuck, but jokes always save the day. We learn how to use humour and jokes this way. Sensibilities are grown this way, by knowing each other... not in a useful way. It’s not about what kind of work a particular person is working on, or what books we commonly read. It’s more about the kinds of problems happening with our scooters, what food we are craving at the moment, and whom a particular person finds annoying or cute and trying to sleep with, in what sex position even, given the conditions. Only when we’re relaxed and can’t find anything else to joke about – usually after conversations about football and current Indonesian politics, which always provide a good source for jokes – do we start to tackle the stuff we actually need to tackle. Repeat this process *ad infinitum*, you know you have a family and true friends around you, as you know the system and dynamics of the everyday. This is vital to building trust. In a system where you’re not paid handsomely, and in a city full of lonely hearts, this is how we build our magnet, therefore our myth. It’s a bit eroded now with these career-minded youngsters. They see *ruangrupa* as a working place,

where none of us can be depended upon financially. Now, time is back to money. It's inevitable, maybe, and we need to tackle and live with it somehow.

CK

You mentioned that there are some differences between the old and young generations at ruangrupa, also rooted in the experience of 1998. How do these differences manifest themselves?

fr

Pre-1998 puts us before the Asian economic meltdown in 1997 which caused student protests, shootings, and ultimately led to the May 1998 riot, after which President Soeharto announced his resignation, and congregating with more than five people who are not family members was virtually prohibited by law. The explosion of art and cultural collectives by the end of the 1990's to early 2000's, of which ruangrupa could be seen as a part of, was a euphoria, a celebration of this release. Again, we hang out as a statement. Finally, *nongkrong* was no longer prohibited and seen as a useless, suspicious activity.

I was entering adulthood when 1998 happened; I experienced it. Those who were older than I were actively responsible for what happened – to different extents, of course. We still share the same paranoia and euphoria. We see *nongkrong* as a vital political statement of its own and we're sensitive to any threat against that. Our last presidential election showed how dire this forgetting could be. We ended up having a US-style two-candidate battle. One candidate, Prabowo, came from a Soeharto family and was partially responsible for the loss of lives during the 1998 riot. There's no way for us, my generation, to let this slide. The other candidate won by a fraction: 51% – 49%. I was teaching in the university at that time and was surprised how the majority of college students voted for Prabowo. Most of my students actually voted for Prabowo! I asked around and found out that either their parents, who grew up enjoying

Soeharto's era, influenced them, or in most cases, they just couldn't grasp the trauma of my generation. As a consequence, *nongkrong* is something no longer worth the struggle. Ironically, after overlooking it for a while, we're now striving again for the importance of *nongkrong*.

* *Nongkrong* is an Indonesian slang term for 'hanging out'. The particle *pe-an* is to transform the verb into a noun.

The contribution results from the transversal project week of Pool CH (Master Platform Switzerland) as *Unmaster Class: Committees of Decolonisation*, conceived by Farid Rakun (ruangrupa) with Nabil Ahmed and Doreen Mende on October 26-27, 2015, realised in conversation with the CCC Curatorial seminar. In addition, Camilla Paolino's and Carolin Kohn's participation at the Maju Kena Mundur Kena (MKMK or Neither Forward nor Back) Academy by Institut ruangrupa, in the context of the Jakarta Biennale of November 2015, enabled the continuity of conversations from March to July 2016.

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Situated Practices

In response to the Situated Art Practices seminar
Marion von Osten
Grant Watson
Yann Chateigné

What if the work of an artist, a curator, an exhibition-maker, a theorist, an activist, an academic, or an educator was to entangle with research-based practices? What if research-work necessitated the kind of transdisciplinary conditions for activating situated knowledge, initiating learning processes across geo-spatial settings, re-thinking the forms of subjectivation, and for questioning normative categories in contemporary art practices?

Disobedience in the Division of Art Labour

Situated Art Practices (Marion von Osten) Since the early 1990s, I have been engaged in exhibition-making. First, within the institutional framework of the Shedhalle Zürich; later, independently. To make them meant not researching topics and artists and to finally exhibit them in a designed environment, but rather the intention was to create an experimental and collaborative condition in which the exhibition-making became a critical medium in its own right. I have called them *Project Exhibitions*. Their aim was to intervene in hegemonic discourses on economy, gender, and the governing of mobility. Doing them meant that new prospects and viewpoints could possibly emerge. Notions like the 'Creative Imperative' or the 'Colonial Modern' and my own writing concerned with these concepts have been situated in the making of an exhibition. With the emphasis on making, the creation of temporal collaborations and exchanges with very diverse actors from the field of applied and non-applied arts, academia, theory, pop culture, and activism is central. It includes productions done collectively with Labor k3000 or kpD (kleines post-fordistisches Drama) including videos, conversations, city tours, publications, web projects, exhibition and graphic design.

Making exhibitions thus seemed to be a way out of the narrow pathways of an artist's work and its narrow subject-object relation, a discomfort that haunted me



Situated Practices, Marion von Osten demonstrating the book of her Projekt Migration (2005), CCC, Geneva, November 10, 2015.
Credit: Eric Philippoz

ever since I studied painting in the 1980s. Exhibition-making was about reaching out to others and to overcome self-enclosure. The doubt in linear and two-dimensional narrative forms on the one side, and the existing asymmetric power relations in the art field on the other side, can be thought of as the background for turning to exhibition-making as a performative practice. An exhibition is temporal and spatially bound. It exhibits, disappears, and if it comes back to life in another venue it will be materialised in different form. An exhibition allows for thinking in constellations: to consider diverse materials from popular sources and archives, from historical and contemporary film and art works, as it allows for the possibility of relating one's own productions to the issues raised. An exhibition creates openings and closures, publics and counter-publics. Exhibition-making is understood here as an amplifier for anticipatory politics, as it initiates the creation of new thought in material form and creates unpredictable outcomes and possible becomings.

How We Behave

Grant Watson

My most recent project, *How We Behave*, takes the interview as a format to explore Foucault's notion of 'the care of the self' in relation to contemporary politics and life practice. Historically, 'the care of the self' was a school of thought from antiquity: a philosophical approach to the idea of a life practice based on consciously formulated techniques present in Stoic, Epicurean, and Cynic traditions. Today, Foucault suggests such a thing is lacking in contemporary society, but that nevertheless, the process of self-work might provide some of the skills needed to navigate current ethical and political questions.

Testing this hypothesis, research was undertaken through extensive interviews in cities across different parts of the world. Interviewees, invited through professional and friendship networks, included artists but also curators, a choreographer, an actor, fashion and graphic designers, philosophers, a psychoanalyst, a publisher, a novelist, a poet, a journalist, a model, and a sex worker. While representing a limited demographic, testimonies were often symptomatic of shifts taking place in society that call into question our behaviour and our capacity to act politically. These shifts might include the legacy of liberation movements, a deregulated knowledge economy where precariousness is linked to coercive entrepreneurship, and the idea of an unravelling moral or social template.

The first set of interviews took place in Amsterdam, London, São Paulo, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York (2012-14). In each city, interviewees discussed

details of their 'life practice', producing reflections on habits, exercises, techniques, emotional processes, economic circumstance, ethical dilemmas, and political actions. Since 2015, interviews have been positioned within more specific political contexts. In Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata (December 2015/January 2016 – ongoing), this meant conversations with individuals involved in LGBT activism in the wake of a reinstated Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalises sexual practices 'against the order of nature.' In Athens (November 2015), interviews were conducted against the backdrop of an economic and migrant crisis, and in London (May 2016 – ongoing), interviews will track the experience of individuals engaged in housing activism. In these settings, the idea of 'the care of the self' is explored not as a 'selfish' or self-oriented preoccupation, but as one aspect of a collective process of both macro- and micro-political work.

Developed out of curatorial research, *How We Behave* moves through a sequence of interviewing, transcribing, editing, and filming that results in a series of short films which can be shown in a gallery setting. It seeks to extend the range of formats that could be considered within a curating practice and complicate the categories of curating, research, and artistic work.

Yann Chateigné

You exemplify the way artists, curators, or theorists always follow a kind of genealogy of artistic practice, which defines itself by un-defining itself. Something new is opening up by practising this subtraction, this *via negativa* of un-definition, of un-identification: these older ways of exploring the relationship between artistic practice and real politics, aesthetics of existence, and new forms of curation, for example. I'm interested in questioning the notion of the position – 'positioning'; 'posturing' – by confronting it with a series of negatively connoted terms – such as 'imposture' – when trying to



Grant Watson, *How We Behave*, still, interview with artist Michelle Dizon, 2014-15. Credit: Grant Watson

outline this ongoing movement towards the un-definition of a position. The way artistic practice or, especially as both of you showed, making exhibitions and curating create a sort of common ground of artistic curatorial and theoretical practice. Seizing the possibility of producing something different; to make a step into the unknown, where the next step is not known yet; where you put your practice in movement; a specific way that is not curation nor artistic practice, that is not theory-based; a sort of mix: one may call it 'artistic research' or any other term we perhaps need to define. Is it possible to teach something like this in the context of a school?

GW

Going back to the clip of Michelle, she says at the end that she's learned to think in the gaps between discourses. For me, it is quite an interesting start when it comes to thinking about education, and particularly in a context like the CCC Programme where you have a kind of interdisciplinary approach to education, but also in



Situated Practices, Grant Watson, *How We Behave*, projection, CCC, Geneva, November 10, 2015. Credit: Eric Philippoz

relation to, for example, curating, which is also a composite subject. So I think that this idea of disciplines, obviously, is a very secure place to be if you're inside a discipline. And that's something that is easy to teach because there's a canon and a set of rules and you have to communicate that and to ensure that the student absorbs those rules and reproduces them. But in a situation where the question of discipline is a bit more open, it becomes a much more complicated question, I think. The question that you might always ask is: 'What is the curriculum?' or something like that. There's something I've learned from art, actually – it's this idea of what it means to set up protocols. To invent protocols. And that's something I tried to work with in this research project: that without having a kind of given template, I have to try to establish my own protocols as I go along. So for me, this might be one way you could address this notion of the interdisciplinary in an educational context.

SAP (MvO) Positions are shifting: the theorist suddenly becomes the culture producer or the culture producer becomes the theorist; all these kinds of possibilities coming up with completely new ideas of what a subjectivity in the field of cultural practices could be. We discussed today that theory has also already stepped out of the institution, the kinds of knowledge that we are referring to, from gender studies to cultural studies, were not established in the universities, but came from the streets. They came from the streets into the universities and today they are dispersed. Like Kurdistan's guerilla women fighters who have self-organised education places where they are reading Judith Butler and are trained in combat techniques. Theory stepped in and stepped out and is flowing between different practices and knowledges.

We're not experts just in one field, but it's a specific form of practice. It's the practice of relations. I call it an

‘anticipatory politics’. It is actually what is not known. It’s the unknown, and ‘anticipatory politics’ means something that will emerge, but in the moment we don’t yet know it.

GW For example, where I teach in London, the students are paying very high fees: they come to the class, they want something substantial. But you’re inviting them to participate in something which is, to a certain extent, open-ended. And I think it’s a complex role to perform, because ultimately what you want is for the students to produce their own curriculum. You want them to come to you with an idea of what they need. Because the question ‘what do curators need to know?’ is a very open-ended one.

YC On the leaflets our school printed to advertise the last call for applications to our programmes, the sentence was written like an invitation: ‘Becoming an artist, becoming a designer.’ It evoked, in a way, the powers of an educational institution that could make someone *become* an artist. Actually, the students who apply to the school have the feeling that they are already artists. Our mission consists more of deconstructing this pre-existing idea of what an artist is: to teach them different ways of existing as an artist, to show to them all the possible positions. Or maybe to unlearn what an artist is, to open possibilities of existences. What if we – artists, curators, thinkers – decided not to please the institutions but to answer with another question? Or decided not to answer but to create specific contexts as you both did? What would it do to the so-called artistic sphere in which we work? What if we refused to systematically work the same way, to write our biographies the same normative way? Over the last couple of years, a series of exhibitions have questioned the very notion of biography. I was thinking about this interesting and intriguing show on ‘biographical forms’ recently curated

by Jean-François Chevrier; also about this book that came out a few months ago about artists using biographies and imaginary lives as a form of art; about this project by Lili Reynaud-Dewar, professor of Visual Arts at HEAD – Genève, a few years ago; maybe there is something interesting to explore there. Is this the time when we – curators, artists, thinkers – are asked to build a new body, to use our body differently, or to use unknown parts of our body, maybe in a more subversive way? Would this constitute a strategy for inventing or for finding new and different techniques of self-definition or self-knowledge?

SAP (MvO) I was really interested in your proposal of the refusal, because you were also very wise to remind us what the portfolio is today. It is a commodity. You are selling your labour force; that is actually what the human resource manager wants to know – what you have done – and that also counts for people in the art field. It is this very idea of intervening into this and relating not only to ‘the care of the self’ but to the politics of all the aesthetics of existence, as a possibility to refuse this imperative of playing in this field – in cultural symbolic capital – which is actually what a portfolio or a biography is. But then it doesn’t matter if I studied art or what you studied or what we were: we are becoming somebody else and as we are becoming it together, I think that’s actually your question: what is this becoming about? It’s not becoming an artist, it’s not becoming a designer: it’s becoming something else that we don’t yet know. A constant process of exodus after exodus. Isn’t that beautiful? That’s actually what the avant-gardes were looking for; so we are still in the middle of the avant-garde’s dream, in post-Fordism, or whatever, or post-modernism. We are still in the middle of the avant-garde *prospect*.

GW I think you’re right, I think they are all different kinds of practices that are emerging in these definitions of art/

non-art, curator/artist/theorist as you said. It becomes quite uninteresting in the end to dwell on the terminology. My experiences of institutions is that they are always in crisis and often I was in a position where I was supposed to be defending the institution. It seemed to me to be sort of a pointless exercise because the institution was anyway so fragmented. It wasn't hegemonic. It was just a collection of individuals that had come together; it could never really maintain a front. So I never had that sense of the institution as a marker of authority. That might be the luxury of having been inside. And now I see them really as a structure that can provide temporary shelter in a way, you can use institutions for this and that, but not to make a commitment to an institution or neither to reject the institution outright. So I guess I'm trying to have a slightly more nuanced relationship with institutional structures.

SAP (MvO) My generation – a new wave-punk generation – was critical of institutions and thus definitely was not creating them. This is why I became interested in other practices that will lead to the future of critical practice, which Florian Malzacher, for example, calls 'from project to organisation'. Today we have an obvious shift in creating alternative organisations, para-institutions by culture producers. I'm saying 'culture producers' because you cannot call them 'people who come from architecture, from design, from dance', these kinds of disciplines that are still taught in the art academies and in our educational systems; they are in everyday practice overworked by the practitioners themselves, from Jakarta to Santiago de Chile. These micro-organisations are not architecture offices, they're not enterprises, they're not art institutions where only products are shown. Their practices are somehow in-between distribution, production, knowledge change, and pedagogy. They are curating but also the opposite; it is a new form of post-

disciplinary practice. There's also a conscious understanding that what we have called 'art' might disappear.

GW One institution that I would like to mention in relation to this is *If I Can't Dance, I Don't Want To Be Part Of Your Revolution*, because they commissioned this project and I think it only could have happened in relation to something like that, because they have a great, specific way of working. They were established in the millennial years, in 2005 or so; three curators had been invited to curate projects at the margins of theatre festivals in Holland, and they decided to collaborate together and make this organisation. They maintained this incredible way of working and they have produced a studio, which is not a physical studio but a context in which people can develop projects like this with an incredible amount of patience.

SAP (MvO) When we think of this as a historical development from Manet's studio, when you see people gathering there it is a social space, it was not just the autonomous artist producing but also a social gathering creating a communal space; but still only one modernist subject producing in this space. This shifted then in post-studio practices, which actually gave rise to quite a lot of problems because the practice then ceased to have an address, a place. But the studio also included all kinds of processes of slowing down, because the studio is also a place where you absolutely do need to slow down. And I think this is highly interesting if this now becomes, in the translocal micro-organisation, a collective space which not only addresses artists, but also maybe people from urban neighbourhoods, or other forms of culture producers.

GW A very important point that you made, in fact, is this question of slowing down. The value of the studio: a space that is outside of the marketplace, outside of the speed of contemporary culture, and yet it's kind of evaporating

for many artists. So the question there is: how do you slow down within these new forms of practice? For me – and my work as a curator was all about speed – for me, slowing down was reading texts. It took me a long time – it took me the decision to join a PhD programme – to sit at a table for a day and read a book. I mean, that was anathema to me, in my life as a curator, it seemed absolutely a complete waste of time, and it took training to sit and do that. So I think it's quite interesting that maybe education is also about...

SAP (MvO) ... slowing down...

GW ... slowing down and helping each other to find situations in which you can sit. And you might not be reading a book, it might be something else.

The contribution is a result of the public session of the Situated Art Practices seminar by Anne-Julie Raccoursier and Marion von Osten on November 9-11, 2015 with Grant Watson, with comments by Yann Chateigné.

CONTEXTUAL MATERIAL

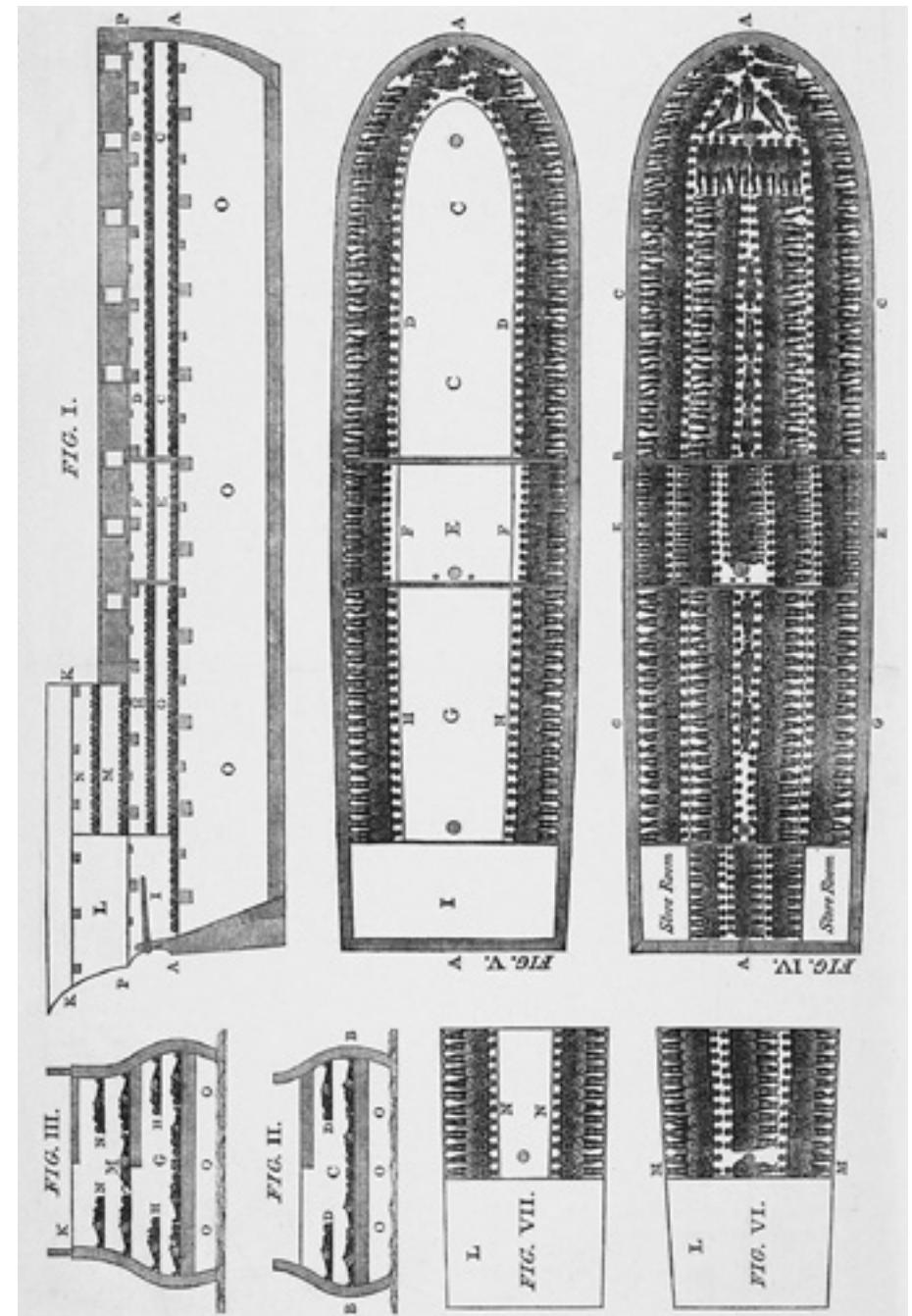
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Décoloniser l'Europe

En conversation avec le séminaire Etudes Politiques
Françoise Vergès

Que peut signifier aujourd'hui « décoloniser l'Europe » ?
Comment développer une politique et une poétique d'une deuxième vague de décolonisation ? Quel est le rôle des artistes et des intellectuels dans cette période de crise liée à l'exode des réfugiés et des migrants, à la crise économique, à la montée des mouvements populistes xénophobes ?
Comment penser, créer et agir devant la montée des périls, lorsque la tentation de l'impuissance guette ?



