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COMMONS

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It is not some unavoidable real world, with its laws of economy and laws of war, that is now blocking us. It is a set of identifiable processes of realpolitik and force majeure, of nameable agencies of power and capital, distraction and disinformation, and all these interlocking with the embedded short-term pressures and the interwoven subordinations of an adaptive commonsense. It is not in staring at these blocks that there is any chance of movement past them. They have been named so often that they are not even, for most people, news. The dynamic moment is elsewhere, in the difficult business of gaining confidence in our own energies and capacities.

. . . It is only in a shared belief and insistence that there are practical alternatives that the balance of forces and chances begins to alter. Once the inevitabilities are challenged, we begin gathering our resources for a journey of hope. If there are no easy answers there are still available and discoverable hard answers, and it is these that we can now learn to make and share. This has been, from the beginning the sense and impulse of the long revolution.

—Raymond Williams³⁹

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INTRO

It's the night before the opening, another opening, a new door swinging out to permit us entry.

But openings are good, it's the *enclosures* that are hard to deal with - the attempts to shut our brains in them, to trap our bodies and labour in debts, mortgages, credit cards, or worse yet, putting our friends in prison because they refused these very enclosures.

It is in the rebellious spirit of sharing then; that this perhaps jumbled collection of texts has been assembled. The idea was to have a small basis for starting to think how we might all start to engage, or in fact continue, creating commons, with a focus on knowledge and the role it plays in capitalism. Our spirit is rebellious because it stems from a desire to destroy systems of exploitation, and to quote Gigi Roggero (pg .13.) "to relocate the question of the common from one centred on property relations, to one focused on relations of production." Massimo De Angelis adds some clarification in his investigation of the shift from the neoliberal 'tragedy of the commons' to the viewpoint of capitalism not being able to survive without them. He suggests the idea of the distorted commons, that is "commons that are tied to capitalist growth... where capital has successfully subordinated non-monetary values to its primary goal of accumulation." (pg .31.)

Morgan Adamson and co. take us through some of the more concrete forms the enclosures are taking (pages .45.), investigating the figure of the student and their entanglement with 'cognitive capitalism'; a kind of capitalism based on knowledge, whereby access to the job market depends on 're-skilling', e.g. having to pay in order to learn the skills required to get a job (which in effect results in a massive wage cut for the working class, according to George Caffentzis, pg .103.), and getting into debts from which one can never escape, in stark contrast to the financial institutions of the world who have engrained themselves so deeply into our everyday lives that society is forced to bail them out!

A campaign against debt can be found on page .97., also important here in Austria, which so far has mostly avoided the downward spiral of student debts, but the tendencies examined in this reader are already visible and show the urgency of developing and expanding the student struggles both here and globally.

The third section is an attempt to bring together some more practical approaches to 'commoning' or 'commonification' (page .103.) - the process of creating commons, that is to say recognising commons or the common not as a natural resource but something that we create in social processes. So from reports on the global student movement as the main organised response to capitalism's ongoing crisis, to more subtle discussions of commoning found in 16 Beaver groups 'veiled discussions' (page .123.), as well as random tangents of thought such as how all this relates to art, starting perhaps with reflections on Alexander Koch's figure of the *Kunstaussteiger* (page .159.); what does it mean to leave art behind, to quit? What is an art outside of property relations? Can we remain in an 'art world' that is viewed as a common, or is the art world we know so established in circuits of capital and business that a process of commonification is out of the question? To help begin this investigation we turn to Chto Delat, the Street University St. Petersburg, Kirsten Forkert, Nora Sternfeld and David Riff for some contemplations of art, education and activist practices...

Lots of love, the Institute for Temporary Commonification + AG HEXENPOWER

This reader is dedicated to our beloved friends involved in the struggle the world over

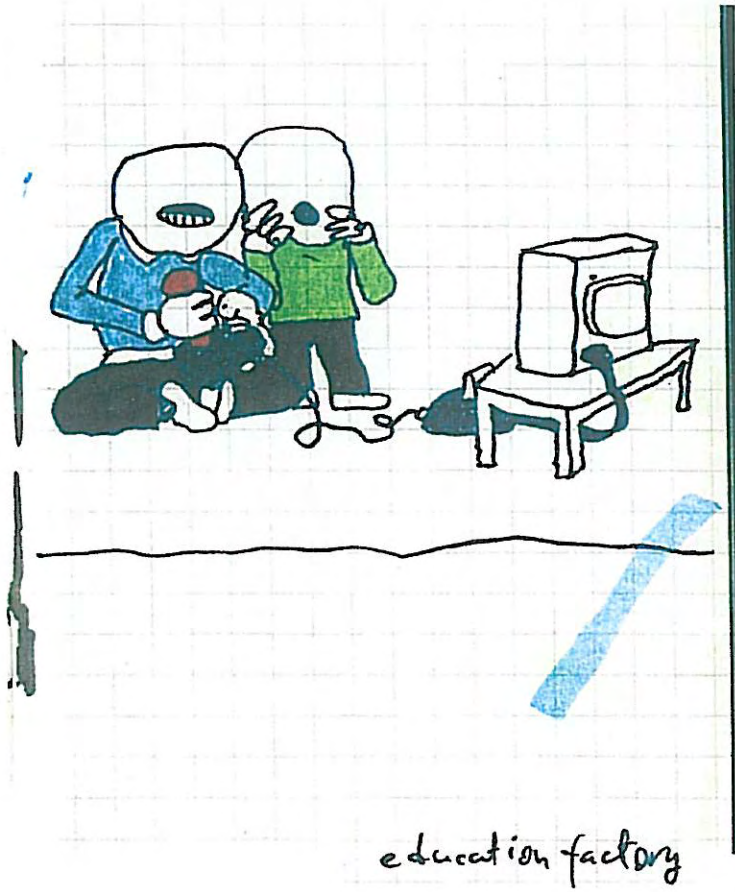
Kisses of solidarity to B., A., J., and I.