« Il faudrait d'abord étudier comment la colonisation travaille à déciviliser le colonisateur, à l'abrutir au sens propre du mot, à le dégrader, à le réveiller aux instincts enfouis, à la convoitise, à la violence, à la haine raciale, au relativisme moral. »

Aimé Césaire, Discours sur le Colonialisme (1952:11)

Etudes Politiques (Charlyne Kolly)

Comment décoloniser les nouvelles technologies ?

Françoise Vergès

Je vous suggère de lire *La machine est ton seigneur et ton maître* sur les conditions de travail dans les usines chinoises Foxconn. C'est écrit par des sociologues chinois qui ont recueilli des témoignages d'ouvrières et qui analysent les conditions de travail dans les grandes usines qui nous fournissent des outils Apple et toutes les autres machines qu'on utilise. Il n'y a jamais de produit pur, ni dans sa production, ni dans son utilisation. Les nouvelles technologies sont un champ de contradictions ; l'idée est de les comprendre et de les connaître, plutôt que de les refuser. Décoloniser les nouvelles technologies, ce serait protester contre leurs conditions de production, qui ont déjà très bien été décrites. Notamment la question de genre et la situation des femmes qui travaillent dans ces usines.

Pédagogies alternatives

En ce qui concerne la chaîne de production, il faut partir du moment de l'extraction d'éléments, c'est-à-dire des mines, puis traverser les usines, la distribution, rencontrer l'écart entre le coût de fabrication d'un smartphone

et son prix de vente, pour terminer avec un déchet. Le champ d'utilisation de ces outils nous permet d'entrer en relation avec des personnes avec qui cela aurait été beaucoup plus difficile d'échanger des informations, des textes, des images et des sons auparavant. Utiliser ces technologies contre leur mode de production. Vous connaissez la phrase de la féministe noire-américaine Audre Lorde : « On ne déconstruit pas la maison du maître avec les outils du maître. » Elle demande : comment déconstruire la maison du maître, la domination, si l'on ne possède que les outils que nous offrent les dominants ? Comment faire ? Qu'est-ce que l'on va faire avec les nouvelles technologies, si les technologies sont un champ de domination ? Si l'on utilise les mêmes outils, on va être coincé, c'est le serpent qui se mord la queue, il n'y a pas d'issue ! Mais quel était le contexte dans lequel Audre Lorde a prononcé cette phrase ? C'est celui d'une conférence féministe près de New-York dans les années 1970. Elle faisait remarquer que les femmes blanches américaines décidaient unilatéralement de l'agenda des grandes questions qui y seraient abordées. On ne peut pas parler de féminisme, tant que le féminisme appartient exclusivement au monde des femmes blanches. J'en conclus que la question est : qu'est-ce que je déconstruis dans la maison et comment je le déconstruis – notamment avec certains outils des dominants – plutôt que de me sentir coincée parce que je n'ai que les outils des dominants ? et qu'en est-il des outils contre-hégémoniques ? Une étape de la décolonisation des nouvelles technologies, c'est ce travail sur leurs modes de production.

Au sujet de l'éducation, la question n'est pas de ne pas aller à l'école, c'est d'aller à l'école pour pouvoir se saisir de certains des outils de l'éducation afin de les retourner contre les dominants et de développer des pédagogies alternatives. Sur la langue, le grand écrivain

algérien Kateb Yacine déclarait en 1966 : « La francophonie est une machine politique néocoloniale, qui ne fait que perpétuer notre aliénation, mais l'usage de la langue française ne signifie pas qu'on soit l'agent d'une puissance étrangère, et j'écris en français pour dire aux français que je ne suis pas français ». Artistes, écrivains, théoriciens utilisent cette stratégie de retournement ou de détournement.

EP (CK) Durant votre conférence, vous avez dit que l'esclavage moderne s'est étendu de 1500 jusqu'à 1900 et qu'aujourd'hui on aurait tendance à dire que c'est un « spectre ». Même si l'esclavage est toujours d'actualité, ce ne sont pas des termes que l'on peut utiliser facilement. Quel serait le vocabulaire à employer pour parler d'esclavage aujourd'hui ?

FV Je dis « esclavage moderne » de manière systématique, pour le distinguer des formes d'esclavage contemporaines et pour souligner que l'esclavage colonial – du 16^e au 19^e siècle européen – est non seulement contemporain de la modernité européenne, mais aussi qu'il *appartient* à la modernité européenne, à sa conception de l'individu, de la liberté, du droit et à la naissance du capitalisme. Quand je parle de spectre, je parle d'une figure qui hante la modernité et non d'une figure identifiée au passé qui aurait disparu, effacée par le progrès. L'esclave – non pas l'individu, mais la figure au sens historique et politique du sujet – hante la modernité, elle pointe de manière spectrale sa formation. Quand je dis qu'elle doit garder cette dimension spectrale, je dis qu'elle doit continuer à être inquiétante, à déranger le discours de l'humanisme abstrait. Si l'esclave est rejeté dans le passé, alors l'Europe peut l'inviter à s'asseoir à sa table ; elle pacifie une figure qui interroge de manière radicale sa formation, la manière dont elle a construit richesse, philosophie, racisme, l'idée du sujet... L'esclave comme spectre, comme fantôme, doit

perturber le récit, perturber cette représentation de soi fondée sur un mensonge.

Capitalisme Racial

Je reviens sur le fait, essentiel à mes yeux, que la figure de l'esclave est intimement liée à la construction de l'Europe et des « Autres », au capitalisme naissant, au *capitalisme racial*. Un capitalisme qui s'appuie non seulement sur la distinction entre les vies qui comptent et les vies qui ne comptent pas, mais aussi sur le fait que les vies qui ne comptent pas sont racialisées. Dans ces processus, le « Noir », le « Nègre » est, pour l'Europe, le signe de l'abjection. Mais les processus de racialisation touchent aussi d'autres groupes, comme évidemment les Juifs d'Europe ou les Roms. Je cherche à « repolitiser » la figure de l'esclave, ne pas en faire simplement une figure historique, mais une figure politique, du monde politique. Il s'agit de comprendre la manière dont la liberté est pensée en relation avec la privation de liberté, comment et pourquoi la citoyenneté est « blanchie » : être citoyen et libre et naturellement « blanc » ; alors que « noir », ce serait être naturellement esclave et potentiellement libre.

La richesse qui s'est construite sur l'esclavage moderne a été un grand thème dans les années 1960, notamment avec le livre d'Eric Williams, *Capitalisme et Esclavage*. Dans les années 1980-1990, il y a eu un plus grand intérêt pour les aspects culturels, les créolisations, les religions, les rites. Je pense qu'aujourd'hui il faut croiser les deux approches.

Si l'on emploie le terme « esclave » pour désigner des statuts très différents, c'est sans doute parce que le mot est puissant, fortement évocateur. C'est la métaphore vers laquelle on se tourne spontanément pour expliquer un total manque d'autonomie, une privation totale de liberté. Quand quelqu'un dit : « Je suis esclave », il faut entendre ce que cette personne dit, ce qu'elle exprime ! On ne va pas lui dire qu'elle se trompe, lui dire : « Mais enfin vous n'êtes pas un esclave ! Vous n'êtes pas dans une plantation ou sur un bateau négrier. » Il faut entendre pourquoi tant de personnes, aujourd'hui, réutilisent ce terme et parlent d'esclavage, que ce soit en Asie, dans les Amériques, en Europe ou en Afrique. Nous avons des exemples historiques de cette utilisation, qui a d'ailleurs été sévèrement critiquée par les Africains-Américains qui ont toujours voulu souligner l'aspect *racial* ; il n'y *pas* d'esclavage colonial sans racisme anti-Noir. Mais, par exemple, le féminisme occidental s'est historiquement appuyé sur l'esclavage pour dénoncer la situation des femmes, le fait qu'elles appartenaient à leurs pères, maris, frères... Elles s'appuient sur la condamnation de la traite et de l'esclavage – le droit naturel interdit qu'un être humain en possède un autre – pour condamner la condition des femmes. En conclusion, nous devons d'une part revoir l'utilisation historique de la figure de l'esclave et de la notion d'esclavage par des groupes et des individus, d'autre part garder la spécificité de l'esclavage colonial dans son lien intime avec le capitalisme racial, la figure du « Nègre », une division raciale du monde, une division internationale du travail genrée et racialisée. Aujourd'hui, je pense qu'il faudrait parler de « travail esclavagisé » et revenir aussi à une analyse du monde du travail, de la division internationale du travail et de la manière dont cette division est ethno-raciale. Il faut penser l'esclave en relation avec le travail et le racisme, et non pas avec le monde de la morale.

Etudes Politiques (Camilla Paolino) Pour reprendre le discours que vous avez fait sur la décolonisation des savoirs dans le contexte d'une institution : comment peut-on mettre cela en pratique concrètement ? La formation dans les universités est habituellement très liée au travail que l'on va trouver ensuite ; si l'on décolonise le milieu académique et que l'on met en pratique des méthodes alternatives de formation ou d'instruction, comment va-t-on faire face au monde du travail ?

FV En Afrique du Sud et aux Etats-Unis, aujourd'hui dans les universités, les étudiants demandent une décolonisation des savoirs qui s'appuie sur le constat que, pour l'Afrique du sud, tant d'années après la fin de l'apartheid, le sentiment domine que l'éducation ne repose sur rien qui soit en relation avec le monde africain.

Un des buts de l'université – certainement pas le seul – qui prend de l'importance, c'est la reproduction de l'idéologie. L'objectif est de faire de nous des personnes qui vont servir l'hégémonie culturelle ; si c'était pour faire de nous des gens qui allaient monter des barricades, on le saurait.

La décolonisation, ce n'est pas l'intégration de thèmes ou l'intégration de personnes. Comment, lorsque nous apprenons, intégrons-nous un vocabulaire sans nous poser la question de l'histoire des mots utilisés ? Par exemple, si je dis « je m'intéresse aux banlieues » : pourquoi ce terme « banlieue » ? Ne doit-on pas l'interroger et interroger les raisons de l'intérêt pour les banlieues ? Quelles sont nos références implicites et explicites qui s'expriment dans la question que nous posons ?

Etudes Politiques (Charles-Elie Payré) Ces formes de décolonisation du savoir ne passent-elles pas nécessairement par un moment de crise ? Comme par exemple en Grèce, en ce moment, où les infrastructures s'écroulent et qu'il faut repenser la manière dont le savoir se développe et se

recrée ? Pensez-vous que d'autres moments permettent quand même cette décolonisation ?

FV

Les moments de crise ne sont pas toujours des moments d'opportunité. La « crise » est une construction qui peut entraîner la peur et le désir de tranquillité, de retour à des normes et des formes familières. On aime penser que « si on met un coup de pied dans la fourmière, ça va changer » ; il se peut aussi que ce soit pire après. La crise ne doit pas être idéalisée. Elle peut constituer pour les pouvoirs l'occasion de resserrer la vis. La décolonisation ne vient jamais d'en haut. Elle vient de mouvements « d'en bas », des femmes, des minorités, des ouvriers, des peuples colonisés qui disent : « On n'accepte pas les choses telles qu'elles sont. » Sur la question de l'institution et comment la changer : tous les changements qui ont eu lieu sont partis de mouvements sociaux et culturels. Tous. Ce sont les mouvements de femmes qui ont poussé l'enseignement à tenir compte de l'histoire des femmes, en signalant qu'aucune situation n'est universelle. Même chose pour les colonisés, les ouvriers, les peuples indigènes...

Brouillage des espaces

Etudes Politiques (Cécile Boss)

Que fait-on, dans notre contexte – celui de l'université ou de l'école d'art –, des micro-situations concrètes de soulèvement ou de résistance ? Je pensais au cas des usines Foxconn, où les grèves et les révoltes des ouvriers ont été passablement invisibilisées et restent méconnues. Que faire aussi des résistances et des émeutes des migrants bloqués aux frontières, comme le

cas de Calais en France ? Une deuxième question : vous avez mentionné la fin de la Commune de Paris et la façon dont l'Etat a joué le rôle de pacificateur pour empêcher une transformation sociale ; comment cette expérience historique, en lien avec un certain contrôle de l'Etat et de ses médias, trouve-t-elle un écho dans les résistances actuelles ?

FV

C'est une très bonne question, parce qu'elle montre justement l'effort de pensée que nous avons à faire. La vision binaire – le Nord et le Sud, l'Est et l'Ouest, les dominés et les dominants, les colonisés et les colons, les féministes et le patriarcat – a été bouleversée. Des figures qui étaient spontanément associées à une résistance – « le gay », « la lesbienne », « le Noir », « le colonisé », « la féministe » – sont aujourd'hui brouillées : ce n'est pas parce que vous êtes gay, lesbienne, noir, colonisé ou asiatique, que vous êtes automatiquement du côté de la résistance. On a aussi un brouillage des espaces. Il n'y a pas un seul espace de l'oppression, comme par exemple « l'usine » dans le récit européen ; il y a du dominant à l'intérieur même des dominés, Fanon en a très bien parlé. On doit travailler sur plusieurs spatialités et plusieurs temporalités en même temps. Il y a du lent et du rapide. Il y a les migrants coincés aux frontières, mais il y a la rapidité du passeport biométrique.

Nous vivons constamment dans des temporalités qui se croisent. Comment penser et que faire ? Comment penser les nouvelles formes de résistance ? Vous avez évoqué Foxconn : il y a eu, au-delà des grèves, beaucoup de suicides. Le retour au corps, au corps humain qui remet de la chair, au sens propre, dans les questions politiques et économiques. Au delà du discours économique qui s'exprime en chiffres, en PIB, il s'agit de remettre le corps humain exploité, nié et méprisé au cœur du dispositif capitaliste. Vous ne voulez pas entendre ce que ce corps exprime ? Il se fera quand même entendre,

en se suicidant. D'une certaine manière, les terroristes, en se tuant, en se faisant exploser, remettent du corps humain dans la question politique. De manière extrêmement terrible, horrible certes, mais ce n'est pas la question que je pose ici. Ils rappellent de manière spectaculaire que la guerre, c'est la mort et la destruction des corps. Ce n'est pas de l'abstraction, des avions qui passent dans le ciel, des drones manipulés de très loin qui tuent. Ces formes de résistance qui utilisent le corps posent une vraie question. Remettre le corps exploité dans sa réalité, dans sa matérialité, contre son effacement, voilà de quoi il s'agit. Il s'agit de corps humains et non pas de choses abstraites. C'est à nous de remettre un discours et un vocabulaire sur cette forme de résistance. Comment le penser ? Par exemple, la question de l'immigrant, à la fois visible et absolument invisible. Comment faire d'une situation comme cela quelque chose qui dérange, qui perturbe le récit de la consommation heureuse ? À travers les suicides de Foxconn ou les migrants aux frontières, comment transposer cette réapparition du corps, ou le retour de la question de la dignité, dans le champ du politique ? Beaucoup de migrants reprennent la phrase des combattants anti-esclavagistes : « Ne suis-je pas un être humain ? Pourquoi ne suis-je pas traité en être humain ? » Le terme « humanisme », qui a été associé à la pensée et à la civilisation européennes, doit être réactivé à partir des autres modernités, à partir d'autres philosophies, d'autres conceptions de ce que c'est qu'être humain.

La fabrication de la précarité

Aujourd'hui, plus fortement à cause des progrès des technologies, se pose la question de la fabrication de la précarité et du consentement à la précarité. C'est une forme de gouvernance. Les puissants cherchent à augmenter la précarité, tout en repoussant la limite du tolérable pour éviter que les gens descendent dans la rue et se révoltent. Ils organisent, pourrait-on dire, un « seuil de précarisation » : rendre tolérable la vie précaire, ignorer le fait que les quelques privilèges de sa propre vie reposent sur la précarisation d'autres vies. Il nous faut penser la manière dont s'organise la précarité, qui touche de plus en plus de champs : la santé, l'éducation, le travail, le logement et la circulation des êtres humains. Et comment la pacification s'organise avec la précarité. C'est un chantage constant : vous avez une vie précaire, mais elle pourrait être encore plus précaire, alors contentez-vous de ce que vous avez. Résister, c'est ne pas céder à ce chantage, valoriser d'autres économies que celles de la consommation outrancière et renoncer à la satisfaction narcissique apportée par des biens dont la production repose sur l'exploitation la plus brutale et la destruction du monde.

Il y a une chose que j'ai trouvée absolument importante, après les attentats de Paris et de Beyrouth, c'est d'essayer de donner des noms et des visages aux personnes, pour qu'elles ne restent pas anonymes, invisibles. Parce que quand on dit 130 morts, on ne comprend pas ce que cela veut dire. Grâce aux mots et aux images quelque chose s'incarne et c'est cette incarnation qui est importante. Comment incarner les morts ?

Résister à

l'idéalisation

Il faut trouver une méthodologie qui réponde à ça et ce n'est pas toujours facile, car en face la machine de logique est assez simple. Elle s'appuie sur la notion de « l'individu » et le narcissisme. Réfléchir à un nouvel humanisme, se dire que ça paraît abstrait et se demander quel est son vocabulaire; quels sont les mots qui vont faire descendre dans la rue et qui vont mobiliser, qui vont faire se soulever? On l'a vu en Tunisie et en Egypte: les soulèvements se font autour des notions de dignité et de respect, et cela met les dominants en danger, car la demande de dignité et de respect renvoie à une conception de l'humain qui est étrangère au capitalisme ou à l'État policier. En quoi la dignité est-elle une notion politique? Cela signifierait quoi, aujourd'hui, de parler des vies « qui comptent »? Comment reprend-on cette idée, non pas seulement des vies qui ne comptent pas, mais des vies rendues obsolètes?

Il faut penser l'émancipation sans idéalisation. Idéaliser un groupe censé incarner l'émancipation totale a été, on peut le dire, catastrophique: la classe ouvrière, les femmes, les minorités, il fallait chaque fois trouver le groupe qui ouvrirait la voie de l'émancipation. Or, l'idéalisation s'accompagne inévitablement d'un discours de l'innocence: ce groupe a toutes les qualités, il a en lui tout ce qui est nécessaire pour obtenir l'émancipation. Et quand il n'accomplit pas sa promesse, hop! on en trouve un autre! Mais la question de la violence et de la résistance, ce n'est pas celle du bien et du mal! C'est celle de la justice sociale, de la justice environnementale, de la libération des femmes. En France, les minorités se font entendre et ce n'est que justice. Que va t'il advenir en Europe avec la montée des xénophobies, de

l'islamophobie, de la destruction engendrée par le capitalisme? Nous assistons à une combinaison de militarisme et de néo-libéralisme. Dans ce contexte, en prenant l'institution où nous sommes comme exemple, il faut apprendre aux étudiants à poser des questions, à être éternellement curieux de la manière dont les objets, les images et les discours sont produits – par qui? pour quoi? comment? avec quels outils? – et résister à l'idéalisation.

Cette contribution est issue du séminaire Etudes Politiques de Pierre Hazan, auquel a participé Françoise Vergès les 16, 17 et 18 novembre 2015.

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The Anthropogenic Image

In conversation with the Critical Theory seminar and
The Anthropocene Atlas of Geneva Working Group
Armin Linke
Gene Ray

How can we read the planetary effects of human activities by visual means? What are the responsibilities of the artist to make public the complexities of living amidst environmental change? Do images of environmental change of anthropogenic conditions bear any special capacity to pry open the grip of 'spectacle', understood as a totality of images that becomes a system of social control?

001



002

What are these changes? As we all now know, our global social process is altering the planet's carbon and nitrogen cycles; pumping CO₂, methane, and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere; producing global warming, climate change, rogue weather, ocean acidification, and rising sea levels. Chemical pollution released by industrial processes, including industrial agriculture, is producing soil degradation, water contamination, loss of bees and other pollinators, red tides and marine dead zones. Wars, nuclear tests, nuclear waste and accidents are leaving legible marks in the rocks. Human movements, from invasions and migrations to air- and sea-borne commodity flows, have rearranged the earth's biota. Genetic engineering is rearranging the DNA. All these changes, exacerbating the stresses of over-harvesting, deforestation and habitat loss, have initiated what many scientists are calling the 'Sixth Mass Extinction' in the planet's history, an event that will change the path of evolution and leave a clear 'biostratigraphic signature' that future geologists will be able to read.

001

Armin Linke, ReN_002244_11,
Forschungszentrum Jülich Research Centre,
plant atmospheric chamber Jülich (Köln)
Germany, 11/06/1999

002

Gene Ray, Geneva, 07/12/2015

003



004

Every day in the news now, we hear about climate change. But the Anthropocene is more than that. Extinction is perhaps the ultimate stake of the Anthropocene. Even if the human species survives these changes, the predictions are that a vast number of species will not. Just how many, no one knows or can know. But future evolution will be limited to the reduced genetic pool of whatever is left.

003 Armin Linke, ReN_002667_23, Herd Cordoba
Argentina, 06/12/1999

004 Gene Ray, Geneva, 07/12/2015

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006

This form of 'voluntary subjectification' (Giairo Daghini) to the social and artistic limits produces a new and forced coming of awareness in the spectator, and creates a different political agency of the artist by adding to photography a third dimension – temporal, spatial, and of conscience – that *demands* to be observed, and suggests in every moment to taste the experience of pure observation, that is, to appreciate one's own non-limited experience that we still possess as free individuals.

005 Armin Linke, ReN_008104_3, UNO-Klimakonferenz zu CO2-Treibhausgas-Ausstoß, Plenarsaal, Bundeshaus, World Conference Centre, UN Campus, Bonn, Germany, 10/03/2014

006 Mandarava Bricaire, *The collective offense is the artist's sacrifice: A proposed reading of Armin Linke's work*, 12/2015

007



008

But humanity: who or what is that? Humans are one species among others – we are a species in the biological sense. But people are not the same either, are they? Humanity implies some assemblage of shared values and identity, some collective subjectivity and agency. Critical theory teaches us that such a humanity doesn't yet exist; so far it is no more than a promise. Our divisions are in the way of any such unity in diversity. What does exist are groups and individuals who, by their activities, organise themselves wildly into social processes. But a key question of the Anthropocene is: will humanity finally emerge?

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Armin Linke, ReN_001669_34a, Star City, Cosmonaut Training Centre, Moscow, Russia, 10/12/1998

008

Gene Ray, Geneva, 07/12/2015

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Humanity's great promise of European enlightenment has failed terribly. We need to think differently about how we are in the world. Therefore, I would disagree with this moment of humanity as an emerging future, because humanity has proven to be the horror; the genealogy of horror as a banality of evil and violence, as a continuously banal but most brutal act. We have to start from there. If we take into consideration that technology is an anthropological space, or can be understood as a visual-spatial anthropology of technology, then we might be sitting here in this moment as technologies. In that context, the age of the Anthropocene does offer the possibility of discussing humanity as a non-human/human relation. This is the only chance we have left.

009

Armin Linke, ReN_006865_5, Gas pipeline junction, Nadym, Russia, 22/05/2011

010

Doreen Mende, Geneva, 07/12/2015

011



012

During your presentation, there was this moment of experimentation when you showed us three hundred images in a minute, and we received much information at the same time. It was like going through Tumblr or Google images where you can scroll down and down, having the impression that it might never end. In the *Anthropocene Observatory*, it was like that as well: I remember hours and hours of video, such that you could not expect the spectator to grasp, to understand and see everything. But at the same time, you have a very precise way of framing the choices of subject. Also, when I see these images, I think that my reading of them is different than it would be of mass media images, because you often use a very wide scale that clarifies the situation in which the picture is taken. These two points might be contradictory: on the one hand, the mass of information and works in the exhibition, such that I could not see everything; and on the other hand, the clarity and precision in the framing and choice of subject of each picture.

011 Armin Linke, ReN_001224_35, Bloemenveiling Aalsmeer, flower auction, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 15/04/1998

012 Janis Schroeder, Geneva, 07/12/2015

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During the seminar, we spoke about Trevor Paglen's way of not showing what is an investigative work, but showing what is not usually shown about the secret services and secret operations in the United States in relation to terrorism. But with the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene, it seems that what you are doing goes through a similar process, which is to gather and show a huge documentation work of what is not shown in the presentation of the institution and its structures. Or maybe to show what is behind the abstract concept of the Capitalocene while giving it a concrete form of representation.

013 Armin Linke, ReN_008275_23, Nayakrishi Andalon, ecological farm rice seeds vault, Tangail, Bangladesh, 07/04/2014

014 Aurélien Ballif, Geneva, referring to the Critical Theory seminar, 07/12/2015

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016

The artist here is capable of showing, pointing the finger at something, dramatising, and ‘sarcasticising’ the photographer/journalist’s pretense of having political agency. The post-modern act of pointing the finger to an outside projection of oneself in the real world reveals itself to be tragically consumed and empty; there is seemingly no self to be found in the current ‘outside’. The artist indicates an exterior that he does not recognise himself in. Freed as he is of any external correspondences, he gives himself to the spectator. Becoming cynically useful to allow a simple vision: suggesting to take that position that the artist sacrificed to himself, he asks to re-view – or re-see, as in re-evaluating – what stands in front of one’s own eyes as inadequate, insufficient, and sometimes inhuman.

015 Armin Linke, mDV_000040_35, NASA
Jet Propulsion Laboratory, 99.9% air-based
substance, Pasadena, USA, 19/07/1999

016 Mandarava Bricaire, *ibid.*, 12/2015

017



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The Anthropocene also means a crisis for all the disciplines and for every field of knowledge production. The Anthropocene describes the imbrication, the mutually-conditioning entanglement of society and nature, perhaps even to the point, as some argue, of dissolving all distinctions between them. Consequently, natural sciences cannot operate in isolation from social sciences, nor can social sciences fail to take into account the findings of natural sciences. And because anthropogenic change impinges on questions of value, identity, power, and politics, the Anthropocene necessarily concerns the humanities as well. None of the inherited disciplines was prepared for anthropogenic global change; none, alone, has the power and resources to analyse it. The Anthropocene forces on the disciplines the transdisciplinarity that they have all institutionally resisted.

017 Armin Linke, AVN_003395_12, Mountain with
antennas, Kitakyushu, Japan, 09/09/2006

018 Gene Ray, Geneva, 07/12/2015

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020

During the Pool CH session with ruangrupa and Nabil Ahmed, we discussed Achille Mbembe's approach to the concept of 'deep time'; how can we think of 'deep time' in the context of de-colonising processes? Nabil introduced the idea of 'environmental-historical methodology' that operates through a working protocol in order to understand time as non-chronological, but time rather inscribed into ecological/geological/biological strata where, I think, the human reappears simply as an environmental biological substance. Nothing more. 'Deep time' is a concept attached to the anthropogenic idea in relation to the visualities of geological time. So this proposition is compelling to take further because it demands a political shift of perspective away from the anthropocentric imperative, towards a 'material witness' (Susan Schuppli), and de-colonising processes.

019 Armin Linke, ReN_007206_14, National Museum, the «Selam» display, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 25/02/2012

020 Doreen Mende, Geneva, 27/10/2015

021



022



021 Armin Linke, ReN_003753_11, Guarani tribe, native calendar, Mato Grosso, Brazil, 27/03/2002

022 Armin Linke, ReN_008542_35, BAPCO Bahrain Petroleum Company, laboratories, Awali, Kingdom of Bahrain, 04/12/2014

023



024

‘Anthropocene’ may not be the best term. But even if we reject it, it is important to begin somewhere and to have some linguistic handle with which to acknowledge the radical changes now emerging, and the urgency of responding to them. Polemical counter-terms can be helpful and clarifying. Donna Haraway, in particular, has been prolific in generating alternative handles. Rejecting the ‘Anthropocene’, she, Jason Moore and Andreas Malm have proposed the ‘Capitalocene’. In discussion with a group of anthropologists, she and her interlocutors came up with ‘Plantationocene’; she also suggests the ‘Chthulucene’. Conservation biologist Michael Soulé proposed the ‘Catastrophozoic’. Sci-fi novelist Kim Stanley Robinson dubbed it ‘The Dithering’. David Abram calls for humility and grace before the ‘more-than-human world’, and Bruno Latour calls for a new strategic subjectivity – the ‘Earthbound’: prepared to face Gaia and cope with our disasters. All these counter-handles have their insights.

023 Armin Linke, ReN_007126_13, Occupy Frankfurt, camp in front of the ECB Frankfurt am Main, Germany, 12/12/2011

024 Gene Ray, Geneva, 07/12/2015

025



026

A couple of years ago, I had a conversation with a recently retired geologist who had been studying the history of climate through the stratigraphic analysis of rocks. Although he did agree with the Anthropocene thesis, I was surprised to hear him complain about people being too alarmist nowadays – ‘especially climatologists.’ Indeed, why should we frighten people?

‘Humans are the dominant colonising species and, as such, they tend to grow to a critical point where they will affect the ecosystem that sustains their very existence. Then, usually, these colonising species simply drop.’

What surprised me the most wasn’t the catastrophe scenario he was depicting, but the fact that for him there was nothing catastrophic about it. Looking at the history of mankind from a distance with a scope of tens or even hundreds of thousands of years, obviously this major shift in perspective allowed him to keep alarmism

025 Armin Linke, ReN_007779_12, El Ejido Spain, 04/07/2013

026 Aurélien Gamboni, Geneva, 07/12/2015

at a distance. Neither the inequalities of exposure to environmental risks, nor the other living species facing extinction could find compassion in his eyes. Yet his position wasn't 'anthropocentric'. In fact, it struck me that his gaze was rather that of the rocks, with whom he had made alliance long ago, building his knowledge from their sedimented memory. Should he zoom into this large scale picture and experience other perspectives, this knowledge would become quite vertiginous.

I remember thinking: maybe this has to do with our new condition, where shifts in scale and perspective become necessary to address the current anthropogenic environmental changes, however we want to call this period... Maybe we need to learn how to live with vertigo?

027



028

Anthropologist Anna Tsing argues that the Anthropocene should be thought of as the time of the loss of refugia. In the Holocene, there were abundant refugia, or places of refuge where re-worlding in cultural and biological diversity was possible. In the Anthropocene, the refuges are disappearing. The webs of life are shrinking; the stresses and damage are too much, too fast. One definition of catastrophe: a situation impossible to prepare for or adapt to.

029

Within the spectrum of related or equivalent terms surrounding the Anthropocene, like the one by Donna Haraway, there seems to be agreement around the fact that the Anthropocene is a catastrophe. But there is another way to think about it, which was conceptualised by Nick Land and Sadie Plant in a 1994 essay entitled *Cyberpositive*, in which they wrote about 'Anastrophe'

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Armin Linke, ReN_008186_5, Erich-Ollenauer Haus, former SPD headquarters Bonn, Germany, 20/03/2014

028

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Gene Ray, Geneva, 07/12/2015
Adeena Mey, Geneva, 07/12/2015

in contrast to 'Catastrophe'. For them, 'Catastrophe is the past coming apart. Anastrophe is the future coming together. [...] Crisis is convergence misinterpreted by mankind.' So this opens up a totally different way of thinking and rearranging the future, from the future and the post-human.

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031

What is driving climate chaos and the loss of biological and cultural diversity? The system, the global social process, rather than some abstract 'humanity'. But let's be more precise: it is the transnational corporations directed by the elite 1% and supported and defended by the most powerful states, working by force through military and covert intervention, and by 'law' through the World Bank, IMF and WTO. These agencies – the same ones that are enclosing commons, destroying Indigenous communities, privatising the public, and precarising labour – are those most responsible for anthropogenic environmental change. But if the elites and deciders of capitalist modernity are the drivers of planetary melt-down and mass extinction, can 'green capitalism' and 'eco-modernism' really be expected to save the day?

030

Armin Linke, ReN_003677_2, EPFL, Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne, Alps model, Lausanne, Switzerland, 13/12/2001

031

Gene Ray, Geneva, 07/12/2015



The technique here is recognised in its critical value as such and resembles the ones brought about by the spectator in a mutual recognition of a thin threshold of pain: the technique limits the observation, just as the seeing is already limited as it looks towards something that isn't any more codifiable than it already is (an extremely institutionalised setting, an inhuman architecture, etc.): *here, look how limited we are.*

The contribution was conceived as a result of the Critical Theory seminar by Gene Ray on December 7-9, 2015 with Armin Linke that included a presentation of *The Anthropocene Atlas of Geneva*, a research project by Aurélien Gamboni, Gene Ray, Janis Schroeder, and Kate McHugh Stevenson initiated in the context of the CCC Research Master Programme in 2013.

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Xenofeminist Session

In conversation with the Reading Group seminar
Laboria Cuboniks
Yoneda Lemma

Why take a politics of alienation as a point of departure to think from? What does xenofeminism enable us to think towards questions of gender, algorithms, science, economics, and violence? In which ways does Laboria Cuboniks advance an affirmation of abstraction as an episto-political necessity for 21st century claims on equality? And how does xenofeminist thinking, as proposed by Yoneda Lemma, stretch into sonic reflections that connect the universal world of functors to the universal world of morphisms?

Reading Group (Yael Wicki) I will try to formulate the first group's questions: first, what is your definition of freedom? And what is the link to alienation? Both concepts come together in the *Xenofeminist Manifesto* and we thought it would be nice to hear more. Also, at the beginning of the text there is a link to collectiveness, to collective thinking, so we were wondering how you think about collectiveness.

ZERO
0x01

[...] We are all alienated – but have we ever been otherwise? It is through, and not despite, our alienated condition that we can free ourselves from the muck of immediacy. Freedom is not a given – and it's certainly not given by anything 'natural'. The construction of freedom involves not less but more alienation; alienation is the labour of freedom's construction. Nothing should be accepted as fixed, permanent, or 'given' – neither material conditions nor social forms. [...]

0x04

[...] There is no 'feminine' rationality, nor is there a 'masculine' one. Science is not an expression but a suspension of gender. If today it is dominated by masculine egos, then it is at odds with itself – and this contradiction can be leveraged. Reason, like information, wants to be free, and patriarchy cannot give it freedom. Rationalism must itself be a feminism. Xenofeminism (XF) marks the point where these claims intersect in a two-way dependency. It names reason as an engine of feminist emancipation, and declares the right of everyone to speak as no one in particular.

TRAP
0x0D

[...] What requires reengineering are the memetic parasites arousing and coordinating behaviours in ways occluded by their hosts' self-image; failing this, memes like 'anonymity', 'ethics', 'social justice' and 'privilege-checking' host social

dynamisms at odds with the often-commendable intentions with which they're taken up. The task of collective self-mastery requires a hyperstitional manipulation of desire's puppet-strings, and deployment of semiotic operators over a terrain of highly networked cultural systems. The will will always be corrupted by the memes in which it traffics, but nothing prevents us from instrumentalising this fact, and calibrating it in view of the ends it desires.

Laboria Cuboniks (Helen Hester)

Freedom and alienation definitely go together in the text, you're completely right about that. We argue that alienation is the labour of freedom's construction – that a certain degree of alienation from the conditions in which we live enables us to better recognise the possibility of challenging and transforming these conditions. Feeling that you're alien from something can make it seem much more malleable. But the word 'alienation' circulates in numerous, sometimes ambivalent, ways within the text: from technological 'alienation' in relation to labour; to a productive 'alienation' from reproductive embodiment; to abstraction as a general condition for so-called 'Promethean' thinking. The *Manifesto* moves towards a 'politics for alienation' then, not only in the sense of arguing for an openness to certain experiences of alienation, but also in terms of its ambitions to engage with current conditions of exploitation and to forge alliances with subjects rendered socially and politically alien.

Yoneda Lemma

Alienation, or estrangement, was important in early philosophy. Philosophers might temporarily inhabit alien positions when thinking differently within their societies. Alienation coincides with liberation, through realisation and modulation or separation. You are automatically tapping into something 'alien' when you do not conform to definitions or identifications. When you bring a new idea or question or you bring a concept and start

to reinvestigate things – which modulates your position without essence – alienation might become a part of the methodological process. It is also at the experiential crux of entering unknown situations, a constant 'yet' formulated within the poetry of every realisation. Self-realisation is not easy: you are also always becoming alien to yourself. In other words, alienation can be an enabling feature for having a propensity to live without fixation. And so, I think there must be an underlying philosophy of alienation that is a kind of precursor to remaking collective intelligence, firstly, by developing a constant ease with fearlessness and immanence, arriving at each situation anew; and secondly, by remaining 'global' above the twists in delusional philosophies.

LC (HH)

This links to your second question about the collective. For us, it is a collective. The idea of 'alienation' was really important from the beginning too. Because we didn't know what we would do, what we were doing. We were generating a sort of theory that was alien to itself. We did not understand the direction it could go in. We drafted the *Manifesto* hoping – indeed, we continue to hope – that it might proliferate in ways beyond us. And we've seen XF being taken up by people who are working on independent artistic projects and dealing with different disciplines or ideas. There is something really interesting about being made alien from 'your' ideas. But XF never really belonged to any one of us, even from the beginning, because we are six women working together and not always agreeing on everything. So, there isn't a single voice between or within Laboria Cuboniks. To some extent, what we are doing is a very partial, small-scale performance of the idea of the 'intersectional universal', where we are looking for that piece of common ground between six divergent opinions, six different disciplinary backgrounds – a territory that seems to have currency for all of us that we can do things with and around

which we can mobilise. From archaeology to cyber-security, from gender studies to philosophy to art, we are trying to find a set of ideas that all of us can, to a greater or lesser degree, subscribe to and get our teeth into. The most obvious sense in which we think of the collective is as six people constantly negotiating with each other and not always agreeing. And this process also ties into some of our ideas around scale. It's there, right? This idea of needing to think beyond the micro-political and the individual, of trying to make connections, to figure out how fractured insurgencies can be thought of and brought together. So, the collective on multiple scales, from the very small to the much grander: the work of trying to find ways of forging a collective thinking.

On the topic of the 'xeno' and the alien, one limitation of the *Manifesto* is that we do not do enough to address the non-human. I would like to see xenofeminist ideas applied to the pursuit of multispecies eco-justice and related ideas – to think about a kind of xeno-hospitality that exceeds the human. There is a lot of scope for extending this project, and it is exciting to see eco-queer collectives like Les Bitches in Italy picking up on these possibilities. It's exactly what we were hoping for when we wrote the *Manifesto*.

YL

This also brings us to the question of time in cultural praxis. How can we rethink time, with processes occurring on multiple scales and the future of the universe abducting us? What is actually happening with what we call 'change' in 'nature' and how nature's various levels interlock? To really develop ourselves or our societies in terms of nature's complexity – and especially not to separate nature from machines – is important and requires a renewed interest in metaphysics and multiple logics.

RG (YW)

During the Reading Group, we noticed that there were so many positive vibes going on in the *Xenofeminist Manifesto* towards a change, or the possibility for



Xenofeminist Session, Latoria Cuboniks, visuals, projection, CCC, Geneva, January 4, 2016. Credit: Eric Philippoz



Xenofeminist Session, Yoneda Lemma, audio performance, CCC, Geneva, January 4, 2016. Credit: Eric Philippoz

change, but what would it actually mean? Where could it happen? How could it happen? We were wondering if there are examples that you already know of or that you could point to?

LC (HH) In terms of xenofeminist ideas in practice?

RG (YW) Exactly.

INTERRUPT

0x07

[...] We want to cultivate the exercise of positive freedom – freedom-to rather than simply freedom-from – and urge feminists to equip themselves with the skills to redeploy existing technologies and invent novel cognitive and material tools in the service of common ends.

0x08

The radical opportunities afforded by developing (and alienating) forms of technological mediation should no longer be put to use in the exclusive interests of capital, which, by design, only benefits the few. There are incessantly proliferating tools to be annexed, and although no one can claim their comprehensive accessibility, digital tools have never been more widely available or more sensitive to appropriation than they are today. [...]

LC (HH) One interesting area to consider here is the material on biotechnologies and circumventing medical gatekeepers through open-source medicine. We've seen a couple of people responding directly to our ideas about this, including the *Open-Source Gendercodes* project, which is experimenting with transgenic tobacco plants as a means by which people might more freely access hormones by growing them at home! We're also really excited by the work of the GynePunk collective which, to my mind, takes up second wave feminist ideas about putting 'women's health in women's hands', with a focus on explicitly extending these principles to queer and

trans* people, and those who might face barriers in accessing institutionalised healthcare, including immigrants, sex workers, those without health insurance, and so on. The group is interested in gynaecological medicine and is exploring new ways of practising this, from 3D-printing specula, to encouraging people to take an agential role in the collection of samples, to developing devices for basic DIY diagnostic testing. The whole project is about circumnavigating commercialised, exclusionary medical institutions and gatekeepers as much as possible. It's interesting because, for example, the Pap smear has, for a number of years, been something that gynaecologists (in the US in particular) have desperately tried to claim and hold on to as their own. There's no insurmountable reason why Pap smears couldn't be self-administered in the home and then sent to a lab; indeed, the inventor of the Pap smear explicitly explored this possibility and argued that it would have no impact on the quality of the sample collected. Gynaecologists are not keen on people doing that, however, because to de-professionalise the Pap smear would be to restrict a regular revenue stream.