We traverse the threshold

KEY TO THE **GLOSSARY**: IF YOU SEE WORDS MARKED LIKE THIS WITH
ORANGE HIGHLIGHTER:

KEY WORD

THEN A SMALL ATTEMPT AT SUMMARY HAS BEEN MADE ON PAGE. **171**



education factory

Five Theses on the Common

Gigi Roggero

I present five theses on the common within the context of the transformations of capitalist social relations as well as their contemporary global crisis. My framework involves "cognitive capitalism," new processes of class composition, and the production of living knowledge and subjectivity. The commons is often discussed today in reference to the privatization and commodification of "common goods." This suggests a naturalistic and conservative image of the common, unhooked from the relations of production. I distinguish between commons and the common: the first model is related to Karl Polanyi, the second to Karl Marx. As elaborated in the postoperaista debate, the common assumes an antagonistic double status: it is both the plane of the autonomy of living labor and it is subjected to capitalist "capture." Consequently, what is at stake is not the conservation of "commons," but rather the production of the common and its organization into new institutions that would take us beyond the exhausted dialectic between public and private.

Key Words: Common, Class Composition, Cognitive Capitalism, Financialization, Operaismo

Discussing the *common*, it is unclear whether we can say: one year before was too early, one year later will be too late. Yet, the question of the common must be historicized and situated—that is, located within the transformations of social relations of labor and capital as well as within their contemporary crisis. My analysis proceeds from the framework some scholars refer to as "cognitive capitalism" (Vercellone 2006). I approach cognitive capitalism as a provisional and exploratory concept. While I am not interested in delving too deeply into the debates surrounding this term, a brief clarification is necessary. Cognitive capitalism does not refer to a supposed disappearance of manual labor. Nor is it synonymous with other categories (for example, the knowledge or creative economy). Contrary to the approach that focuses on a central "post-Fordism" and a peripheral "Fordism" (Harvey 1989), I concentrate here on the tension between the individuation of specific workers in the labor market and the wider process of the cognitization of labor, which provides a "watermark" that allows us to read and act within the contemporary composition of living labor as well as forms of hierarchization and exploitation at the global level.

Historicizing the common is a matter of methodology. From my perspective, there is no production of common knowledge that is not situated knowledge. In other words, I am not interested in a dead philology of what Marx or other revolutionary thinkers "truly" said about the common. My concern is rather to interrogate what

these thinkers have to say to us now, in the present historical conjuncture. This provides my starting point in analyzing the conflict between the production of the common and contemporary capitalist forms of accumulation and crisis. Let me clarify that I do not intend to oppose philology and politics. Rather, I am proposing that there can be no living philology if we do not situate the reading of Marx and other militant theorists in their historical conjuncture, based on their tactical and strategic aims. There must be a process of translation to move such strategies and tactics onto our peculiar battlefield.

Mario Tronti wrote, "Knowledge comes from struggle. Only he who really hates really knows" (1966, 14; translation mine). *Operaismo* and Marx assume this revolutionary viewpoint on the partiality of knowledge and the radical conflict that is part of its production. Using Deleuze's terms, we must distinguish between a *school of thought* and a *movement of thought*. The former is a set of categories that are produced and defended in order to patrol the borders of an academic, disciplinary, and/or theoretical field: it is the way in which the global university works today to depoliticize thought and reduce living knowledge to abstract knowledge (edu-factory collective 2009). In contrast, a *movement of thought* aims to use categories as tools to interpret reality and to act within and against the political economy of knowledge. It is a theoretical practice immanent to the composition of living labor and based on militant inquiry and *co-research* (Roggero, Borio, and Pozzi 2007). In other words, it is only by taking a partial position that it becomes possible to understand the whole and to transform it—that is, to organize the common.