It's also very important to think about the raced history of things like gynaecological testing, because there's a long history of black women being experimented on, often without either consent or anaesthetic. The bodies of black slaves played a crucial role in the development of the speculum, for example – a tool that later became a kind of icon for the women's movement's self-help practices. The raced dynamics of reproductive medicine further play out in the ignominious histories of birth control practices, including forced sterilisations of 'othered' populations. Ideas like this feel as if they are things of the past – as if this chapter has long since been closed, and we live in more enlightened and reflexive times – but unfortunately this isn't the case. Even in recent decades,

we have seen the development of new forms of contraception coupled with racist and classist rhetoric. When the Norplant contraceptive implant was launched in the 1990s, for example, one of the first things that certain commentators were asking was: ‘Can we force this upon welfare recipients? Can we compel women who have been in prison to use this?’ There was a clear interest in ensuring the supposed health of the body politic by preventing procreation amongst ‘bad’ or undesirable populations. There has to be continual education around this – constant and persistent vigilance about the way in which the sexual health of bodies is policed and monitored.

Reading Group (Camilla Paolino) I would like to reconnect to what you just said about this idea of hacking gender, hormones, and so on, since in our reading of it, we found it quite problematic. We were wondering about the dangers and risks the concept of open source may imply, because, of course, being freely accessible by definition, they could be used by those in power as a means of domination and exploitation. And also, we considered the related question of possible dependency or addiction. Even if it’s very inspiring as an idea it also presents a lot of dark sides, and that’s what we would like to discuss.

ZERO
0x01

Anyone who’s been deemed ‘unnatural’ in the face of reigning biological norms, anyone who’s experienced injustices wrought in the name of natural order, will realize that the glorification of ‘nature’ has nothing to offer us – the queer and trans* among us, the differently-abled, as well as those who have suffered discrimination due to pregnancy or duties connected to child-rearing. XF is vehemently anti-naturalist. Essentialist naturalism reeks of theology – the sooner it is exorcised, the better.

ADJUST
0x11

Our lot is cast with technoscience, where nothing is so sacred that it cannot be reengineered and transformed so as to widen our aperture of freedom, extending to gender and the human. To say that nothing is sacred, that nothing is transcendent or protected from the will to know, to tinker and to hack, is to say that nothing is supernatural. ‘Nature’ – understood here, as the unbounded arena of science – is all there is. And so, in tearing down melancholy and illusion; the unambitious and the non-scaleable; the libidized puritanism of certain online cultures, and Nature as an un-remakeable given, we find that our normative anti-naturalism has pushed us towards an unflinching ontological naturalism. There is nothing, we claim, that cannot be studied scientifically and manipulated technologically.

OVERFLOW
0x1A

[...] ‘Nature’ shall no longer be a refuge of injustice, or a basis for any political justification whatsoever! If nature is unjust, change nature!

LC (HH) One thing that we say in the *Manifesto*, is that there is an element of risk involved. As such, we frame a number of our positions as questions: ‘Can we extend the principles of gender hacking in such a way so as to avoid endangering people’s health and people’s lives?’ But it’s important to recognise that a lot of people’s lives, in one way or another, are already endangered or unbearable right now. We should not allow fears about the future potential misuses of these technologies to occlude the importance of people having agency over their gendered embodiment—we must not lose sight of collective issues when considering individualised risks.

RG (CP) But for example – and this is a very dystopian idea – what if they were imposed by people occupying a power position, to dominate and choose for others? For instance, we were considering the example of some familiar environments – the framework of the United States is the first one that came to mind – in which the mother or the father would give medications for mental disease to their children, mistaking puberty or teenage melancholies for depression. They actually use medication on very young children or teenagers, just because they misunderstand the real problem, which, in most cases, simply has to do with a specific phase of life. Now, when hormones become open source and people have free access to them, what if some very conservative father, against queerness and so on, sees that his young son is effeminate and decides to give him hormones to make him more ‘manly’? You know, these are very drastic projections, but they make us question this proposition and the danger it entails. What if the person in power – a father, or the state, or what have you – decides to use these new technologies and the power to change nature *against* the human being?

YL This sounds like a form of family abuse – not unrelated to problematic twists in contemporary social health systems in the West. A lot of people worried that abortion, for instance, would be used wrongly, but that’s definitely *not* a reason to make it unavailable.

LC (HH) Yes – there is a risk that, as so often happens, technology ends up being emphasised at the expense of underlying social relations; in your example, transphobia, heterosexism, patriarchy, and the misogynist denigration of femininity are key factors in precluding autonomy and embodied agency. Within the philosophy of open source gender projects, the *self* is the locus of experimentation. It is more about Preciado’s ‘auto-guinea pig principle’ than it is about subjecting non-consenting others to one’s will.

YL Our bodies are chemically very sensitive and we are still so unaware of the fluctuations. We need to develop more sensitive methods in medical practices that also appreciate our bodies and what we can do with them, outside ‘medical’ concerns.

Reading Group (Aurélien Ballif) In the *Manifesto*, this kind of technological advance and technological possibilities are one aspect of it, but there is also the other aspect of raising the consciousness of everyone, and questioning what one can do and should do about one’s own moral conduct. So I think that this aspect in relation to the technological advance, makes a lot of sense because, as Camilla was saying, it’s a risk, but the whole project would advance like that, with all these different aspects; it kind of resolves itself. Of course it’s an ideal, but that’s the way I understood it.

ZERO

0x02

[...] XF seeks to strategically deploy existing technologies to re-engineer the world. Serious risks are built into these tools; they are prone to imbalance, abuse, and exploitation of the weak. Rather than pretending to risk nothing, XF advocates the necessary assembly of techno-political interfaces responsive to these risks. Technology isn’t inherently progressive. Its uses are fused with culture in a positive feedback loop that makes linear sequencing, prediction, and absolute caution impossible. Technoscientific innovation must be linked to a collective theoretical and political thinking in which women, queers, and the gender non-conforming play an unparalleled role.

INTERRUPT

0x06

Global complexity opens us to urgent cognitive and ethical demands. These are Promethean responsibilities that

cannot pass unaddressed. Much of twenty-first century feminism – from the remnants of postmodern identity politics to large swathes of contemporary ecofeminism – struggles to adequately address these challenges in a manner capable of producing substantial and enduring change. Xenofeminism endeavours to face up to these obligations as collective agents capable of transitioning between multiple levels of political, material and conceptual organization.

PARITY

0x10

[...] Xenofeminism seeks to construct a coalitional politics, a politics without the infection of purity. [...]

LC (HH) There's an explicit moment where we essentially posit just that, where we talk about the fact that technologies do tend to be co-opted: 'It is imperative that we develop an ideological infrastructure that both supports and facilitates feminist interventions within connective, networked elements of the contemporary world. Xenofeminism is about more than digital self-defence and freedom from patriarchal networks. We want to cultivate the exercise of positive freedom – freedom-to rather than simply freedom-from' – so, the freedom to assemble our own forms of gender embodiment, as well as the freedom *from* the threat of immediate abuse, for example – 'and urge feminists to equip themselves with the skills to redeploy existing technologies and invent novel cognitive and material tools in the service of common ends.' And then we immediately go on to say: 'Serious risks are built into these tools; they are prone to imbalance, abuse, and exploitation of the weak. Rather than pretending to risk nothing, XF advocates the necessary assembly of techno-political interfaces responsive to these risks.' So that's exactly what you were saying: the idea that there *is* a risk, but that actually doing

nothing is also a risk, but one that disavows itself. So okay, we'll let people suffer in bodies that they hate, or insist that they perform a gender that has been inflicted upon them. All of this is already a terrible risk to people, but because simply letting a situation perpetuate itself is not an active intervention, it feels like less of a risk. I would much rather advocate for a form of risk that makes life liveable for a lot of people who are suffering right now, than a form of risk that involves doing nothing to protect an imaginary future child. It's interesting that it is the child, too, who tends to be the icon for this kind of conservative risk-aversion, as if the life of a hypothetical future child is of more significance than the lives of real people right now, who happen to be adults and are therefore no longer important!

Reading Group (Duke Choi) I was thinking about gaining consciousness of the labour of resources. You mentioned growing tobacco as a means to create hormones, but we are actually consuming a huge quantity of soy products, which contain a high concentration of oestrogens already. Today, in the US, men going to the gym take tons of steroids to become more aggressive. It's becoming highly accelerated in this kind of masculine demonstration and it's kind of scary! I think that we have to be conscious of our own labour and what we do in our everyday lives. You talked about technology and how women became part of the industry during World War II, making bombs for the army. Nowadays, it has been translated to textiles and to electronic equipment. We could also see it as an act of violence on nature: even if we are unconscious of it, we're still partaking in a violent manner, not like war, or guns, or these kinds of immediate acts of violence, but slow ones.

LC (HH) The fact is that these processes are replete with tensions and contradictions. There is something very unsettling about the fact that the availability of hormones on

the market and their general accessibility is built upon historical and ongoing animal testing, for example. One can see the real benefits of having access to these technologies, whilst also recognising that medical innovation is underpinned by both human and non-human suffering. There's no easy way to negotiate this terrain. All one can do is aspire to limit harm, whilst seeking to leverage the opportunities afforded by the current moment. A lot of terrible things have happened to bring us to where we are, and these cannot be undone and must not be overlooked. But what is available to us in this moment that we can take and use and do something better with, to try to reduce the sheer amount of shit we'll have to face in the future? It's not easy and it's not clean, but if we keep waiting for a moment when we can advance an entirely unsullied politics, we'll be waiting forever. History up until this point has been a river of shit! That's where we're starting from. There is no clean point beyond this river from which to begin an emancipatory project.

YL

Better build the Ark.

LC (HH)

An ark for a river of shit! Yes, that's something to aspire to. Except that arks are so heteronormative... A queer ark, upon which to sail on the river of shit that is history – that's Xenofeminism!

The contribution is a result of the initiative by students of the Reading Group seminar, lead by Cécile Boss and Janis Schroeder, to invite Laboria Cuboniks and Yoneda Lemma on January 4, 2016.

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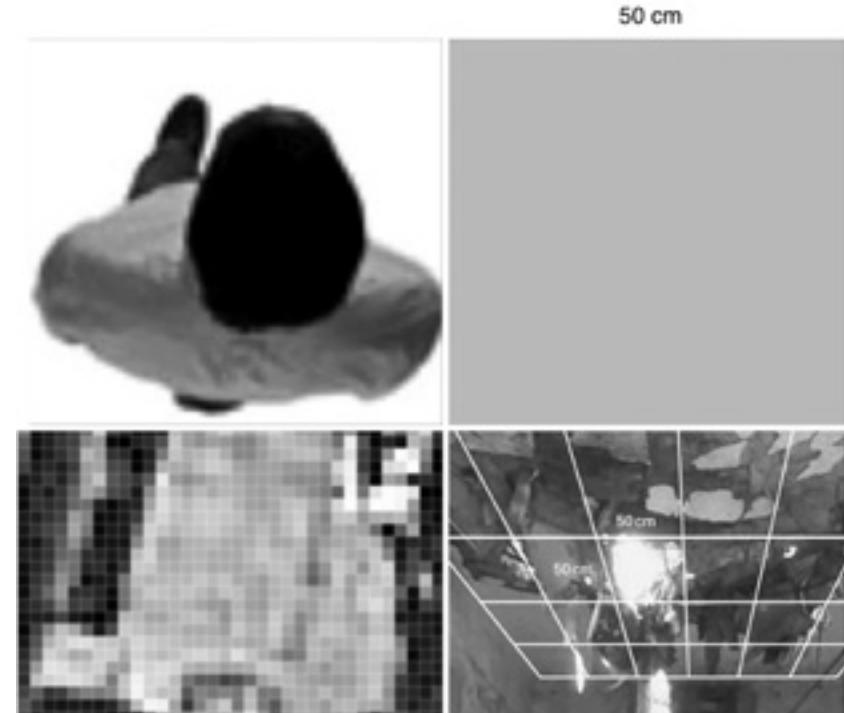
Violence at the Threshold of Detectability

In conversation with Pool CH
Eyal Weizman

Why is it necessary to develop a new visual vocabulary for the production of images as material evidence in political ecologies, environmental rights, war and humanitarian violence? What can research in visual cultures and spatial-political practices do for questions of law and justice? What are the limits of constructing the architecture of memory by visual means? What can be done about 'holes' in the materiality of events?

Pool CH (Doreen Mende) In *Forensic Architecture*, you are working in a research formation together with activists, victims, artists, architects, and lawyers; your transdisciplinary research refuses to deliver the linear expert's perspective in the conventional sense. How does this range of perspectives come together so as to have an impact that operates and unfolds its elements before the law?

Eyal Weizman Our conception of 'forensis' reaches beyond the walls of the court. Forensis calls for 'the art of the public forum' that operates differently than the methodologies of forensic sciences. We are not interested in 'forensics' as an expert science but in 'forensis' as a public practice. If you write a report for the Human Rights Council of the United Nations, your burden of proof is different than if you present it in the National Court or Supreme Court.



Top: The resolution of 50 cm/pixel (in which the size of a pixel is half a meter by half a meter) has been established to avoid the risk of privacy infringement lawsuits because this is the frame within which the human body fits when seen from above. But important details of strategic sites are also camouflaged in this resolution, as are the consequences of violence and violations.

Bottom: The roof of a building in Miranshah, Pakistan, that has been hit by a drone-fired missile. The form of destruction is masked in the photo's pixelation. Image source: DigitalGlobe, Inc., March 31, 2012. Next to it a still from footage broadcast on MSNBC of the aftermath of a March 30, 2012 drone strike in Miranshah, Pakistan, showing the entry hole of a missile through the ceiling of a room. Image constellation: Forensic Architecture.

Each one has its own protocols. We tend to work always to the highest protocol, so that it could potentially go there. However, National Courts are still more conservative than international courts, which are a bit more receptive to new technologies. If we are in court, we are the prosecutors, are we not? The defence will always try to poke holes in your arguments, therefore, their attack on us is three-fold. First of all: 'Who are you? You have an MFA in Architecture?! You are not experts?!'

Citizen science

From the court's perspective, an aesthetic practice can add a poetic or personal dimension. But that is not what we are interested in! We think that as image practitioners, we have a sensibility to compose, to look, and to identify. We want to find ways for articulating what it means to be 'aestheticised to politics', for example, to feel politics as if your skin is incredibly tuned. Sometimes you cannot bear pain because you feel it. It is less mediated but immediate. We never numb ourselves to the statistical dimension of politics. Sure, that's not an argument for the court. However, in a situation in which most evidence is visual, who does the court want to speak with if not image-makers? This is how we slowly carve a space for ourselves within a mainstream imperative of expertise. The second thing: 'But you are not neutral, right?' Our argument with 'forensis' is that truth is produced through conflicts and activism. We want to undo the 19th century notion of the 'expert as being objective and neutral.' We want to talk about the 'militant expert' that uses a militant science, a citizen science. We always take the side of the victim. We try to introduce new technologies to see things that create a new composition, an

assemblage, to be active in the court – to open up the field of vision. We try to expand the possibility of speech, vision, and listening in a way that creates a juridical precedent, because this is how the law works. We need to try things out. At first, the court would say 'no' and throw us out. But step by step, they will open up the conventions.

Pierre Hazan We see the indifference of large segments of society who don't care if thousands of men, women, and children are dying in the Mediterranean Sea trying to reach Europe. How do you deal with this process of de-sensitisation in your work?

EW The fact that we are sitting right now in an academic framework means that we are not technically an NGO. We research political dimensions in order to write about them, to make them public. We have setup a kind of auto-critique inside our own organisation. Médecins Sans Frontières have been using the idea of auto-critique that influenced us in our way of thinking, for example, to evaluate each case regarding questions of whether we should enter the court, or operate outside of the court; how should we address the public? How should we address the law; to how many forums should we bring the same evidence? This is a form of mitigating the complicity with juridical systems: we are not fanatics for the law and we do not believe that there is any political salvation in law. We believe that a legal process is only as good as the political process is. You need to work both inside and outside of court. Then, you arrive at a much more fundamental problem: when we give our work to a prosecutor, we say: 'You never have an exclusive right over this.' Because we will take the same material that we are showing in court to the public domain, for example, to an exhibition at an art institution in order to circulate it in public as protection against singular ownership by the court.

Pool CH (Tina Wetchy)

Would the modelling of a maximum of criteria, extending to migration, allow a causal link to form and make it possible to bring certain crimes, such as displacements caused by global warming, to court?

EW

We are living in a period where concepts of the image – the proof and knowledge, what we see and what we make available – are expanding to such an extent that it has become necessary, as you say precisely, not to remain evidence only for violations that are already articulable. Rather, our turbulent times require new definitions of equality, and therefore, we need new ways of detecting inequalities today. The correlation between cause-and-effect – in relation to climate change leading to environmental destruction, and environmental destruction leading to war – we can call this a ‘feedback loop’. We don’t know exactly what is the ‘cause’ and what is the ‘effect.’ However, perhaps it is not that important, because the correlation statistics demand another form of engagement; it can show us different types of violations that demand new definitions of justice and injustice.

Slow violence

This is exactly the situation that also makes it necessary to redefine contemporary image practices as a practice of three-dimensional modelling. For example, *Forensic Architecture* is engaged with a commission to do with forest fires in Indonesia. The biggest forest fires in history, massive pollution the equivalent of the total annual emissions in Germany or Great Britain, are happening monthly in Indonesia and also Malaysia, and to a certain extent Thailand, but they also encourage extreme capitalistic extraction through the cultivation of palm oil. There is a very important figure in this case overlooked

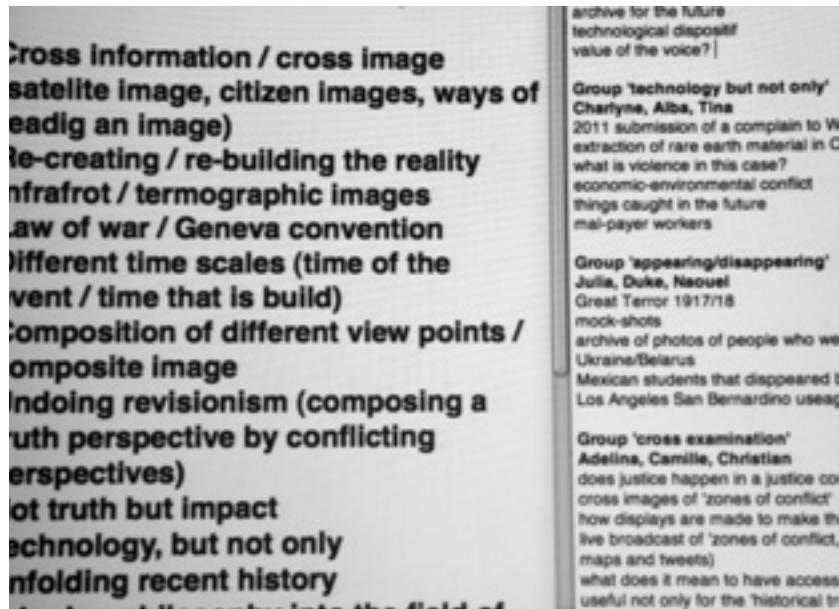
by the law, namely a community of orangutan apes. If we leave the question of human rights aside, then we encounter a great breakthrough in terms of cognitive and behavioural psychology, and neurology, in the understanding of the personhood of apes. Only by expanding the realm of equality, does it become possible to include an orangutan as a climate refugee in the debate. Something that is ‘murdered’ rather than ‘killed’. ‘Murdered’ means that there is a basic equality. You don’t murder a cat, a dog, or a bird, but you can murder an ape. To speak about that kind of threshold condition is yet another kind of expansion of the sensible as it is expanding the notion of equality through new signs. Robert Nixon, a literary critic, introduces in his book *Slow Violence* an understanding of violence as an eruptive type of ‘affection’ that has a direct perpetrator and a victim: ‘slow violence’ is the slow erosion, almost imperceptible, of the environment. Intoxication, destruction of the air, the water, the rivers, the plants. You can hardly photograph it. The processes of slow violence are so slow that they are imperceptible. How to make them perceptible? How to narrate them? How to make them appear as subjects of history?

Pool CH (Charlyne Kolly)

My question relates to the modelling and contemporary image practices that were discussed earlier. Do you develop your own software for this kind of modelling?

EW

We have developed the open source software *patrn.co*. It’s public domain and responds to two important questions that we encountered in our work: first, how can we circumvent the military disqualifying our work on the basis of it being ‘a single incident’? And how can we respond to the challenges of the law by providing proof of systematic grave, widespread violation, which is not about any single incident, but a repetition, a relation between incidents? The second relevant concern is:



Violence at the Threshold of Detectability, working protocol of group session, projection, CCC, Geneva, February 22, 2016. Credit: Eric Philippoz



Violence at the Threshold of Detectability, group work, CCC, Geneva, February 22, 2016. Credit: Eric Philippoz

how can we turn forensics into an operational tool for looking into future patterns, for example, allowing us to see a coastal guard in a particular area at a particular time, so we can warn migrants or activists? We can see the future, but in a very indeterminate, blurry way.

Eitan Diamond Regarding the challenge of establishing that violations can be widespread and systematic: when there is compelling evidence of illicit conduct, the tendency is often to sacrifice low-level agents whose guilt can hardly be denied, while at the same time denying and obfuscating the systemic failure for which more senior officials carry responsibility. It is here that revealing patterns becomes important. Because when you can convincingly show a pattern of violations recurring at different points in space and time and committed by different perpetrators you can locate responsibility at a higher level of planning and decision-making, namely with those who had the power and authority to set such patterns in place. In fact, the more widespread the pattern is exposed as, the higher up responsibility is seen to flow through the hierarchy of power and authority.