Thesis 1: The common has a double status

When knowledge becomes central as a source and means of production, the forms of accumulation change. For Marx, knowledge was crucial in the relationship between living and dead labor but, due to its objectification in capital, it became completely separated from the worker. The incorporation of the knowledge of living labor into the automatized system of machines entailed the subtraction of labor's capacity, its know-how (Marx 1973). Today the classical relationship between living and dead labor tends to become a relationship between *living* and *dead knowledge* (Roggero 2009). In other words, the category of living knowledge refers not only to the central role of science and knowledge in the productive process but also to their immediate socialization and incorporation in living labor (Alquati 1976). The composition of cognitive labor has been shaped by the struggles for mass education and flight from the chains of "Fordist" factories and wage labor (Vercellone 2006). In this process, on the one hand, the cognitive worker is reduced to the condition of the productive worker, and, on the other, he tends to become autonomous from the automatized system of machines. This leads to a situation in which the general intellect is no longer objectified in dead labor (at least in a stable temporal process). That is, knowledge can no longer be completely transferred to the machines and separated from the worker. The previous process of objectification is now overturned as the worker incorporates many of the aspects of fixed capital. He incessantly produces and

reproduces, vivifies and regenerates the machine. At the same time, a permanent excess of social and living knowledge continuously escapes dead labor/knowledge.

In this framework, the necessity to reduce living labor/knowledge to abstract labor/knowledge—that is, the imperative to measure work despite the objective crisis of the law of value—forces capital to impose completely artificial units of time. To use the words of Marx, it is a “*question de vie et de mort*”: the law of value does not disappear, but it becomes an immediately naked measure of exploitation: that is, law of surplus value. The capital has to *capture* the value of the production of subjectivity “in both senses of the genitive: the constitution of subjectivity, of a particular subjective comportment (a working class which is both skilled and docile), and in turn the productive power of subjectivity, its capacity to produce wealth” (Read 2003, 102). In this way, the common is not a mere duplication of the concept of cooperation: it is simultaneously the source and the product of cooperation, the place of the composition of living labor and its process of autonomy, the plane of the production of subjectivity and social wealth. It is due to this fact that today the plane of the production of subjectivity *is* the production of social wealth that capital is less and less able to organize the cycle of cooperation “upstream.” The act of accumulation, the capture of the value produced in common by living labor/knowledge, takes place more and more at the end of the cycle. From this standpoint, we can conceive of financialization as the real and concrete, though perverse, form of capitalist accumulation in a system that has to place value on what it cannot measure. To use the words of some authors close to *The Economist*, financialization is the “communism of capital”—it is the capture of the common.

In the context of the common as just discussed, the classical distinction between profit and rent becomes quite problematic: when capital appropriates cooperation that to a large extent takes place without the presence of direct capitalist organization, these two terms assume similar characteristics. Today, rent is the form of capitalist command that captures the autonomous production of living labor. This does not mean that capital is exclusively a parasite: it has to organize this capture. The corporate figure of the “cool hunter” is illustrative in this regard. In the 1920s Henry Ford said: “Buy any car, on the condition that it is a black Model T,” summarizing the (however unattainable) capitalist dream to push needs “upstream.” Today, in contrast, the cool hunter acts “downstream,” capturing autonomous life styles and subjective expressions. The “center” goes to the “periphery” in order to capture its common productive *potentia*.¹

This analysis helps to answer a central question for those familiar with the literature on networks and the Internet: why is it that neoliberal scholars exalt the characteristics (free cooperation, centrality of non-property strategies, horizontality of sharing, etc.) highlighted by critical theorists and activists with regard to the production of knowledge? Starting from the description of the cooperative and self-organized practices on the Web, Yochai Benkler (2006) hypothesizes the rise of a horizontal production based on the commons. In this way, Benkler describes

1. While by “upstream” I refer to the organization of social cooperation and relations by and through capital, by “downstream” I refer to the organization of capitalist capture of social cooperation that exists in a partial autonomy of capitalist relations.

a movement from a system based on intellectual property to a system based increasingly on open social networks. From Benkler's analysis we can see that the commons are at the same time becoming a mortal threat to, and a powerful source for, capitalism. Due to the fact that in the context just described, intellectual property risks blocking innovation, capitalism tends to become "capitalism without property." We can follow this development not only in the case of the Web 2.0 but also in the clash between Google and Microsoft and the alliance between IBM and Linux. We can say then that command is now based on a sort of capitalist "common right" which is beyond the relationship between private and public right and which today is the central axis of normative development.