Pool CH (Kyrill Charbonnel) Regarding the difference between testimony and evidence, I wonder about the political impact of the image. There is the image that carries a certain abstract-aesthetic moment, for example the image-blur, but refuses to transport a mere description or expression of the crime. And there is the picture that frames the dead Palestinian child in the arms of his father, a common news-icon. Politically speaking, which has a stronger impact?

The blur

We see the camera as having two ends: it records the objects that the lens is directed at, and it records the subject who records it. If you move fast – this is a simple example – it will record that thing with a blur. That blur records the one behind the camera while recording what happens in front of it in movement. Reading the photograph from the imperfection of the images – that is what’s important. It’s always in the blur, in a motion, in the imperfect image that you see, in fact, the portrait of the videographer or photographer. There is software that allows you to correct blur, but how does software know what made the blur? If the software knows the movement of the camera that generated the blur, then it can also reconstruct the blur. It is a simple algorithm. Imagine how specific your portrait is within the blur in the image? The blur in an image is like the portrait of the photographer superimposed, as if you shoot through a glass that is half reflective. You see both, your own mirror image and the thing outside. This is what we are talking about. Therefore, to answer your question: in many cases, the image with the child de-politicises the crime and turns our gaze away from a detailed analysis of the historical conditions of violence in war.

Pool CH (Adelina Tsagkari) Trials are used to make the truth appear. Two lawyers defend two different perspectives with different arguments about two different visions of the same event. Now, if there is a platform like *Forensic Architecture* that crosses these two visions with the hope of making almost objective truth where you can see reality, then what is the role of the lawyer? What can the lawyer contribute to the processing of reality when confronted with a program that is actually cancelling the lawyer’s function? What’s your position to the truth?

ED Legal disputes are not just about rival readings of facts. They are about the application of norms to facts and this requires the interpretation of legal texts that

invariably contain an element of indeterminacy. In addition, judgement often depends on an evaluation of the mindset of the actors involved – how they understood the facts, what they foresaw, what they intended – and this too leaves open a lot of room for dispute. But even at the level of facts, it is doubtful that one could ever reveal an objective, unchallengeable vision of reality free from any constraint of perspective or framing and could not be put into question. What often happens in legal contests between powerful actors like states and victims of violations, is that the lawyers advocating on behalf of the powerful party have access to information and resources to make a more compelling argument about the facts. *Forensic Architecture* doesn’t obviate the legal contest, but instead equalises it. It is not about establishing consensus, but rather about providing a means for what Jacques Rancière calls ‘dissensus’: a break, or challenge to the reading of reality/truth driven by dominant forces. It makes a compelling case on behalf of the weak or disadvantaged.

Extreme peace

Pool CH (Christian Bill) When I read your text, *Violence at the Threshold of Detectability*, it opened for me the question of scale or frame. In Auschwitz, the means of exterminating people were chemicals: the grain of chemical salt is both the murder weapon and the clue that allowed a picture to become evidence. Now with drone technology, numerically controlled, the weapon dispatches the body into fragments, and the pixel – also a fragment – is used in forensics as the clue’s unit. I see a relation between the time and the means we have to acknowledge bodily disappearance along the history of technology. Where I’m

lost is here: if there is a threshold, is violence the extreme form of peace or peace the extreme form of violence?

EW Let me bring in here Plato's concept of the 'pharmakon'.

PC (CB) It's a poison that becomes remedy.

EW Or a remedy that becomes a poison. I think that doubling is very much my conception of making evidence and being in politics. Politics in practice is hard. It is always hard when you work in situations that are unclear. I think the closer you are, the closer in a 'pharmakon' scale, between the remedy and the cure, the closer you are to poison; it's the best way for the cure to operate, just under, it's a very dangerous place to be. Operating politically is dangerous. Politics is dangerous because actions in the world can always be complicit, actions in the world can sometimes hurt people more. There is no one clear or static solution to the problem of the 'pharmakon'. If you want to operate in the world, you become a 'pharmakon'. The decision to go to court is a difficult decision, because you are legitimising that court. You can use the court like Jacques Vergès against the law itself, by taking the law to trial. Before I started *Forensic Architecture*, I wrote a book titled, *The Least of All Possible Evil*, from which emerged my critique of the law. If you move from being a writer, as I was, to operating in the field of real politics, you need to work critically in a different way. You always need to measure your own complicity, and this is exactly the moment when theory can be useful, like a yardstick that helps you navigate.

Pool CH (Camille Kaiser) What if speech was not possible for the witnesses in the court? When is speech given back? Or is it possible to find justice outside the court in that sense?

EW I rarely see justice reached inside the court. I'm not in court to look for justice. I am in court to look for action. Is justice in the court? Is there god in the church? Is there wisdom in the university? Is there beauty in the museum? I would like to engage in a question for you: how do you

operate within this institution? How do you develop a critical practice, a self-reflective practice, that operates inside and outside, that saves what is valuable without ignoring the fight against that which is ridiculous? Do you think that this is a very limited horizon, a misunderstanding of art? Of course it is, but in every line that we draw, in every bite that we store, in every installation or film that we make, we know that we operate with this difficulty – the difficulty of practice.

The contribution results from the transversal project week of Pool CH (Master Platform Switzerland) on February 22-23, 2016 with Eyal Weizman, joined by Eitan Diamond and Doreen Mende.

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From the Virtual Feminist Museum to the Analysis of Biennial Culture:

Curatorial challenges and the politics of critical thinking, reading, and making art

In conversation with the Research Practice seminar and the Beyond the Monument Working Group
Griselda Pollock

How can contemporary history be approached through artistic practices? What can such an exhibitionary focus reveal about the history of contemporary art at the end of the history of art? Can curation be a critical and a political practice? Could an exhibition history constitute a method of studying such questions?

Griselda Pollock Each of us has a project. At the level of research, however, the concern is not only 'What's the research question?' but 'What is the archive?' and 'How are we going to investigate it?' That latter question leads to methodology, which takes place *through* a practice, or *on* a practice, or, when you are describing the curatorial, curation can itself be a research exercise. I would define it as a *thinking through making* or *thinking about making*. This leads to the questions: 'Will the work/exhibition *do* anything?' 'How do you initiate effects that will be transformative?' Those of you who have read my book on *Trauma and Aesthetic Transformation* will know that I clearly hold it onto the issue of *form*: 'trans-FORM-ation' and the notion of the 'FORM-ulation'. There are these two elements that are the legacy of modernist thinking on form. I am interested in the tension that emerges between the intense requirement for art students and people doing research to produce something that can be evaluated, and the possibility of research as a kind of thinking with and finding of forms for new knowledge or understanding. I wonder what the tension between productivity, evaluation, and creativity is for you. Has anyone been experiencing that? Has that been part of your conversations, individually or collectively?

Research Practice (Mandarava Bricaire) Yes, it speaks to my research in terms of the relationship between creating knowledge and how the process can end up shifting the interest of an artist towards his/her life. For me, it is precisely that: if one is too conditioned by the external object one has to produce as an artist or student, one risks locking and interrupting the transformation into an external and defined object. Instead, I am interested in how that process can leak into a vision of the world and of the self that is more universal. It does not necessarily have to be attached to an object. The final product of that process of transformation can be just *me*. Where the non-

conceptual is taken by 'the care of the self' into the conceptual research.

Forms of address

GP You are setting up the coordinates. Somebody is designated as a maker of a special kind – the artist – and something is designated as an object of a special kind – art. Setting these up against each other has a long-standing history in the modernisation process. We seem to be mediating that process now through the expansion of the term 'research' as we could learn it from curator-thinker Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev's model for *dOCUMENTA (13)*. Then, the subject/object opposition of art as production/product gives way to a more fluid process of activity and materialisation of thinking.

Research Practice (Camille Kaiser) In the CCC Programme, we all have very different backgrounds. We know that what we are looking for is different from the Fine Arts Programme; friends from this programme do not understand what I am doing. They ask: 'Are you making a film? Or are you writing a text?' And I would be tempted to say: 'No, no, I'm just taking two years to reflect,' without going into details.

GP You describe a certain kind of withdrawal from what we could call the 'productivist ethos' of the art school: make, make, make. In opposition to that, we need the time to reflect. Reflecting is also a kind of making that is equally necessary. This goes back to what Michel Foucault proposed as 'the care of the self'. Making a different kind of *self*: who will be the agent to become active? But I want to push this question a bit further. It

has to do with the question of research: is it external to artistic practice or do we confront a whole range of practices in a new fundamental way by thinking of research-led practice?

Let me read to you some passages from the writings of Elizabeth Grosz, an Australian feminist philosopher. She writes: 'We need concepts in order to think our way in a world of forces that we do not control. Concepts are not means of control, but forms of address that carve out for us a space and time in which we may become what can respond to the indeterminate particularity of events. Concepts are thus ways of addressing the future, and in this sense are the conditions under which a future different from the present – the goal of every radical politics – becomes possible.'

In the area of feminist theory, there is a dichotomy between thinking as an abstraction and doing as activism, which we might link with artistic making. Unless you have some sense – some theory or concept – of what it is you might legitimately or usefully or effectively do, your gestures may remain merely iterative and not transformative. She also writes: 'In short, theory is never about us, about who we are. It affirms only what we can become, extracted as it is from the events which move us beyond ourselves.' This is the incredibly important process of encountering whatever may be given in methodological process or research, or the critical readings into practice. The reason that I still think *with* art and think *about* art, is that there is a specific space in art-making – for historical reasons in modern times – that allows you, the artist, to speak in the first person. That is one of the privileges of being an artist. We do not like collectivisation in art. In scholarship, we use the 'we'. But in art and literature, culture allows the artist or writer to say 'I think' or to speak as a singular voice.



Griselda Pollock, *From the Virtual Feminist Museum to the Analysis of Biennial Culture: Curatorial challenges and the politics of critical thinking, reading, and making art, projection, CCC, Geneva, March 23, 2016.*
Credit: Eric Philippoz



Griselda Pollock, *From the Virtual Feminist Museum to the Analysis of Biennial Culture: Curatorial challenges and the politics of critical thinking, reading, and making art, projection, CCC, Geneva, March 23, 2016.*
Credit: Eric Philippoz

Grosz continues: ‘If theory is conceptual in this Deleuzian sense, it is freed from representation – from representing the silent minorities that ideology inhibited (subjects), and from representing the real through the truths it affirms (objects) – and is opened up to the virtual, to the future which does not yet exist.’ This relates to my concept of the Virtual Feminist Museum, which allows me to speak about the ‘virtuality of feminism’, feminism as that which does not yet exist. It has been actualized in part at different moments of its history. But now it is still to come. Thus it is the constant work of producing something that we do not yet know what it is. Let us understand that ‘feminist theory is essential, not as plan or anticipation of action to come, but as the addition of ideality, incorporeality.’ What she means is the very capacity to think beyond the real, or to think beyond what is currently embodied and materialised. We have to add that dreaming and the imagination are resistance ‘to the horrifying materiality of the present as patriarchal, racist and ethnocentric, a ballast to enable the present to be transformed.’ It is a way of thinking about the need to generate concepts and to think about theory as a kind of work in going beyond ourselves to open up the possibilities of change. The Virtual Feminist Museum, in that sense, is a concept with which I work, but neither as a topic nor as a theme: it works only by formulating, reconceptualising problems, and by not accepting labels.

Research Practice (Doreen Mende) This raises the question of the situatedness of one’s own research. Since it was founded 15 years ago, the CCC Programme has embraced many different points of departure, perspectives, and languages. Practice here may emerge as a hybrid from critical theory, vocabulary, and struggle. Where is the location of this kind of hybrid fabric? What kind of space does this kind of thinking and crossing produce? Does it not request also to be many: the ‘I’ is not only one, it is

many that resonates according to situations and contexts. Or is this the neoliberal trap? How do you think about the situatedness of research that tries to do things differently?

Intimacy of reading

GP In one sense, the absolutely classical text on this is, of course, Donna Haraway's *Situated Knowledges*, which centrally emerges out of feminist critique going back to Adrienne Rich. I also want to approach your question slightly differently. How do we meet the other? Also Gayatri Spivak has taught me in her book, *Death of a Discipline*, about a conceptual move to counter globalisation where everything is connected in what is clearly a web of capital holding us within it. Spivak proposes the counter-notion of 'the planetary' as a counter-concept to globalisation. While the global is something you look at from a distance and imagine, the planet is the place Spivak says that we inhabit. The central question here is: 'How do we co-inhabit this globe in all our differences?' One of her recommendations for learning how to do so is by reading, reading literature specifically. She also wants people to read literature in its own language even if you need to work with a translation. Why? It is a way to hear what is being said in the first person from different places in our shared planetary home.

Our language is so deeply imbedded with our becoming in language, with the first songs we hear, the first stories we hear. Language like this is not something that can simply be translated. But learning to read the

other's ways of seeing and saying is a way to resist globalisation and become planetary. In terms of my own work with students I aim to put a certain kind of 'intimacy of reading' into place. I relate Spivak's project to the concept that I created to undertake post-colonial feminist studies in art: generations and geographies. This was a way to reject nationalism and the imposition on artists of the straitjacket of geoethnicity. Each artist is situated at a unique point on the double axis of time and place, of history and space, of generation and geography, and thus no work is representative of a nationality but rather it is a creative intervention at that singular intersection, and from that point it is addressed by an 'I' to those who will 'read' it.

There is thus a counter-ethical political requirement to listen, to *intend* towards that which is otherwise silenced and not recognised, and to enable the processes of what Spivak sees as the 'intimacy of learning', which brings us to the transformations of subjectivity through aesthetic encounter. There is still this question at a certain point: where is there an 'I' who can act towards another? What makes us capable of that action, in a way that will not be phallic? What does that term mean? 'Phallic' does not have to do with men; it has to do with the logic by which binary-based language works. That logic is the logic of presence/absence, plus/minus and it produces not difference but asymmetrical hierarchies of its terms.

I am interested, therefore, in the work of Bracha Ettinger because she addresses elements of the formation of subjectivity that precede our entry into the phallic logic of language, which are outside its binary logic. She calls this other co-existing sphere of meaning, 'the Matrixial'. If we do not bring in the psychoanalytical, we will not grasp the play in art and life of phantasy, desire, and the unconscious.

Ettinger links the sources of the aesthetic experience and potentiality to these proto-subjective processes which she names 'the Matrixial'. The Matrixial refers to a non-phallic logic by which meaning can still be instituted in what she calls 'sense-knowing', attunement, co-response-ability. The situatedness of her Matrixial aesthetics is what she then names 'trans-subjectivity'. It is based on a capacity for responding to what is non-me (different from what is not-me, phallic different a and not a). In terms of art and its critical and transformative work, the question then concerns responsiveness and not situatedness. This gives rise more to an ethics of acknowledgement of where you are: situatedness or even generational and geographical positioning. It is the proto-ethical possibility of art as transformation because it requires our being partners in difference.

Feminist engagements

Nicole Schweizer

You've talked about *documenta* and about the Virtual Feminist Museum, to which you have dedicated two books. I would be very curious to bring the two parts together: How is *documenta* also a kind of virtual possibility? Does its feminist virtuality, however, also get lost, as in the case of *documenta 12*, where the feminist practice of the curation was not always recognised and instead, its difference was merely seen as being a failure as an exhibition?

GP

You have touched on the relation between the exhibition as event and the form of its cultural memory. Historically, since the middle of the 20th century, the memory of the

exhibition was located in the printed catalogue. The catalogue becomes the form in which we know about the history of a single exhibition and also of the art history of which that exhibition was a key instance. The catalogue becomes the dominant form of our knowledge about the history of contemporary art. I defined art history as a specific combination of time (history), space (exhibitions), and the archive, and thus the ways it creates memory.

We need to read these archives. We struggle with the absence of counter-readings, for example, with the absence of alternative forms for understanding contemporary art historically. *Documenta 12*, for anybody doing research, is at the mercy of what is now on the Internet in terms of critical responses. That will include a range of very negative criticisms and very few serious analyses. It is absolutely vital for me to provide a feminist-inflected reading of this but also the other *documenta* exhibitions, which form a series of prisms through which to track a history for contemporary art. I could point to the paradoxical moments particularly of Enwezor's *documenta 11*, which, I argue, unconsciously internalised feminist models while not acknowledging feminism as a force in art. *DOCUMENTA (13)* actively internalised feminism in its thinking in ways that helped shape its different ways of doing an exhibition, selecting and working with artists.

The history of art or of feminism is not just a story of events, but a matter of the shapes or absences of the cultural memory we produce for the past. I am developing this method of exhibitionary art history as the form of such a critical cultural memory. I did it with the history of feminist engagements in the visual arts, which can also be charted by studying the history of its key exhibitions. This method attends to those moments in time and space that crystallise our ability to see it as complex, heterogeneous, contradictory, and intersecting with other moments.

The Virtual Feminist Museum as research method and also as a method of presentation is different. It is conceived in terms of a kind of poetics of affect to produce the possibilities of different kinds of knowing that come about from what I bring together in this virtual thinking space. I want my readers to be affected as one path to critical awareness. I want to generate a certain kind of shock that enables people to realise a deep feminist issue: 'How completely indifferent are we to life' because of living in a phallogocentric logic.

Beyond the Monument (Pierre Hazan)

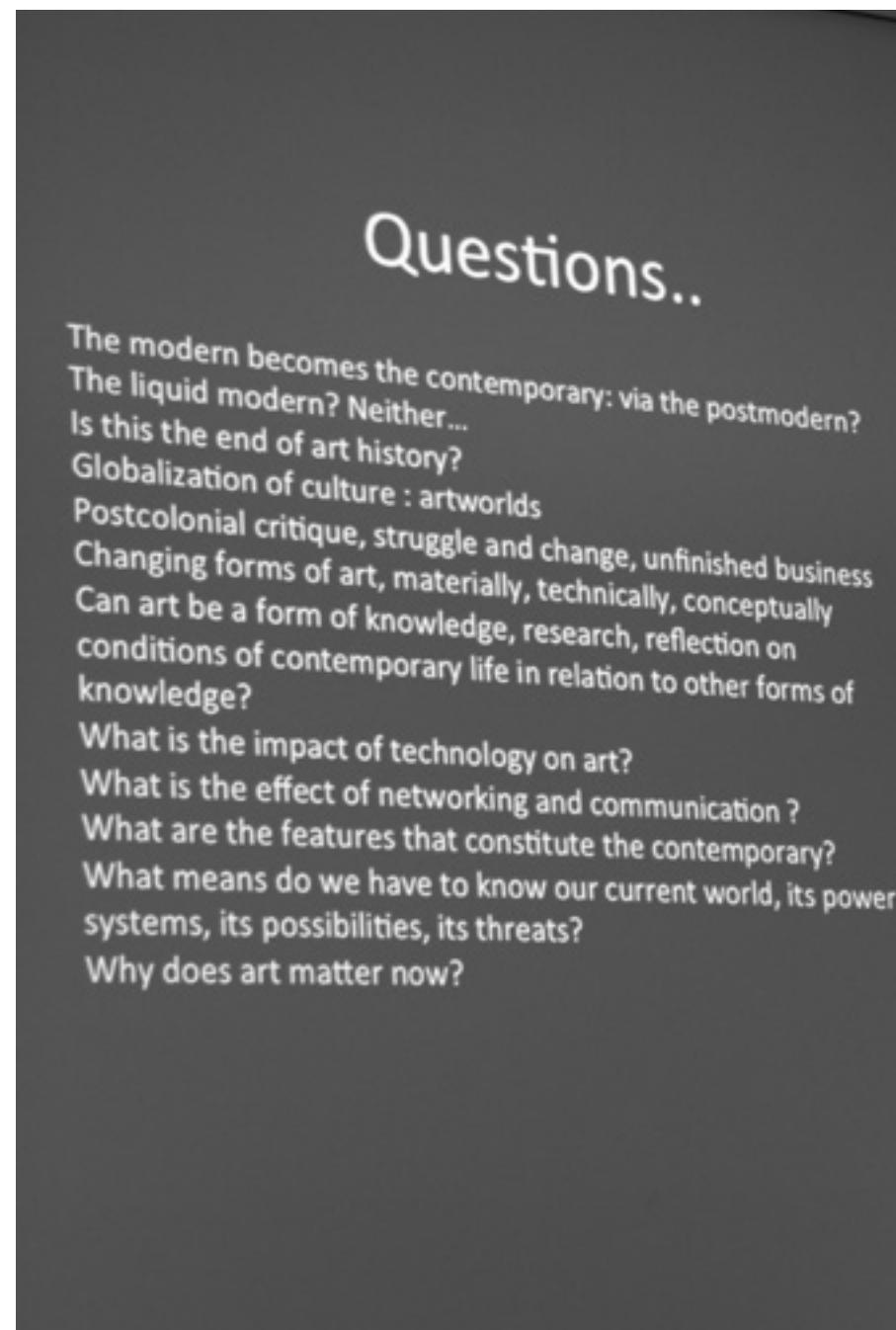
For a long time, there has been a tension between a policy of oblivion and a policy of remembrance, until the latter became the new norm in the 1990s. Today, with the development of new information technology, the process of memorialisation is taking place almost simultaneously with the events being commemorated; how do you read the implications of this shift in temporality?