Take as an example the on-line client assistance of many software companies and cell phone providers, which is based on the "free" and "open source" cooperation of the "consumer" or "prosumer," to quote the widespread rhetoric of the "information society." This cooperation of the "prosumer" is directed toward the zeroing of workforce costs, which is offloaded onto clients. In this way, free software means free labor; the "prosumer" is in fact a worker without wage. The only waged workers of the companies are the people who control what the "prosumers" are allowed to write. Capitalism might be able to give up property, but never command! Given this context, in order to recompose command and govern cooperation "downstream," capital is now forced to continuously block the productive *potentia* of living labor with intellectual property and with precariousness. This is the contemporary expression of the contradiction between forces of production and relations of production and the basis of the contemporary crisis: that is, the crisis of the "communism of capital" (Fumagalli and Mezzadra 2009). Therefore, since capital cannot organize social cooperation "upstream," it has to remain content with simply containing the latter's dangerous power and retroactively capturing the value of cooperation. Today capital takes the figure of the *katéchon*,² restraining the "evil" of living labor *potentia*.

In the context of the transformations of labor and capitalist accumulation just described, the common assumes a double status: it is both the form of production and the source of new social relations; it is what living knowledge produces and what capital exploits. This tension between autonomy and subordination, between self-valorization and expropriation, takes the form of a *transition*. Rather than being a linear passage from one stage to another, this transition is an open process of contestation among different paradigms of production, composed of different forces, possibilities, and temporalities, and coexisting in a prismatic battlefield "illuminated" by social struggles. The transition to cognitive capitalism presents itself as a *primitive accumulation* (Mezzadra 2008) that has to repeatedly separate, as Marx wrote, the workers from the means of production and the conditions of the realization of work. Today these means of production are not land but knowledge. The primitive accumulation of cognitive capitalism separates living labor from the production of the common: its temporality is the continuous re-proposition of its prehistory. But this

2. *Katéchon* is a concept that Carl Schmitt borrows from Saint Paul to describe a force that restrains evil.

permanent transition is also the continuous reopening of the possibility of a break, of the actuality of communism and the autonomous organization of common production.

Thesis 2: The common is not a natural good

In the international debate, the common is usually referred to in the plural—that is, as the *commons*. It is usually identified as something existing in nature (water, earth, environment, territory, but also information and knowledge). We could attribute a theoretical referent to this interpretation of the common: Karl Polanyi's (1944) analysis of the "great transformation." Polanyi reconstructs the rise of capitalism along the line of a tension between the expansion of a self-regulating market and the self-defense of society geared toward reestablishing control over the economy. Transformation is premised on the conflict between economic liberalism and social protectionism, between utilitarian principles and communitarian cohesion, between commodification and the defense of natural elements (i.e., the commons). In this framework, capital is represented as an inhuman "Utopia," an outside that tries to appropriate an otherwise naturally self-regulated society. Consequently, in this formulation, capital is not a social relationship, but a historical accident and a deviation from the self-regulating norm. The great transformation then is a struggle between economic means and social aims.

From the Polanyian perspective, the central site of antagonism is the market and commodification, not exploitation and the social relations of production. In recent years, many "Polanyian" positions have appeared in social movements and among activists and critical scholars—for instance, with reference to networks. In this genre of approach, the struggle is identified between the monopolists of information and the libertarian or neoliberal engagement for the free circulation of knowledge. From this perspective, for instance, Web 2.0 is the affirmation of an alliance between a "hacker ethic" and "anarcho-capitalism." However, this perspective does not see that the defense of a "virtual community" against monopoly and intellectual property may also mean the continuity of relations of exploitation.

The problem for us is to relocate the question of the common from one centered on property relations to one focused on relations of production. Exalting the importance of "culture" and the "anthropological commons," many Polanyian scholars conceive the centrality of the concept of mode of production for Marxian and operaista perspectives as a form of "economism" (Revelli 2001; Formenti 2008). But it is precisely their interpretation of this concept, as well as of labor, that is "economistic." Since for Polanyian scholars capital is not a social relation, it therefore becomes one among the many actors that society must control. However, when we analyze the material transformations of labor and production in recent decades, we could say "culture" and "anthropology," that is, forms of life and expressions of subjectivity are endlessly captured and assigned a value. There is no longer an outside to the relations of production: they are the site of capture and exploitation, but also of resistance and liberation. They are the location of the double status of the production of the common.

Therefore, in what we have defined as a Polanyian vision of the commons, the subjects are the individual and society, both of which conserve an uncontaminated anthropological and natural space against the external invasion of capital and commodification. The concept of the individual is continuous with the universal subject of Enlightenment modernity, the concept of society is an organic whole: both are bearers of the general interest that coincides with the conservation of humanity in the face of the risk of catastrophe. In instances where the alliance between the hacker ethic and anarcho-capitalism fails, or in cases of the capture of the former by the latter, the same scholars invoke the troubling ghost of the state. For them, the state becomes the guarantor of “society” against “economy,” or rather, a substitute for society’s incapacity to defend itself. From within these parameters, then, community, in a reactionary way, must protect its identity, its mythological commons, from the invasion of globalization. That is, it must protect these commons not only from capital and commodities, but also from labor and its embodiment in the mobility of migrants. As a consequence, politics becomes a negative Utopia and a normative project geared toward avoiding the worst—that is, a *katéchon* politics. What is at stake is not the organization of the *potentia* of the common but rather its limitation and the issue of its “de-growth.” Due to the misunderstanding that capitalist development consists of processes of growth and de-growth, the image of the commons is made to mirror the juridical concept, which is based on the principle of scarcity and which stands in sharp contrast with the richness and abundance characteristic of knowledge production. In opposition to this approach, following Marx we can state: capital, rather than the presumed scarcity of the commons, is the limit.

From my perspective, it is imperative that we denaturalize knowledge in cognitive capitalism. We must recognize that it is not because it is a preexisting natural excess that knowledge is common; rather, it is common because it is embodied in living labor and its production. Therefore, what singularities have in common is not an abstract idea of humanity, but their concrete and specific relations in the ambivalent and conflictual process of their constitution. Even the life appropriated by “biocapital”—that is, the processes of capitalist valorization invested in the social relations of biotechnology (Rajan 2006)—is not identifiable with a natural element. What is patented is not the genome itself or particular parts of the body, but rather the production of knowledge of these elements. In biocorporations, valorization through knowledge and data takes place at the level of the production of life itself. So the genome, as an abstraction of life created through the deployment of information, is then combined with the abstraction of money in the financialization process. The combination of these two abstractions forms the “capitalist common,” capturing the production of living labor, and is therefore today more important in the valorization process than the intellectual property system itself.

From this perspective, living labor has nothing else to defend apart from the autonomous cooperation, the common, it continuously produces and reproduces. Also, there is nothing natural about the apparently natural commons since they are endlessly produced and defined on the plane of tension determined by the relations between the autonomy of living labor and capitalist command. In this sense, the binary scheme between “Polanyi-type” and “Marx-type” unrest in the history of

workers' movements, proposed by Beverly Silver (2003), also is unconvincing. For her, Polanyi-type struggles are characterized by a pendulum-like movement between the processes of expropriation and proletarianization and the reaction of workers against these processes; and Marx-type struggles are thought to be inscribed in relations of exploitation that undergo a succession of stages, in which the organization of production changes. But we have to recognize that in cognitive capitalism we run into a situation in which the resistance to the expropriation of knowledge is immediately the struggle against the relations of exploitation because this resistance poses the question of the collective control of the (cognitive) production of the common against capitalist capture.

Thesis 3:

The common is not the universal, it is a class concept

Implicit in the different interpretations of the common and the commons is the question of the subject. The society, the community, the individual, the "prosumer," all these subjects reintroduce in different ways the idea of the universal that seeks to defend humanity from capital and commodification. Marx splits the historical subject of modernity, the citizen, with the concept of labor power. And yet, Marxist and socialist traditions reintroduced a new figure of the universal through the concept of class as the carrier of the general interest. **Operaismo**, like Marx, once again splits this subject and proposes that the working class cannot be interested in a general human destiny as it is a partial subject constituted within and against capitalist relations. The abstract One is split into the antagonism of two parts: the working class is the *potentia* that wants to exercise power; capital, on the other hand, is the power that exploits *potentia*. The former is the master, the latter is the slave. But there is no dialectical *Aufhebung* possible between them. In fact the dialectic, which also necessitates the universal subject, dies in the partial insurgence of the workers' struggle.

In situating the question of the common in class antagonism, I do not refer to a sociological or objective image of class as it does not exist outside struggle. To recall Tronti, "there is no class without class struggle" (2008, 72; translation mine). In a similar way, late in his life Louis Althusser (2006) asserted that struggle should not be thought to arrive retroactively, but rather is constitutive of the division of classes. Based on this idea, we use the category of *class composition* which, in operaismo, indicates the conflictual relations between the material structure of the relations of exploitation and the antagonistic process of subjectivation (Wright 2002). The operaisti distinguished between *technical composition*, based on the capitalistic articulation and hierarchization of the workforce, and *political composition*—that is, the process of the constitution of class as an autonomous subject. Within this framework, there is no idea of an original unity of labor that is then divided and alienated by capital and therefore in need of recomposition, nor is there a concept of consciousness that must be revealed to rejoin the class-in-itself with the class-for-itself. Because class does not preexist the material and contingent historical conditions of its subjective formation, there can be neither symmetry nor dialectical overturning in the relation between

technical and political composition. Subjectivity is at one and the same time the condition of possibility for struggle as well as what is at stake in it.

Operaismo forged these categories (i.e., technical and political composition of class) in a very particular context, marked by the space-time coordinates of the “Fordist” factory and consequently a specific figure of the worker. Today we need to radically rethink these categories due to the fact that the composition of living labor has been unrecognizably transformed by the worldwide struggles of the last four decades. Workers, anticolonial, and feminist struggles have forced capital to become global.