Fragilisation

GP

Memorialisation can indeed become a means of *not* registering what has happened, precisely when we immediately overlay the event with our own affectivity. Let us think of some of the recent events in France or Istanbul. People spontaneously stand together and weep, lay the flowers, hold out the candles. But how quickly does that exceptional time-out pass back into ordinary life? If a memorial is installed, for instance, it takes over the job of the remembering, perhaps, for us, leaving us to follow a daily life.

I think we need to ask where is the space of fragilisation that allows us to register what has happened and to not just simply witness it and then move on. Bracha



Griselda Pollock, From the Virtual Feminist Museum to the Analysis of Biennial Culture: Curatorial challenges and the politics of critical thinking, reading, and making art, projection, CCC, Geneva, March 23, 2016. Credit: Eric Philippoz



Griselda Pollock, *From the Virtual Feminist Museum to the Analysis of Biennial Culture: Curatorial challenges and the politics of critical thinking, reading, and making art*, projection, CCC, Geneva, March 23, 2016. Credit: Eric Philippoz

Ettinger calls this new kind of subjective and social response 'wit(h)ness'. This is a created word, an invented concept in writing. It creates a suspended space between coming forward to say: 'Yes, I will witness that this has been done', and standing with someone, not just in solidarity in the old sense, but by being prepared to take into yourself something of the implications of the event, the wounding of an other. For Eric Santner, memorial practices are a means of how *not* to remember. Santner is one of the key thinkers of how monumentalisation is a way of *not* having to remember because it does involve us in practices where we realise our implication in the situation, our contributions or implications in different ways. The violence that Adriana Cavarero names 'horrorism' – that is the killing of the unarmed – is a terrifying form of contemporary violence. And it is not enough just to remember it. But the Internet turns atrocity into information. Witnesses are now those who take pictures and post photographs.

I think this is where the artistic practices work as a device or process that prolongs the memory of which you speak. Art can stage scenarios that demand that we stay with them long enough to be affected, and through such affection we allow ourselves to be shocked into thinking.

Some of the horroristic violence of our times are not state-sponsored or war-related.

At the end of her book, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt defined the violence of her times, initiated by Hitler and Stalin, as 'pan-movements'. A pan-movement offers a complete and single answer based on the incontrovertible law of Nature (Hitler), or History (Stalin). Under such laws, everybody is instrumentalised by this law. In effect, the human is abolished, sacrificed to the 'One'.

The sources of the contemporary forms of violence that lead to suicide bombing have these same characteristics. No life is valued for itself in the face of the law that

shapes the pan-movement. These pan-movements of our time exhibit a radical anti-modernity that is also radically anti-feminist and hostile to the very conditions that we have struggled to put in place to make lives livable for people, in terms of their rights to the fullness of their persons, their sexualities, their loves, and their ambitions. On the level of research, we need to be exploring the conditions for human cohabitation on the planet as we face them now, and asking what is the force with which we should speak back to people who want a world without the ambivalences and challenges of modernity. Yet we cannot speak back in the name of the 20th century and the modern because that is also broken by its own violence. And yet at the same time, we have to discover: what were the things that modernity delivered to us, that could become powerful life rather than death forces? And something around the question of some of these words – ‘Compassion is the original gesture of peace’ – speaks to me from the work of the artist Bracha Ettinger. Peace is not the opposite of violence; it is the production of the conditions for life. We are in the process of having to defend the conditions for life itself, life of humanity, life of the planet, life of what lives with us on the planet in the non-human forms of living, as we come to imagine a human life that is not bare life, but full. This is not the work of remembrance of past atrocities and violence. We are in a deeper crisis, in terms of being able to speak back to the kind of violence of the new pan-movements that have a single principle or belief as their law. We need to have a kind of vigilant memory which enables us to have a vocabulary for naming that which threatens human life: it used to be called ‘fascism’ or ‘totalitarianism’, the search for total domination.

Alert memory

In my work on concentrationary (*concentrationnaire*) memory and the role of aesthetics as a form of resistance to totalitarian terror, I go back to the end of the film by Alain Resnais, *Night and Fog (Nuit et Brouillard)*. The voiceover by the poet Jean Cayrol is partnered with an image of the exploded ruins of a crematorium at Auschwitz. But the message is this and its aim is to make us anxious about the present: ‘Do not believe for one minute that this monster of fascism lies dead under the ruins of the crematoria. It’s in the streets, everywhere. It may be you, or you, it may be me. We’re all capable of becoming the executioners of the future,’ he says. That’s where I’m coming from: a kind of intensely vigilant and alert use of memory to remind us that the potentiality of modernity is catastrophic but its critical aesthetic resources can be mobilised to make us anxious and hence active in the present.

Audience What about selecting the information? This is the first step of remembering. How do you see the relation between quantity of information and remembrance?

GP We have to make a constant distinction between ‘information’ and ‘knowledge’. Because you are right: we’re absolutely flooded with information, images, mobile phone recordings, news reports... It’s always the role of selection, distillation as you say, prolongation, and transformations, to the point at which you are asked to do some work. Something has to be mobilised in you. Let me give an example of Chantal Akerman’s film *Sud*. She is famous for long takes with fixed cameras. ‘How long does it take to see something even in the nothingness of just holding a camera in front of the road?’ when she just drives the car. *Sud* references the horrifying

racial killing of a young man, James Byrd Jr., who was dragged by white men behind their car on June 7th, 1998 in Jasper, Texas. Akerman sets up a camera and films driving down that same road, the same distance, showing in real time the time that James Byrd Jr. was dragged. It tells you exactly how long the killing and his body's horrific mutilation would have taken. Being with it in this cinematic time-space means that you learn to know something that's not shown to you, but, having seen the film, you know something about horror and racism that you will never un-know. This is the idea of 'wit(h)nessing'. There's an underlying psychological process of fragilisation, non-abandonment, and compassion that allows us to stand up and say: 'Yes, I'm going to be with it. I'm going to not just turn away, look at the news images and move on.' The film takes time and shows virtually nothing so as to exclude information while visually sensitising us and thus inciting compassion. Fragilisation is opposed to self-protection of an objectified paranoid self, that is, the one who wants to know in order to master. If I stay with it, as Akerman did to reveal the invisible right there, then I can't be the same anymore. What I am is now with what I have been asked to see slowly. That is a transformation affectively generated by the encounter with an artwork that is artworking.

The contribution is the result of the Research Practice seminar by Aymon Kreil, Doreen Mende, and Denis Pernet on March 21-22, 2016 that included a reflection on the research project *Beyond the Monument* by Pierre Hazan, Denis Pernet and Catherine Quéloz (initiated in the context of the CCC Research Master Programme in 2010) in conversation with Nicole Schweizer of the Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne.

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The Site of Not

In response to the Theory Fiction seminar
Fabien Giraud
Ida Soulard

How can we puncture the enclosed form of an ever-replicating present blocking any futurity, and develop strategies to open exit routes out of this stasis? How does this concern address the concept of 'site', as in site-specificity, as a normative framework for the evaluation of the artistic gesture? Why do we need to re-reason the concept of 'site'?

Over the past few years, we have been following different trajectories through three collective projects: a series of workshops and seminars entitled *The Matter of Contradiction* (2011-2013); an ongoing research project, *The Marfa Stratum* (2013-UTD); and *Glass Bead*, a research platform and journal (2012-UTD). These different projects can be seen as various attempts at contributing to the ongoing debate on the possibility of art's exit from the contemporary. We would like to share the questions and concerns animating this debate, for example, how can we puncture the enclosed form of an ever-replicating present blocking any futurity, and develop strategies to open exit routes out of this stasis?

If those three projects were, in the course of their development, informed and transformed by the work of their participants, they all started from the same initial collective diagnosis: the idea that any attempt at unbinding art from the contemporary requires the renegotiation of its inherited position in the general landscape of knowledge production. Or to put it otherwise, in order for art to make any claims on its political traction or its capacity to open to new social and organisational forms it must first come out of the epistemic periphery in which it has been placed. Each one of these projects, though very different in nature, can be thought of as a specific procedure attempting to achieve such an epistemic reformulation.

Orientation

An orientation is the act of giving a direction to a movement.

At the origin of the project *The Matter of Contradiction* was a shared recognition: the ecological crisis is an epistemic panic. What characterises our present is not only the discovery of a natural world endangered by our



Standing near the 1906 ground rupture northwest of Olema in Marin County. Credit: J. B. Macelwane Archives, Saint Louis University



A computing division in Washington, DC, 1924.

actions (ecological crisis) but more widely the radical disruption that such a situation brings in the order of constituted knowledge (epistemic crisis). The appearance of new phenomena or ‘ecological objects’ – such as the plastic Gyre in the Pacific or radioactive materials – both created by humans and constituted of layers whose temporalities or spatial distributions exceed the scale of human experience, demands a reconfiguration of art’s position within the general field of knowledge. Art can no longer be seen as a shield against these traumas revealed by scientific reason. It can no longer ensure the safeguard of subjective experiences sealed off from their background. Instead, it needs to register the apparent meltdown of these categories, the collapse of art’s immune function and the full epistemic disorientation resulting from it.

The Matter of Contradiction was organised as a collective thought experiment within and through this collapse. Through a series of workshops and public events it tried to map out the ungrounded epistemic terrain on which we stand.

In this investigation of the ungrounded, the diagrammatic method became central to our experiment and helped us orientate within the panic. Contrary to a map, which unfolds in a metric and is thus inscribed in a pre-determined frame of reference, a diagram produces its own metric and constructs its own frame of reference through the gestures that compose it. As an autospatialising gesture, a diagram requires no *a priori* solid ground upon which to unfold its movements, nor does it necessitate an external star alignment to orientate. It is an intrinsic method of orientation that works by materialising the gestures constitutive of any epistemic order and opens to the possibility of their immanent transformation and relaunching of their movements.

Localisation

Pointing at a direction and moving towards it first requires that we define what a 'point' is. It demands that we approach a locality as a tension between the *there* and the *here*, the point *towards which* we move and the point *from which* this movement departs.

It has now become common to claim that all knowledge is situated, that any attempt at grasping the global is in fact the expression of a particular locality from which this attempt is made. This position was brought forward and justified in the context of a general critique of modern rationality and its coercive applications (by 'dead or old white men'). But it is now clear that the emphasis on particularism, on social and cultural singularities, has failed in countering the hegemonic dynamics it aimed to denounce. Moreover it can be said to have become insidiously complicit with the fragmentation of struggles and subjectivities on which neo-liberal politics thrive. Furthermore, the refusal of aiming towards generality, drawing universals or invariants, has created even more marginalised positions, academic niches at best, always more secluded and deprived of actual political power.

Art has played a major role both in accompanying this critical effort and the subsequent failure of its emancipatory promises. The notions of 'site' and 'site-specificity' have, since their historical emergence in the 1960s, served to reveal the inequalities and overarching ideologies at work in the field of art, while progressively failing to oppose the full integration (and inexorable dilution) of these very gestures at a systemic level.

Instead of abandoning the notion of site to this critique, our ongoing theoretical investigation attempts to



Fabien Giraud, *The Marfa Stratum*, 2013.
Credit: Fabien Giraud

rescue its inaugural movement and emancipatory virtue through an in-depth reevaluation of its terms and potentialities. More specifically, it tries to do so by exploring the specificity of Donald Judd's practice within the field of art, and the locality of Marfa in Texas (where Judd installed a collection of permanent works) within the wider geological history of the area. Through the sculptures of Donald Judd and the pragmatist philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce – from which Judd drew part of his inspiration – we try to excavate a concept of site as that which cannot be reduced to a locality but should be understood as a constant dynamic weaving of the local and the global. Judd's sculptures in Marfa are material instantiations of such a concept. On these large installations made of multiple elements, one can never have a full and global perspective. To experience a work, one needs to move through space, from one element to another, while constantly making a hypothesis on the globality that holds these localities together. A site is thus, for Judd, and in the tradition of pragmatist philosophy, a synthetic construction binding local wanderings and global abductions.

Our research consists in taking this conception of 'site' as a synthetically constructed experience of space and projecting it onto geological scales that, by definition, negate this very experience.

To do so, we take the town of Marfa itself as a local point in the globality of the geological history of the region. At this scale, Marfa becomes the 'human event stratum': a few millimetres-thick layer in a core sample, a thin compressed line of sediments comprising, among other vestiges of the small town, the pressured remnants of Judd's specific objects.

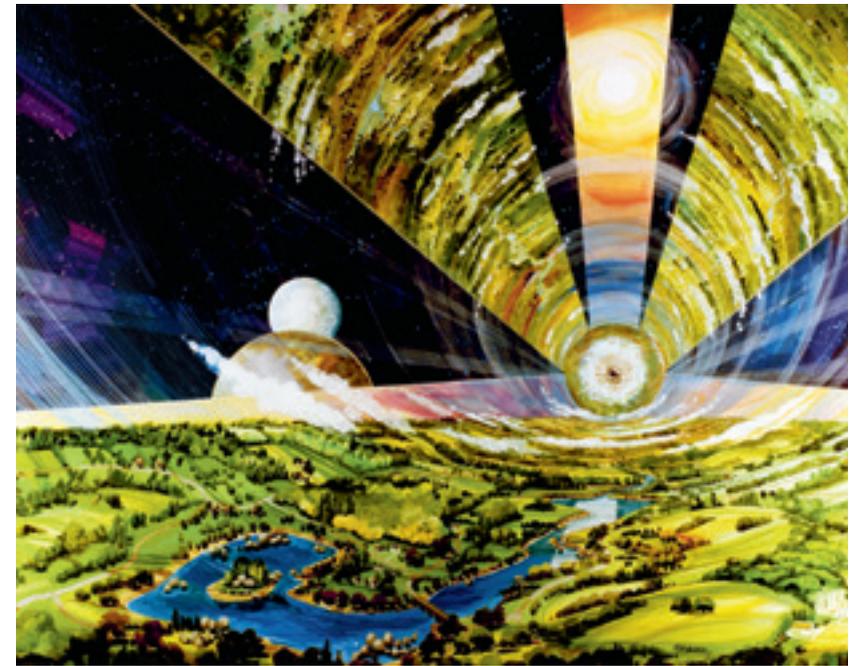
Articulating Marfa as a site and Marfa as a stratum requires a type of binding between the locality of human experience and the globality of indifferent natural processes, which no trivial account of particulars, no over-emphasis on cultural singularities can subsume.

Our attempt in *The Marfa Stratum* is to unfold such a generic topology and from it, formulate a concept of site open to the multiplicity of scales in which we are forced to think today.

Navigation

A navigation is not only a movement through space but the shaping of that space by this very movement.

Glass Bead was conceived as a mode of collective navigation in the landscape drawn by *The Matter of Contradiction* and articulated with the concept of site as explored in *The Marfa Stratum*. This collective five-year project focuses on the relations between art and reason. Each issue of the journal, working through successive stages of determination, focuses on a 'site' where a new facet of this relation is played out.



View of an O'Neill Cylinder, model for long term space settlement.
Credit: Rick Guidice, 1967, NASA's Ames Research Center

The name of this journal, as well as *Glass Bead's* project at large, takes its inspiration from Hermann Hesse's book *The Glass Bead Game* (*Das Glasperlenspiel*, 1943) in which a game of knowledge synthesis is played by a monastic order living in an imaginary and secluded province named Castalia. Departing from this fiction while severing from the obvious political impasses it carries, *Glass Bead* attempts to take on the game in a renewed manner.

To do so, rather than defining the space of art as enclosed within a preconstituted identity (as in Castalia), it aims at redefining dynamically its topology and relationships to other and various modes of reasoning (science, philosophy...).

We consider each form of reasoning as a specific 'field' made of a bundle of gestures binding particular sets of practices with their general epistemic horizons.

In this landscape made of heterogeneous and sometimes incompatible fields of knowledge, navigating and producing transfers and transits between them – which is *Glass Bead's* aim – demands the invention of 'morphing conceptual vehicles' able to move from one field to the other while transforming them and reshaping the ground in the process.

Glass Bead's project is oriented towards the definition of art as a place for the engineering of such vehicles.

The contribution is a result of the Theory Fiction seminar by Kodwo Eshun on April 18-20, 2016 with Fabien Giraud and Ida Soulard.

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+ more contextual material and extended references available on: www.lamatiere.tumblr.com and www.glass-bead.org

Curating Against the Grain: Frontiers, Scripted Spaces, and Groundlessness

In conversation with the Research Practice seminar
Anselm Franke

How can the exhibition as a medium unground knowledge and epistemological certainties? How can a completely controlled and scripted space, like an exhibition, engage with the possibility of the unscripted and unpatterned? Is art perhaps offering ways of leaving a scripted space or a cognitive scheme, reflexively inducing a cognitive crisis, an experience of ontological groundlessness?

Anselm Franke I started exhibiting non-art, next to contemporary art, only eight years ago, in the context of the *Manifesta 7* (2008) in Italy, where I co-curated the section in Trento with Hila Peleg under the title *The Soul, or Much Trouble in the Transportation of Souls*. It took the form of commissioning a set of miniature museums that would act as sketches of possible museums that were scattered throughout the biennale-exhibition. Rather than demanding from the artworks that they carry all the weight of signification in relation to a curatorial theme and frame, I wanted these miniature museums to bear this pressure of the 'theme', but at the same time to use the literalism of the museum format in a speculative and ungrounding way. Using the idea of 'the museum' in that way produces a 'definitional crisis' for the very object on display. So these miniature museums were meant to be speculative departments of a museum of the soul. The soul obviously is also an object in permanent definitional crisis throughout history, and an interesting subject matter for an exhibition; impossible to 'exhibit' as an object. Why did we decide to work on this theme? Because Trento was



Harun Farocki, *Parallel I-IV*, multi-channel video installation, 2012-2014. Still from *Parallel II*, single channel HD video, 8min, 2014. Credit: Harun Farocki Filmproduktion

the site of the Council of Trent in the 16th century, when the Catholic Church crafted the Counter-Reformation, shaping the European modern age of engineering the power architecture and the image politics towards the conquest of the New World. How is the subject to be governed in terms of its psychic constitution? Michel Foucault insisted on the importance of the Council of Trent in relation to the rise of pastoral power and its modes of governance, through the rituals of penance in general and confession in particular. Foucault's reading of the new rules for confession is that it produces a kind of paradoxical internalisation (by way of self-examination) through externalisation (the obligation to confess) – an internalisation and institutionalisation of power, a colonisation of the 'inner man', of our interior life, and also the imaginary, the realm of desires and dreams. After the Council of Trent, subjects of the Church had to confess no longer just about evils they had done, but also about what they had merely imagined, desired, or thought of... We thought that this would be an interesting way to starting thinking about an interior colonisation in relation to the exterior colonisation that takes full steam in the 16th century.

Ontological partition

This approach also developed out of a kind of discontent with the conventions of contemporary art and the biennale format, perhaps even a certain distrust of art and normative ways of curating. We wanted to find ways of working against the amnesia effects of the

contemporary art system, which does not explicate its own history anymore in terms of positions, and against the fetishisation of certain gestures of value production on which the unspoken rules and rituals of the system increasingly rest. We wanted to suggest how works can become readable in open-ended but nevertheless determined ways against the backdrop of a historical scenography. We wanted to experiment with that backdrop, with the storyline, altering perhaps the way art is normally expected to 'perform' in the context of a biennale. We all know that the exhibition is a medium of mastery. It demands objectification and identificatory fixation. A dead butterfly mounted by a pin in a vitrine and a classificatory label attached – this is the paradigm of the exhibition, of the museum. You can only exhibit dead objects outside of the always transformational flow of life and time. And it sets up a matrix of divisions, while it encloses or entraps its own negations. What I mean to say is that within the regime of the museum, this regime cannot be successfully contested. When you try to animate a museum from within and work against its 'butterfly regime', let's say, you are not necessarily fighting the museum but merely confirming its underlying mechanisms. And these underlying mechanisms have to do with the institutionalisation of an order of knowledge and a history of the senses and sense-making, with what I call the 'ontological partition' of the world.

Research Practice (Adelina Tsagkari) Does this relate to the 'butterfly effect'?

AF I mean, literally, in order to turn the butterfly into an exhibit, you have to kill it, pin and fix it. On a different metaphorical and mythical register, however, the butterfly is also a symbol of the psyche and of metamorphosis, pointing to everything that transforms, to processes of becoming. The most difficult object to objectify has always been the processual. So, the soul caused a lot of trouble in modern knowledge systems until being

declared totally non-existent, because you cannot fix the soul with a pin in a vitrine.

Research Practice (Doreen Mende)

What does the distrust in contemporary art allow us to think?