Therefore, there is no more outside nor is there a dialectic of inclusion and exclusion. This is the new time-space plane upon which the formation of class within and against the capitalist relations takes place. The composition of living labor is constitutively heterogeneous as it is based on the affirmation of differences that are irreducible to the universal.³ Capital commands this heterogeneity of the workforce through a process of “differential inclusion.” However, is it only capital that can compose the differences in living labor? Does this heterogeneity prevent the possibility of the common composition of living labor? It is to these questions that I want to turn now while rethinking the concept of class under conditions where the common becomes central to the system of production.

Differences are articulated in a disjunctive sense as the singularities are fixed in their supposed origin and category of belonging (ethnic, gender, communitarian, territorial, occupational, of social group, and so on). We can say that this is the technical composition that sustains the mechanisms of segmentation and differential inclusion in the labor market—that is, capital’s response to govern the crisis of living labor determined by a specific political composition. Without putting this hierarchy into question, however, claims for recognition of particular positions and differences risk being transformed into identity politics. In contrast, we could redefine political composition as a process, to use a concept of Jacques Rancière (1999), of “dis-identification” from the positions naturalized through the mechanisms of differential inclusion. It is the disarticulation of the technical composition and reposition in a line of force that has its definition in the production of the common. Class is this line of force. In this sense, we cannot talk about class as a being, but as a *becoming*.

Nevertheless, the asymmetry between technical and political composition does not suggest that these two categories are dissociated. Rather they are open processes in continuous formation within tension produced by the multiple forms of subjectivity and mechanisms of capitalist valorization. It should be noted then that technical composition is not solely composed of capitalist domination; rather, it is the snapshot of a conflictual dynamic and it is endlessly open to subversion. Similarly, it should not be thought that political composition is somehow external to corporative claims or

3. Here I refer to the historicist understanding of universalism: that is, the mainstream interpretation of the concept within modernity. However, we can state that the common is related to a not-transitive relation between partiality and universal. That is, the universal does not determine partiality, but the insurgence of partiality continuously creates new universalism.

new closures of identity politics: rather, like technical composition, it should be thought of as a marker of a new field of power determined by struggles over the production of the common. So the crux of the matter is to situate and historically determine the open and reversible relation of these two processes. On the one hand, this relation is complicated by the end of the space-time linearity of the relationships between workers and capital based on the “Fordist” factory. On the other hand, this relation is now characterized by the struggle between the autonomy of living labor and capitalist subordination, between the production of the common and capitalist capture.

Taking this perspective, we can then see that technical composition in part overlaps with and in part radically diverges from political composition, making the autonomous organization of the common both close to and far from the “communism of capital.” The possible reversibility among these elements is not meant to imply a dialectical overturning. Rather, it points to the possibility of a break and a radically new line of development immanent to the organization of the *potentia* of living labor.

Autonomy and the powerful development of singularities are not the outcome of a classless society, but that which is at stake in an antagonistic social relationship. The insurgence of partiality characterizes the composition of living labor, but this does not imply the impossibility of conjoining these partialities into the common. In fact, the common is the institution of a new relation between singularity and multiplicity that, unlike the empty universal, does not reduce differences to an abstract subject (the individual in liberalism and the collective in socialism, each undergirded by a particular relation to the state). A singularity can compose itself with other singularities without renouncing its difference. To summarize, what we are proposing here is multiplicity, not nature; singularity, not the individual; and the common, not the universal.

Thesis 4:

The common is not a Utopia: it is defined by the new temporality
of antagonism beyond the dialectic
between private and public

We already stated that financialization no longer has the role classically attributed to it by economists. Today financialization pervades the whole capitalist cycle: it cannot be counterpoised to the real economy because it becomes the real economy precisely at the point when capitalist accumulation is based on the capture of the common. Is it possible to apply the traditional schema of the capitalist cycle to the current transition implied by the new time-space coordinates of cognitive labor and global capitalism? Observing the increasingly rapid succession of crises in the last fifteen years (the collapse of the Southeast Asian markets, the Nasdaq crash, and the subprime crisis), the empirical answer would have to be no. That is, the crisis is no longer a stage in the cycle of capital; it is the permanent condition of capitalist development. We have reached a point perhaps best described following Marx’s insight in volume 3 of *Capital* where he points to the “abolition of capital as private property within the confines of the capitalist mode of production” (1981, 567): today

the “communism of capital” is the capture and transfiguration of the common through rent, where rent is the power of the appropriation of value that is increasingly created by social cooperation without the direct intervention of capital.