AF

It is a question of art's ability to proceed with its project of self-reflection and critique that began with modernism: the history of the increasing critical explication of its own framing conditions, its structural, systemic, institutional, discursive, and political determinations. That's where I would locate this mistrust: as if art – the contemporary art system under conditions of its financialisation – is not fully self-conscious anymore. This critical examination of its own determinations and framing conditions was the very engine of the critical project that is art. Institutional critique is a late example: it renders framing conditions into the subject matter itself. 'Ground' becomes 'figure': this explication of background conditions has been the mission of all modernisms and of contemporary art insofar as it tried to critically engage, but not to betray the project of modernity. But it is no longer working, because the determinations and the structural/systemic conditioning of art in neo-liberalism are increasingly obscured, enthralled by the magic of value production.

Definitional crisis

The whole system of differentiation is endangered, for instance: when is an act of appropriation a meaningful critique, and when is it just appropriation, extraction of value? How does a certain language of critical mimicry

collapse into the imitated object, into a capitalist mimetics, and emerge from the ashes triumphantly? Think of conceptual art, whose history is now commonly referred to institutionally as a 'dematerialisation of the art object'. But what about the form of many, if not most conceptual art pieces? Are they not more accurately described as an 'aesthetics of administration', referring to the quantification and rationalisation of the world, as a critical mimicry of bureaucracy, as a critique of the 'totally administered world' in Theodor Adorno's sense? It is interesting that we might find it difficult today to 'see' these works as that, because such a critique seems so impossible, so hopelessly outdated from today's perspective, where we have happily learned to comply with our own quantification and administration on an hitherto unknown scale. We cannot see these works as opening a precarious, perhaps defeatist space of critique through mimicry anymore, so we fetishise them in a patched-up narrative of progression, drawing on other resources and references: the dematerialisation story, the propositional self-birthing of art, etc... For Benjamin Buchloh, it was Broodthaers who represents the hinge where this space of mimetic critique and critical difference is being closed; for Buchloh, he turned conceptual art from a critique into a genre, a commodity.

I think a lot about these kinds of processes: the historical gaze and the collapse of meaningful differences, and the ability to create such differentiations and politicise the gaze and the field of mimesis and representation. Some contemporary art turns the collapse itself into a theme – think of Jeff Koons. But the matrix of what you can express through this is very limited, and it is ultimately cynicism. We are trying to escape from that cynicism by questioning the framing conditions – not merely in an economic and institutional sense – by bringing in history. But what happened to conceptual art is already

happening to 'history' and 'research' as well: the commodification as a genre. Research has become institutionalised on all levels. It is monitored. It makes every student in this programme here pay tuition fees. So we are in the middle of these frontiers.

RP (DM) Who does legitimise the use of history in a different way?

AF We need history in order to imagine other possible presents. And to explicate the forces that determine this present. It's a fight against the givenness of the given, the inertia of reifications that surround us, and the false surrogate politics of de-reification that is characteristic of digital neo-liberal culture. In a time when images and our visual literacy are becoming less and less complex, I think we need self-reflective narratives, which empower us to reconstruct this space of reflecting our historical determinations again and again. Re-narration non-stop. We need narratives that make a difference in the here and now for really defending that space on the other side of objectification. You might say that it is a very hippie-esque idea, when Herbert Marcuse insisted on this idea of an always-present 'better potentiality' in things. However, I think it is important to remind ourselves of this better potentiality: it is the space that we want to inhabit and challenge through art. Yet it is good to set up criteria for the use of history. This is why I insist on the importance of inducing a 'definitional crisis' over what the object is in exhibitions. It has to be uncomfortable.

I would like to derive my criteria for dealing with history in exhibitions from this quote. It is from the preface of the first edition of Foucault's *History of Madness*: 'We could write a history of *limits* – of those obscure gestures, necessarily forgotten as soon as they are accomplished, through which a culture rejects something which for it will be the Exterior; and throughout its history, this hollowed-out void, this white space by means

of which it isolates itself, identifies it as clearly as its values. For those values are received, and maintained in the continuity of history; but in the region of which we would speak, it makes its essential choices, operating the division which gives a culture the face of its positivity: this is the originary thickness in which a culture takes shape.' Two crucial elements are in this quote from the opening of *History of Madness* (that Foucault later deleted – I do not know why): the 'necessarily forgotten' gestures of demarcation and division, and the 'face of its positivity' that results from them being forgotten.

Twins

So there are gestures that establish the inside and outside; a whole system of binary oppositions is the result of such originary divisions. What he is saying is that beneath each binary, each dichotomy or conceptual opposition in a given matrix of cultural meaning, there is a more originary division to which these conceptual divisions owe the 'face of their positivity', their evidential reality. Forgetting these gestures of division is the price that you have to pay for positive knowledge. The 'thickness' of culture is a result of its boundary-making techniques, and the way they are folded away into the foundations, a 'third' mediating ground. From this perspective, conceptual binary oppositions appear not as oppositions, but regarding their ontological stance, as twins.

So I'd like to imagine the exhibition, the curatorial effort of an exhibition, as a kind of archaeology of that dimension, of the originary divisions that have become obscure, because our positive knowledge rests on them, is brought into being by them. Such an archaeology can be afforded through art and aesthetics, because it is in

the tacit and liminal dimension of aesthetic processes that we find the traces of these divisions, at the limits of language, meaning, and sense. The qualifying entitlement to use history in an exhibition context would be to induce the 'definitional crisis' that opens up a critical abyss through which these 'obscure gestures' can come into view. This necessarily also produces an experience of groundlessness, which requires a double consciousness, a tolerance for ambiguity. Art is in general a great teacher for this kind of ambiguity. The question is how to bring precision into the realm of ambiguity.

RP (DM) Can you elaborate on the articulation of those twins that seem to compose a kind of 'third substance', also calling for a historical consciousness that is entangled with the forgotten?

AF In the *Animism* project, this meant looking at modernity through its relation to animism. Not to 'explain' animism, because that would have meant to merely enact, once again, the set of well-known conceptual binaries through which modern rationality sought to map the world. Instead, to look at the way typically modern conceptual divisions are being engineered over time, from a vantage point that does not take these divisions for granted. And that vantage point happens to be 'animism' itself, insofar as animism is a conceptual signifier for the breaking down of divisions that are essential to the ideology of modernisation. It then becomes the name of a potentially anarchic, non-reductionist mediality. This is the 'third' – the medium-condition. And indeed, in animism anything can allegedly act as a medium of anything else. From here you can begin to delineate those 'obscure gestures', the techniques of liminality that cultures use to establish their 'positive face'. That vantage point must be resurrected at all times, it cannot be simply assumed as a position: we are the embodiment, the effect of modern history, after all. So the exhibition

consisted of mainly two things: possible primal scenes of modernity, self-instituting acts of division such as the 'destruction of the fetish' in colonial lands; and what I call 'relational diagrams': works that explicate how representation makes its subject, by sending the address back to the sender, if you will. We cannot simply step outside the frame of representations, of modernity. But we can engage in an archaeology of its divisions through a reverse ethnology, a reverse study of its border-making techniques. Not to take the results of a division for granted, as isolated discrete realities, but to study the relational realities that have been rendered obscure, and that defy objectification and can be represented only in the ontologically unstable register of the symptom. The exhibition then was meant to be an 'iconography of a border'. The border that separates modernity from its outside, and to undo – or at least de-naturalise – that set of binaries by engaging with its history.

For Foucault, there is no 'madness' in the modern sense before the modern division of reason from unreason. The history of that division has to be written from that zero point of the not-yet-divided. Then we begin to see how the division establishes a matrix that locks its opposites in a system of inclusive exclusions, and how the division yields other divisions as it becomes institutionalised through medical discourses and institutions such as psychiatry. The resulting always-shifting notions of the pathological and the normative are an enactment of such a twin structure. To interrogate culture means to interrogate the forces that make these lines of division shift; to look at their results as unstable products of processes, and not the inverse. To start from potentially anarchic yet historically determined processes of mediation.

So *Animism* was an attempt to 'exhibit' a certain matrix of modernity and its foundational gestures of

division. It was important for me to question this matrix from within, at its limits. Because we cannot simply choose to step out of this matrix. It is not a choice. This is what's crucial to understand. It's very basic. We step from one magic circle into another and normally they are internally structured by certain binaries that give us certain options. To understand these options and their limit conditions and exit strategies is what matters. This is a history of determinations, of framing conditions that now need to be explicated, I believe. Otherwise, we are left with only false identifications, with 'selves', with anachronistic concepts and subjectivities.

RP (DM) Let's move towards the question of knowledge in relation to the technology of machines. I am thinking of digital platforms conceived by non-institutional sources that produce mutant forms of subjectivation and invite us to argue for a 'politics of alienation' as emancipation, which we discussed with Laboria Cuboniks and Yoneda Lemma the other day. Within these, can you see a horizon with the potential to re-articulate a social contract that transgresses the forms of violence prevailing in dominant history?

De-naturalisation

AF Alienation can be a source of emancipation, but certainly not through the kind of neo-rationalism that is currently promoted by some, saturated with survivalism and with very questionable political alliances. For me, the question is how such mutations or re-articulations are framed, and what the framing does to them. It's a question

of the efficacy of ideologies through technology. *The Whole Earth* research-exhibition that I did with Diedrich Diederichsen in 2013 – based on the *Whole Earth Catalog* by Stewart Brand – addressed this question in parts. It was about questioning the transgressive 'un-framing' that allowed it, in the late sixties, to reconcile technology with environmentalism, mediated through cybernetics and the image of the 'whole earth', and how that particular ideological reconfiguration gave rise to neo-liberal globalisation and the idea that digital platforms could give rise to utopian social formations, which we feel should also be 'ecological'. To me, it seems that we are still inhabiting much of this imaginary unquestioned, that its ideas are coming to us 'naturally', while its matrix and the actually existing space of neo-liberal globalisation, are actually collapsing. So I would like to call for a radical de-naturalisation of the ideas underlying the techno-utopianism, without falling into the trap of merely negating technology.

Research Practice (Camille Kaiser) The catalogue was also very practical, like a Do-It-Yourself manual, wasn't it?

AF Yes – a kind of mail order catalogue for everything that is useful for building another world. Diedrich Diederichsen called it the utopia of 'use-value'. It marks the moment when the commune hippie movement failed to build its utopian communities, and the utopianism of the communes reappears in hacker ideology and later, in Silicon Valley discourse.

What is so interesting and urgent about this today is to see how this utopia has become a major platform for a populist, resentment-driven mob politics. The cybernetic framework came into being not least to establish a 'frame' for democracy itself, right after WWII, to prevent democracy from falling for another charismatic, populist leader. Well, we know now that the cybernetic condition that we currently inhabit with our data

economies produces new vulnerabilities for a democratic politics.

There is a strange and perhaps crucial split at the origins of cybernetics and information theory. It's almost as if the *Whole Earth Catalog* came into being in order to cover up that split! And that split is between information and meaning. It is basically the origin of information theory. For Claude Shannon who formalises information in the sense of mathematical formalisation, the content of a message is irrelevant to the engineering problem of information. You can engineer information without any relationship to what is in a message. You don't need to do the labour of interpreting anything.

Is the devalorisation of language, of meaning-making processes, and hermeneutics a result of this split? It seems that this is what Hannah Arendt already foresaw in the 1950s.

The contribution is a result of the Research Practice seminar by Denis Pernet, Aymon Kreil, and Doreen Mende on May 10-11, 2016 with Anselm Franke.

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A sequel: Thinking with Turbulence

Towards a study programme that approaches research
as a composite of practices and being in (geo-)politics
Doreen Mende

From what location can we think, in between systems, technologies, generations, time-zones, crossing borders and entangled histories? What happens to 'knowledge' in a socio-technological epoch that predominantly calculates the unknown into capital growth? What can research do for those of us who operate in the field of contemporary art and struggle to think along the violent pressures in the 21st century? What does *thinking under turbulence* actually produce?

October 28, 2015. Twelve students gather around the table of the CCC seminar room, salle 27, located in the main building of the Visual Arts Department of HEAD – Genève on Boulevard Helvétique 9. Four female students decide to form the *Committee of Naming/Renaming* in the context of the *Unmaster Class: Committees of Decolonisation*. Each student introduces herself by explaining that her name changes according to either the country in which she is physically present, or aligns itself with the maternal or paternal lineage that eclipses one parent's family or the other. She is called by a different name whether in Geneva or in Teheran. Her name hides that her family is from Algeria. The *Committee of Naming/Renaming* notes that the academy's name changed ten years ago: l'École supérieure des beaux-arts de Genève has been renamed (fused with Haute École d'arts appliqués) into Haute École d'art et de design Genève, or HEAD – Genève. The concern for *Naming/Renaming* emerged from Nabil Ahmed's lecture 'The Question of West Papua' during the *Unmaster Class: Committees of Decolonisation* that farid rakun, member of the artists' initiative ruangrupa (Jakarta), Nabil, architect/researcher from London, and I proposed as an experimental setting and social work-gathering with the objective of tackling geopolitical realities and a social contemporaneity informed by history as necessary elements for framing a research process in the field of art today.

A gift that cannot be

refused

It is helpful to leave the notion of ‘research’ aside for a moment in order to turn towards *the curatorial* as a potent term. I will come back to the question of ‘research’, because it is obviously important to be clear how this term resonates within a study programme whose pedagogical foundations have been dedicated to the question of ‘research’ since its institutional formation in 2000. Bringing *the curatorial* into the conversation at this moment allows us to speak through a conceptual framework for sheltering and drawing a temporary constellation that springs from the various research projects around the table, which appear in the form of different practices, languages, knowledges, and subjectivities. In the *Unmaster Class*, the framework accommodates perspectives from architecture, curating, decolonial writing, cultural community work, Indonesian independence; it brings in West Papua, Naomi Klein, and Achille Mbembe, Rob Nixon’s ‘slow violence,’ the Bandung moment 1955 and Soekarno, United Nations’ Committee of 24 (Special Committee on Decolonization), Soeharto, environmental rights and the different horizons as projected by the students: Shirin Neshat, the Master Thesis, the status of students at the University (HES-SO), Algeria, the self-taught Syrian Abounaddara film collective, Catherine Quéloz and Liliane Schneiter, the CCC programme in transition, Walter Benjamin, le traité de Versailles, Hitler’s interpreter Paul-Otto Schmidt, etc. This constellation of voices, theories, systems and periods addresses a condition of transdisciplinarity that I would like to situate closer to the ‘model of reading that is post-disciplinary but that also comes before the separation into disciplines’ as Nina Power proposes in her

text for the *Transdisciplinary Problematics* issue of *Theory, Culture & Society* (2015) to approach those forms of crossing ‘not only from within [a discipline], but also from without, moving across texts and disciplines in a way that raises the possibility of a truly transdisciplinary, collective mode of reading in general’. It is impossible to grapple with this transdisciplinary constellation on one common ground, as it is also counterproductive to sum up that horizon as ‘research’ without understanding that the conditions for ‘doing research’ are equally essential. The term ‘research’ has become an institutional category in the art education framework through peer-reviewed journals, the *plane d’études* calculating ECTS, ‘scientific excellence’ in interdisciplinary programmes of funding bodies, research institutes at art academies, and international conferences. Those structures of institutionalisation erase, or limit at least, the space *to think with the conditions*, for example, to think with the complexity of elements that constitute the environment of research. Today, it feels as though ‘research’ struggles to live outside of the bureaucratic tick-box in funding applications, which seems to be exactly the opposite of ‘doing research’ that had enabled previous generations of artists to break away from the idolatry of objecthood in the art market, or to develop a kung-fu-like technique to counter institutionalisation by analysing its very structures. Anselm Franke addresses this point when he argues: ‘What happened to conceptual art is already happening to “history” and “research” as well: the commodification as a genre. Research has become institutionalised on all levels. It is monitored. It makes every student in this programme here pay tuition fees.’

To be clear, I am not alluding, with *the curatorial*, to the many curatorial study programmes, edited readers, books, schools or Young-Curator-Biennale-workshops. Rather, I propose to approach the curatorial as a ‘gift

before [...] the curator/viewer relation, prior to any contractual determination' that has taken place, as Jean-Paul Martinon writes in *Theses in the Philosophy of Curating* (2013) published by the Curatorial/Knowledge group at Goldsmiths, which I joined in 2007. The curatorial is a gift that comes unexpected and without a contractual agreement, in other words, without the cultural rule to deliver a gift in return. It is a lived experience, impolite but generous and cannot be refused. In that sense, the curatorial operates like a travel companion during the trajectory of a process, ready to navigate between the horizons of language, systems, discourses and practices. The curatorial is something similar to a navigational chart that allows the 'researcher' to move around without having a map or a compass, without originating from the place of investigation, without having been born in Geneva, without having family here, without mastering its cultural, social and linguistic idioms – but still being able to find orientation amidst the layers made of knowledge and non-knowledge. The curatorial operates through movement that is similar to the type of 'navigation [that] is not only a movement through space but the shaping of that space by this very movement' as Fabien Giraud and Ida Soulard propose in their contribution to this volume. A research process conducted through such a knowledge-based *polis* – as Tom Holert frames his approach to the political implications and neo-liberal imperatives of knowledge production today – that is sceptical about mastering a discourse towards normative excellence and likes to speculate, to dance, to delay, to just laugh and joke around, to be misunderstood (sometimes), and thus, to disobey the principles of institutionalisation. The curatorial likes to invent a conceptual personae similar to those that Reza Negarestani introduces in *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Material* (2008). There, as

Kodwo Eshun discussed with the students in the Theory Fiction seminar, the nameless substance of *oil* is the lubricant that narrates the world through a composite of Zoroastrianism, physics, Iran, a hotel room in Istanbul, and the Cross of Akht. As if *oil* is a sentient entity, endowed with capacities to remember, to forget, to think and to feel – only our human brains might be simply insufficiently programmed to receive the message of 'what matter thinks' as Ursula Biemann elaborates with the students in Eshun's seminar. It remains crucial to emancipate 'research' from its academic imperatives that demand the mastering of a discipline. It is necessary to unmaster the principle of 'best practice' that otherwise considers itself superior to other forms of practice. Or, as Griselda Pollock argues, the question of 'methodology [...] takes place *through* a practice, or *on* a practice, or, when you are describing the curatorial, curation can itself be a research exercise. I would define it as a *thinking through making or thinking about making*.'

Xeno-punk

Ongoing conversations with students of the CCC at this moment have taught me that it is necessary to flesh out, in each seminar, the question of practice in the framework of a Research Master Programme that dedicates itself to reading, listening, textual work, theory (as a practice), again reading and writing – as this volume at hand exemplifies – apart from all further possible forms of practice. It is *practice* amidst all research desires that comes with an impatience to re-entangle with *theory* without Theory – two fields that have been kept separate since the first art academy, the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, opened its doors with the emergence of European

modernity around 1648. Practice is necessary because politics takes place *in practice*: we are *being in politics* as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak states in *Death of a Discipline* (2003) when we *think with* the conditions of making. Returning to those students who struggle with *practice* in the CCC, or who have the impression that amidst all reading, listening and transcribing talks, editing texts, looking for books and reading lists that *practice* is absent: the practice of *being in politics* should not to be mixed up with learning technical skills for operating the new HD-digital camera, though this is important too. It also should not be misunderstood as learning canonised vocabularies of Critical Theory, though surely, it is critically important to know about the mechanisms of the Cultural Industry in order to analyse the archaeology of the contemporary object-oriented cultural industrial regimes; learning the educational principles of Brecht's 'estrangement effect' is vitally enlightening for sharpening the weapons to politicise the cultural class struggle by revealing the invisible mechanisms – tiny moments and gestures – of the ruling class. But what if alienation is the living condition that we cannot escape? What if critique, that which our teachers taught us, has been stabilising the teacher's position, but did not change the structures of power – gender, class, race, knowledge-forms – throughout the entire past century? Following Françoise Vergès timely call to decolonise Europe, it is necessary to call for resisting the 'idealisation of resistance,' historically and socially. It reminds me of a tutorial and conversation with a student, who journeyed as an LGBTIQ activist from Lima, Peru and arriving as a student in the CCC Programme in Geneva found himself being interpellated by an idealisation of resistance, as if to speak for a queer movement and for the so-called 'Global South'. Following Eyal Weizman's call for a 'citizen science' as the only possibility for

practising justice when the law obstructs it from being served in the court: 'Politics is dangerous [...] and this is exactly the moment when theory can be useful, like a yardstick that helps you navigate,' as he declares in his conversation with the students. Or, following Laboria Cuboniks' clear conclusion during the 'Xenofeminist Session': '...if we keep waiting for a moment when we can advance an entirely unsullied politics, we'll be waiting forever. History up until this point has been a river of shit!' This reads like punk-speech, but a punk who refuses the idealisation of resistance, who is a stranger, a *xeno-punk*, to any forms of normalised/naturalised resistance. It speaks of a political urgency for popular culture that is 'going to make punk seem like nothing' as Mark Fisher posted on Facebook on October 24, 2013.

Beirut, Thursday, November 12, 2015. David Bowie. La Culture Lutte. Theory Fiction. Paris, Friday, November 13, 2015. FNS. Oil-bag bombs (soak deeper into the façade-cleaning). Grand Théâtre. Oskar Freysinger. Initiative populaire "Pour un revenu de base inconditionnel". Research Practice. T3 Swiss Universities. Joint Plan of Action. GVA. Livret pour étrangers G. Grenzgängerin. Critical Theory. CCC Alumni Association. Workfare. Xenofeminism. The Curatorial. François Hollande extends the state-of-exception in France beyond January 2017. Ports Francs Genève. Situated Art Practices. Istanbul, Wednesday, March 19, 2016. Prix Manor. Prince. Safe Host Data Center SH1. I, Daniel Blake. Tuesday, November 8, 2016. Anis Amri. AMAQ [news agency of Daesh]. AfD [Alternative für Deutschland]. Political Studies. John Berger. 4,913 migrants and refugees died on the Mediterranean Sea in 2016 – on average 14 people per day.

be Thinking under Turbulence

The *Unmaster Class* took place during the *semaine de tous les possibles* – the everything-is-possible week. Nabil's lecture 'The Question of West Papua' provided a repository of concepts, terms, and working methods to approach the seemingly entirely unfamiliar topic of West Papua in Geneva. The landscape of West Papua, the Western part of the Papua Island of Indonesia, hosts the world's largest gold mine (Grasberg Mine) and major copper resources, which explains the violent history of the Indonesian military occupation that goes hand-in-hand with the 'slow violence' (Rob Nixon) of rare-earth material extraction by multi-national companies such as Freeport-McMoRan (USA), leaving spatial and environmental traces of incurable destruction. During the session, the group began to develop the means to operate an 'environmental-historical methodology' for investigating the entangled geography between Puncak Jaya, the nearby mountain of the Grasberg Mine, and Geneva, where in early 1961 the United Nations in Geneva issued C-24: Special Committee on Decolonization by implementing the Resolution 1514. Only a few months ago, Prianka Srinivasan reported in *The Diplomat* that the UN has failed – again – to recognise West Papua's struggle for independence with the consequence that West Papua – again – depends on Indonesia in its struggle to gain economic independence from multi-national companies such as Freeport-McMoRan that continue to exploit gold resources. The Papuan population not only fights for independence but also ecological/environmental rights.

Transgenerational time

While writing up this sequel, I am reading Donna Haraway's new book *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* that arrived in bookshops in Berlin in early Fall 2016. The book can be found listed in the 'contextual material' of 'When Matter Thinks' with Ursula Biemann and Kodwo Eshun and of 'The Anthropogenic Image' with Armin Linke and Gene Ray. Students are reading Haraway's seminal essay *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective* (1988) in the seminar *Situated Art Practices or Pratiques Artistiques Situées* with Anne-Julie Raccoursier. In the Research Practice seminar with Griselda Pollock, she questions the actuality of situatedness in a time when we are implicated in proxy politics and global infrastructures by the means of technology and the *longue durée* of histories. Pollock argues it will be necessary to investigate the constitution of the 'planetary subject' that Gayatri Spivak thinks of when she writes that 'the planet has to overwrite the globe [...] The globe is on our computers. No one lives there.' Territorial exclusivity is impossible in times of turbulence. We humans who are living on a planet on loan, cannot afford to split the earth into millions of parallel universes. Instead, the making of the world is only possible *with* each other, crossing into each other's cultures, languages, sentiments, dreams, and histories. This is complex enough to be the most difficult condition to think with, to operate, to realise and to navigate. Some will argue that the complexity of human existence has always been the foundation of the human labour of thought. However, it is vital to recognise processes that operate through transgenerational time, not for the sake of competing for complexity, but to allow for modes of emancipation that are specific to the temporal and political conditions of each generation. In other words, this writing takes place in a moment when we humans might be confronting the

fulfilment of biologist Lynn Margulis' speculation that a species only progresses successfully according to evolutionary rules when it develops towards its own self-destruction. *The globe is on our computers. No one lives there.* It is critical to realise, however, that Internet access is not a global standard; 60% of the world's human population does not have regular access to the Internet. However, looking from the second floor of Geneva's Safe Host Data Centre, close to the Geneva Freeport and Rolex Headquarters, the rows of cooling turbines outside of building SH1 indicate that computational algorithms certainly siphon water and electricity 24/7. In other words, typing Spivak's statement 'The globe is on our computers' into Google or DuckDuckGo means plugging into energy infrastructures through fingers, eyes, attentions, and brainwaves as if we had bioports in our coccyxes that have turned us already into playmates for Allegra Geller's game *eXistenZ* (1999).

Period of incubation

It helps to read Haraway's words: 'In urgent times, many of us are tempted to address trouble in terms of making an imagined future safe [...] of clearing away the present and the past in order to make future for coming generations. Staying with trouble does not require such a relationship to times called the future. In fact, staying with trouble requires learning to be truly present...]' The concern in our 'terrapolis' is not so much an investigation into the mode or the *what* of thinking. Instead, it begins at an earlier stage. In times of jet-set curating, Biennale-tourism, planetary

computation and profound political shifts towards a *new* 'Great Moving Right Show' (Stuart Hall, 1979), we need to investigate *where* the 'truly in the present'-thinking takes place amidst troubles and turbulence. *Where* are the conditions for thinking with the fellow traveller, the political friend, the species-companion, even with the field enemy, the friendly competitor or sentient entity? *Staying with the Trouble.* Goodness. That sounds like a continuously fatal present tense. Linguists call this the Gerund form. What present tense is meant here? The tense of writing? Of thinking? Of generating knowledge? Of being with? Is it possible to do all of these at once without the feeling of speed, impotence and incompetence? Thinking under turbulence asks for a voice like Stuart Hall's who, however, could not prevent us from the current rise of 'authoritarian populism' in the U.S. and in Europe. It echoes in the radical pedagogies of minds such as Henry Giroux who could not slow down the neo-liberal speed in Higher Education. It calls for the need to re-activate 'the inscription of the feminine' into academic study programmes as Griselda Pollock suggests. It necessitates the re-activation of Hannah Arendt's thoughts on the 'end of the rights of man' as Pierre Hazan has been reading with the students in his Political Studies seminar, for creating a space to analyse the active forces of political violence that discipline people – again today – by categorising them as 'refugees.' Thinking under turbulence occurs in the era of globalisation that 'takes place in capital and data. Everything is damage control. Information has ruined knowing and reading' as Gayatri Spivak argues. It has generated a 'communicative capitalism' (Jodi Dean) where the quantity of 'likes', 'comments', and 'tweets' defines the quality of a message.

Thinking under turbulence demands that we seek orientation, to watch for friends and allies, to collectivise

and ‘slow down.’ Slowness is rare amidst busy schedules and institutional project-machines. It needs to be trained, as Marion von Osten and Grant Watson propose, through taking a seat, sitting down and in ‘helping each other to find situations in which you can sit.’ This calls for different ways of positioning ourselves as subjects, as Yann Chateigné reflected, that are not defined by biographical records but through gaining self-knowledge, that emerge from processing unknown terrain. Slowing down takes place through the intensity of listening as if the thoughts of each person propose a new horizon that helps to navigate in a collective effort. Slowing down means granting the process of thinking a period of incubation, as if it breeds a virus that mutated with the capacity to survive in times of scarcity. Maybe the space of a Master Programme of two years helps to make one realise the symptoms and processes of that kind of incubation.

Thinking under turbulence goes beyond the scope of one generation. It operates in transgenerational time of which the processes of naming/re-naming call forth its geo-spatial, political and social implications. It implicitly demands, therefore, to question the dominance of one school of critique or one culture for taking collective positions. Thinking under turbulence departs and inscribes itself in our lived experiences as planetary subjects from which we must re-engineer our thinking. In other words, if there is ‘slow violence’ (Rob Nixon) that inscribes itself across generations and geographies – often at the thresholds of undetectability – then there must be slow revolution that stands with ‘revolutionary patience’ as the blogger, friend and theorist Mark Fisher argued a year ago. More needs to be done. January 13, 2017.

This text is dedicated to Mark Fisher (1968-2017).

This text was written as a sequel to the *Thinking under Turbulence* colloquium that took place from September 2015 to May 2016 at the seminar room of the CCC Research Master Programme of the Visual Arts Department at HEAD – Genève. The CCC was inaugurated as one of the first Research Master Programmes in Switzerland in 2000 by Catherine Quéloz who conceptualised it together with Liliane Schneider until 2014, informed by the radical pedagogies of Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren. The proximity of the abbreviation ‘CCC’ stands to reason the resonance with the legendary Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham as the CCC library suggests through its publications by Stuart Hall, Raymond Williams, or Angela McRobbie that can be found next to the writings of Walter Benjamin, Mahmoud Darwish, bell hooks and the books of research-exhibitions by Marion von Osten. Kodwo Eshun’s readings of the CCC bookshelves spotted also, here fittingly, Alain Greenspan’s *The Age of Turbulence*.

CONTEXTUAL MATERIAL

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Interlocutors and Contributors

Nabil Ahmed is a researcher, writer and educator working on environmental conflict and forensic architecture. His writings have appeared in *Third Text*, *Scientific Reports*, *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*, and *Volume* magazine. He has been part of *The Anthropocene Project* at HKW and the 2016 Oslo Architecture Triennial. He holds a PhD from the Centre for Research Architecture at Goldsmiths, University of London. He is a senior lecturer of architecture at The Cass School of Architecture at London Metropolitan University.

Ursula Biemann is an artist, writer and video essayist based in Zurich. Her artistic practice is strongly research-oriented and involves fieldwork in remote locations where she investigates the ecologies of oil and water – most recently for *Forest Law* in Amazonia. Her video installations are exhibited at international art biennials and museums worldwide. Biemann is author and editor of several books including *Stuff it: The Video Essay in the Digital Age* and *Geography and the Politics of Mobility*.

Cécile Boss performs research by means of art (video, performance and writing). She holds a BA in Visual Arts and a Master from the CCC Research Master Programme, HEAD – Genève and held an Assistant position for the programme (2013-2016). For her Master thesis and film *Life is not living* (2013), her research areas balanced psychiatric treatment and confinement with the world of work and care. In parallel, she has intensively studied one thesis from Walter Benjamin's *On the Concept of History* specifically to question the emancipation forms of the subject in a traumatic situation.

Yann Chateigné studied literature, the history of art, archaeology, has been mentored by a famous museum director, learned by collaborating with artists, collectively curated in Barcelona, Eindhoven and London, solitarily wrote for local and international publications, obliquely lectured in

Brussels, Vilnius, Zurich, researched psychedelia, the occult, technologies, taught curating, history, cultural theory, led a museum programme in Bordeaux, founded a publishing house in Paris, and serves as Dean of the Visual Arts Department at HEAD – Genève since 2008.

Eitan Diamond is an international lawyer. Currently he is a consultant for UNICEF and doctoral candidate at Tel Aviv University's Faculty of Law researching the interaction between mediated images and law in conflict situations. He previously directed the NGO Gisha (2014-15) and served as legal adviser at the ICRC (2007-14) and the NGO B'Tselem (2005-7). He holds degrees from the LSE (LLM, 2005) and Hebrew University (LLB, 2000) and was awarded the Academy of European Law's Diploma in Human Rights Law (2016).

Kodwo Eshun is an artist and theorist based in London. He is co-founder of The Otolith Group who were nominated for the Turner Prize in 2010. Eshun is the author of several publications including *Dan Graham: Rock My Religion* (2012) and *More Brilliant than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction* (1998). He lectures in Visual Cultures at the Department of Visual Cultures, Goldsmiths, University of London. Since 2015, he also teaches Theory Fiction at the CCC Research Master Programme, HEAD – Genève.

Anselm Franke is Head of the Visual Arts department at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin, where he was part of the curatorial team of *The Anthropocene Project* and organised exhibitions such as *Animism* (2012), and together with Diederichsen *The Whole Earth* (2013), *Forensis* together with Eyal Weizman (2014) and *Ape Culture* together with Hila Peleg (2015). He was chief curator of the Taipei Biennale 2012 and the Shanghai Biennale 2014. He completed his PhD at Goldsmiths College in London in 2015.

Aurélien Gamboni has been leading a practice of critical investigation over the past ten years, leading to multiple forms of installations, texts and lecture-performances. Often in collaboration with other artists and researchers, he focuses on narratives and

images of the past that bear the potential to operate as conceptual tools, and allow new publics to gather around shared concerns.

Fabien Giraud is an artist. Since 2007, he has collaborated extensively with the artist and filmmaker Raphael Siboni, with whom he has exhibited internationally (Palais de Tokyo – 2008, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris – 2009, Santa Fe Biennial – 2008, Moscow Biennial – 2009, Sharjah Art Foundation – 2013, Biennale de Lyon – 2015). Since 2014, their new and ongoing body of works entitled *The Unmanned* has been presented in a series of monographic shows in Luxembourg, Canada, and France.

Pierre Hazan teaches at the HEAD – Genève. He is also Associate Professor at the University of Neuchâtel and Special Advisor on Transitional Justice with the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (Geneva). Hazan has written a number of books on justice issues and contributed to the U.N. Report on the writing and teaching of history (A/68/296) and to the Report on memorialization processes (A/HRC/25/49) presented in 2014 at the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Helen Hester is Associate Professor of Media and Communications at the University of West London. Her research interests include technofeminism, sexuality studies, and theories of social reproduction, and she is a member of the international feminist working group Laboria Cuboniks. She is the author of *Beyond Explicit: Pornography and the Displacement of Sex* (SUNY Press, 2014), and has two texts forthcoming: *After Work: What's Left and Who Cares?* (with Nick Srnicek, Verso, 2017) and *Xenofeminism* (Polity, 2017).

Carolin Kohl is a graduate student at Maastricht University's Arts & Heritage MA programme. After working in Jakarta for one year, she's been infected by the city's chaos, unpredictability, and the celebratory spirit of its young art crowd. Carolin is interested in global art networks, collaborative art practices and cultural policy.

Yoneda Lemma is Katrina Burch's quasi-causal brainchild, a sonic excavation site plotted to deepen the game of thinking with the universe. Katrina Burch is a feminist thinker, poet, electronic music producer, and composer. She is often an archaeologist, excavating in Peru, Canada, or France. She presents internationally (Fylkingen, HeK, Flatterschaff, Kunstverein Amsterdam, Sonic Acts Academy, Maerzmusik, Berghain, Le Cube, Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers, Tate Britain, Café OTO, ICA, HEAD – Genève, Toni Areal Gallery, Up State, University of Chicago, among others), and has multiple identities and collaborations.

Armin Linke, photographer and filmmaker, combines a range of contemporary image-processing technologies in order to blur the borders between fiction and reality. His artistic practice is concerned with different possibilities of dealing with photographic archives and their respective manifestations, as well as with the interrelations and transformative powers between urban, architectural or spatial functions and the human beings interacting with these environments. He was a Research Affiliate at MIT Visual Arts Program in Cambridge, guest professor at the IUAV Arts and Design University in Venice and professor at the HfG Karlsruhe.

Doreen Mende is a curator and theorist who works on vocabularies for articulating geospatial politics in contemporary exhibiting processes. Since September 2015, she has been the Head of the CCC Research Master Programme and Professor at HEAD – Genève. Her practice-led PhD 'The Itinerant' was awarded from Goldsmiths, University of London, in 2014. Mende is a founding member of the Harun Farocki Institut in Berlin.

Adeena Mey is a critic, researcher and curator. His current work addresses post-war artists' films, the cybernetisation of exhibitionary complexes, media epistemology, as well as antipsychiatry. He curated *Kunstthalle Archaeology* at Cheongju Art Studio, Cheongju, South Korea (2015) and is currently working (with Kyung Roh Bannwart) on the exhibition and symposia project *Neo-Geography* (Centre d'art Neuchâtel, Switzerland)

and various venues in Seoul, South Korea, 2017). With Nicolas Brulhart he translated Nick Land's seminal essay *Meltdown* into French (*Fission*, Forde and Urbanomic, 2014).

Marion von Osten is an artist, researcher and exhibition-maker. She is a founding member of the Center for Post-colonial Knowledge and Culture (CPKC) and kleines postfordistisches Drama (kpD) in Berlin as well as of the media collective Labor k3000, Zurich. Since 2012, she has been a Visiting Professor at the CCC Research Master Programme at HEAD – Genève and the Master for Arts in Public Spheres (MAPS), HSLU Lucerne. She is currently doing a PhD in Fine Arts at Malmö Art Academy, Lund University.

Camilla Paolino lives and works in Geneva, where in December 2014 she co-founded the art and curatorial collective 'you know who', with which she is currently in residency at the independent art space TOPIC. In June 2016, she graduated from the CCC Research Master Programme at HEAD – Genève where she led a two-year long practice-based research on group micropolitics and on the meaning and limits of collectivity in the age of its 'mainstreamisation'. Since September 2016, she holds an Assistant position at the CCC Master Programme, HEAD – Genève.

Griselda Pollock is Professor of the Social and Critical Histories of Art and Director of Centre for Cultural Analysis, History, and Theory at the University of Leeds. Her most recent publications include *Concentrationary Imaginaries: Tracing Totalitarian Terror in Popular Culture* (editor, with Max Silverman, 2015), *After-affects | After-images. Trauma and aesthetic transformation in the virtual feminist museum* (author, 2013), *Visual Politics and Psychoanalysis: Art & the Image in Post-Traumatic Cultures* (editor, 2013). Forthcoming is *Charlotte Salomon: The Nameless Artist in the Theatre of Memory* (2017) and *Is Feminism a Bad Memory?* (2017)

farid rakun currently serves as a researcher and education coordinator for the artists' initiative ruangrupa, a nonprofit organisation founded in 2000 that examines

contemporary Indonesian urban and cultural issues. Through interdisciplinary collaboration among the arts, social sciences, politics, technology, and media, ruangrupa produces a diverse array of exhibitions, festivals, art labs, workshops, research projects, and publications.

Gene Ray teaches critical studies at CCC and is co-organiser of the long-term research project *The Anthropocene Atlas of Geneva* (TAAG). His current work reflects on terror and the representation of terror in the endgame of capitalist modernity, and on possible alliances between critical theory, art, and Indigenous knowledge in responding to ecocide and genocide. He is author of *Terror and the Sublime in Art and Critical Theory* (2005, 2011) and numerous articles on the intersections of art and radical politics.

Janis Schroeder is an artist and researcher working with video, artist books and essays. His research is about the influence and language of image montage by investigating the anthropogenic impact through man-made urban environments in industrial societies. He completed an MA in the CCC (2013) and from 2013-16, he had an Assistant position in the CCC Research Master Programme. Currently, he is a junior researcher in the research project *The Anthropocene Atlas of Geneva* (TAAG), funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation and directed by Professor Gene Ray.

Nicole Schweizer is a curator of contemporary art at the Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts Lausanne (CH). She graduated from the University of Lausanne with an MA in Art History, and from the University of Leeds with an MA in Feminist Theory, History & Criticism in the Visual Arts under the supervision of Griselda Pollock.

Ida Soulard is a doctoral researcher in art history at ENS / PSL University and co-director of Fieldwork: Marfa, an international research and residency project run by Les Beaux-arts de Nantes and HEAD – Genève. She currently teaches at Les Beaux-arts de Nantes Métropole. Together with Fabien Giraud, she co-founded *The Matter of Contradiction* in 2011, a series of seminars and workshops addressing the

geological concept of the Anthropocene and its consequences for the theory of art. In 2012, they co-initiated *Glass Bead*, a research platform. They are currently collaborating on a book entitled *The Marfa Stratum*.

Françoise Vergès holds the Chair 'Global South(s)' Collège d'études mondiales, Paris. Vergès grew up on Réunion Island in a communist, anti-colonialist and feminist family. She has written extensively on vernacular practices, memories of colonial slavery and colonialism, psychoanalysis, Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, and on processes of creolisation in the Indian Ocean world. Beside her activism-based writings, Françoise Vergès is author of moving-image documentaries, collaborations with filmmakers and artists and has been working as an independent curator.

Grant Watson is a curator and researcher based in London. He is currently co-curator of *Migrant Bauhaus* a major exhibition of global Bauhaus reception for 2019 (Bauhaus Kooperation/Goethe Institute/HKW), and is working on the long term interview project 'How We Behave.' In recent years he has curated a series of international exhibitions on textiles and on modern and contemporary Indian art. He is Tutor in Curatorial Theory, Curating Contemporary Art at the Royal College of Art and has a PhD in Visual Cultures from Goldsmiths College, London.

Eyal Weizman is an architect, Professor of Spatial and Visual Cultures, and Director of the Centre for Research Architecture at Goldsmiths, University of London. Since 2011, he also directs the agency Forensic Architecture, whose collection *Forensis* was published by Sternberg Press in 2014. He is a founding member of the architectural collective DAAR in Beit Sahour/Palestine. He has worked with a variety of NGOs worldwide, and was a board member of the B'Tselem and the Centre for Investigative Journalism. He has lectured, curated and organised conferences in many institutions worldwide.

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