From this standpoint, the “communism of capital” goes beyond the dialectic between public and private as these are two sides of the same capitalist coin. As an example, consider the contemporary transformations of the university which are often referred to through the category of *corporatization*. With regard to the melding between public and private in the development of corporatization, we can refer to the American context in which the public university raises private funds while the private university consistently receives state and federal funds. In Italy, in contrast, the trend toward corporatization is paradoxically enabled by a sort of “feudal power” in the state university system. But there are no contradictions between these two elements as this feudal power is the peculiarly Italian way toward the aim of corporatization. Nonetheless, we should clarify that corporatization does not simply mean the dominance of private funds in the public university, nor does it refer to the university’s juridical status. Rather, corporatization is meant to signal that the university itself has become a corporation, which now, based on the calculation of costs and benefits, the profit logic, input and output, competes in the education and knowledge market. In this context, knowledge corporations—from universities to biotechnology multinationals—are central actors in the hierarchies of global education and knowledge markets that derive a significant proportion of profit, valorization, and measure from the stock exchange and its rating agencies.⁴

Let us take the related question of *debt*, a central source of the contemporary crisis, and a great example of the intimate intertwining of the “knowledge economy” and financialization. It would be a mistake to think that increasing university fees indicate a return to the classical mechanisms of exclusion. Rather, a more careful analysis will demonstrate that these increases are accompanied by a simultaneous rise in rates of enrollment. The debt system is rather a selective filter to lower the wage of the workforce before that wage is actually received. Due to the fact that education and knowledge are irreducible social needs, the financialization of this social good is a way to individualize this need and facilitate the capture of what is produced as common. But financialization is also a symptom of the permanent fragility of contemporary capitalism. In fact, the increased defaults on debt repayment stand as one of the central subjective causes of the global economic crisis.

If financialization as the “communism of capital” is the overcoming of the modern dialectic between private and public, then the mobilization against the corporatization of the university cannot be a defense of the public model.⁵ The opposition to corporatization must pose the question of how to go beyond the alternative between

4. It is also within this context that we can interpret the theory of New Public Management, which is a movement, “thought,” and “philosophy” that has sought to justify the introduction of corporate means and logic into the public sector, receives its valence.

5. The latter has been put in crisis not only by neoliberal capital, but also by social and political movements. Actually, the Italian Anomalous Wave and transnational student movement slogan “we won’t pay for your crisis” also means “we won’t pay for the public university crisis.” See www.edu-factory.org

public and private, between state and corporation. That is, the mobilization must provide an alternative within, and not against, the historical development of capital. Indeed, the appeal to the public is based on the restoration of the figure of civil society and the supposed general interest, which necessitates the reduction of differences (especially class difference) to the empty image of the universal. To reclaim the public in this fashion means to reclaim the state, the transcendental recomposition of a supposedly original unity coincident with the modern figure of political sovereignty. The common, in contrast, has no nostalgia for the past. Rather, it is collective decision and organization immanent to the cooperation of living labor, the richness of collective production. To recall Marx, “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery” (1966) (i.e., the public); “all revolutions perfected this machine instead of smashing it” (1963, 121–2).

In these transformations of global capital, I would like to highlight the issue of temporality in order to identify the new quality of antagonism beyond any illusory appeal to the public against the private. Contemporary temporality is ambivalent. On the one hand, this temporality collapses on a sort of endless present in which the precariousness of life dissolves the “space of experience,” compelling us to continuously reinvent ways of living to survive in the present (Koselleck 2007). On the other hand, this temporality opens a new space, no longer marked by the linearity of historicist narration. In fact, it is the conflicts and claims over the new living labor composition that foster the shift in the temporal framework and accelerate the collapse of the normative relationship between the past and the future, reopening history infinitely in the present.

Let us look at this more closely. Within historicism, the immutable value given to the past as well as the passive longing for the future and its supposed progressive destiny—condensed in the eschatological perspective shared by both the Catholic and socialist traditions—have served to stabilize and conserve the existing institution. There is an evident similarity between this and, quoting again Koselleck (2007), the “iterative structure of apocalyptic waiting”: the end of the world and the “sun of the future” are continuously postponed, neutralizing the conflicts and claims for liberty in the present. Therefore, nostalgia (both for the past and the future) risks being reactionary, or, at the very least, is ineffective. In the new temporality, in contrast, the concept of politics finally assumes a new quality. Indeed, this relation between temporality and politics is already identified by many postcolonial scholars as a field of radical challenge to historicist thought: to the traditional progressive model of time that has confined “subaltern” subjects to the “ante-room of history” (Chakrabarty 2000). The “stage” of this pre-politics, or impolitic, to use a rhetoric widely used by those who think that the only form of politics is the representational one, is irrevocably pierced by the insurgence of the “now” as the time of subjectivity and of its political constitution. Without the necessity of waiting for the “not yet” and for the teleological arrival of their moment of action, and without being forced to delegate their action to representational actors or to state sovereignty, the contemporary figures of living labor are in a position to overturn the absence of the future in the fullness of the decision in their present. In their breaking of the normative relationship of the future to the present, the last idealistic remainders of consciousness also dissolve. The social transformation is no longer the linear

progression of historical necessity and consciousness: it is entirely immanent to the production of subjectivity and the common, happening along the tension between the autonomy of living labor and capitalist capture. So the common is not a Utopia: it is not a place that is yet to exist or that will exist in the future. The common exists here and now, and it is striving for liberation. In this context, what we refer to as “the event” is never an origin: the beginning is always the organization of the present and its power to make history. This is a reverse pathway with regard to some contemporary radical philosophers—for example, Alain Badiou or Slavoj Žižek—who dream the theological event of an abstract and metaphysical communism, without subject and process, that is, deprived of bodies, conflicts, and *potentia*.

Thesis 5:
Institutions of the common as a new theory and practice of
communism

Due to the parameters of our new context, there is another central category of operaismo that we have to rethink: the *tendency*. More precisely, we have to rethink the category as well as renovate its method. The tendency is the identification of a field of nonprogressivist possibilities within the framework of the heterogeneity of the composition of living labor and the differential temporalities that capital captures, in order to repeat endlessly its origin—namely, primitive accumulation. Everyday capital has to “translate,” to use the language of Walter Benjamin (1995), the “heterogeneous and full time” of the cooperation of living labor into the “homogenous and empty time” of capitalist value. Parallel to Benjamin, Sandro Mezzadra (2008) proposes to use the distinction made by Naoki Sakai between “homolingual translation” and “heterolingual translation” as a political tool. In the former mode, the subject of enunciation speaks to the other assuming the stability and homogeneity of her own language as well as that of the other. She acknowledges differences, but assigns those to a supposed original community. This form of translation functions as a representation and mediation that reaffirms the primacy and sovereignty of the language of the enunciator. In heterolingual translation, in contrast, the stranger is the starting point for all parties involved in speech, making this form of translation independent of all “native language” and producing a language of mobile subjects in transit. In heterolingual translation, differences compose themselves only in a common process: therefore, language is not simply a means, but precisely what is at stake.

Thus the common is always organized in translation, either through homolingual translation—that is, through the reduction of living labor/knowledge into abstract labor/knowledge—or through heterolingual translation, making a class composition possible within the irreducible multiplicity of new subjects of living labor. In a certain sense, the heterogeneity of struggles renders obsolete the idea of their communication; however, it does not suggest the impossibility of their composition. On the contrary, composition takes place in the process of translation into a new language: into the language of common. In other words, the differences are not in themselves vehicles for antagonism: an inevitable antagonism arises when differences are

reduced to identity, to an abstract origin, and consequently when they speak only as difference and only of their difference. In this way, they are successfully decentralized and domesticated (Mohanty 2003), and are consequently accumulated by the capitalist machine and translated back into the language of value. It is the interruption of this capitalistic translation that opens the space for the political composition of the autonomy of living labor. In other words, our problem is to disconnect in a radical way historical materialism from a historicist narration. The critique of capitalist development is not the empowerment of a supposed non-capital (Sanyal 2007); rather, it is based on the autonomous *potentia* of the cooperation of living labor. In fact, the principle is class struggle. From this perspective, to claim that talking about production relations is economism is precisely to have an economic viewpoint on production relations. If the tendency is defined in the concatenation of points of discontinuity, which compose a new constellation of elements, then the “general illumination” (Marx 1973) of the tendency and its planes of development are determined by class antagonism and the various dispositifs of translation within common production.

This is the context in which we can pose the question of the institutions of the common, starting from the antagonistic relationship between autonomy and capture. Certainly, these institutions should not be conceived as “happy islands,” or free communities sealed off from exploitative relationships. As already mentioned, there is no longer an outside within contemporary capitalism. Institutions of the common rather refer to the organization of autonomy and resistance of living labor/knowledge, the power to determine command and direction collectively within social cooperation and produce common norms in breaking the capitalist capture. These institutions embody a new temporal relationship—not linear or dialectical, but heterogeneous and full—between crisis and decision, between constituent processes and concrete political forms, between event and organizational sedimentation, and between breaking of capitalist capture and common production. To refer to the well-known categories of Albert Hirschman (1970), exit and voice are no longer mutually exclusive alternatives: exit is immanent to the antagonistic social relations, and voice is simultaneously what nourishes and defends the production of the common. Since they are based on the composition and temporality of living labor, the institutions of the common are continuously open to their subversion. Institutions of the common are not an origin, but the organization of what becomes.

I would like to examine this issue through a couple of examples that have appeared within student movements. The first is the rise of black studies as well as ethnic, women’s, and LGBT studies, all of which are rooted in the movements of the 1960s and 1970s, just as the genealogy of postcolonial studies can be located within anticolonial struggles (Mohanty 2003). Black studies not only signaled the process of massification of the university and higher education; it was also the radical affirmation of the collective autonomy of the black community and of black students within and against the university as expressed through the control of the institutional forms of knowledge production. Beyond repression, power was deployed as a means of inclusion. This is well exemplified in the strategy of the Ford Foundation at the end of the 1960s (Rooks 2006), which provided disparate funding for black studies programs in order to support leading advocates for racial integration and

marginalized the more radical militants of the black power movement. We can see in this example how capitalist institutionalization is a form of capture and domestication of the institutions of the common.

The other example is the university movement Anomalous Wave in Italy. Its development is not tied to the defense of the public university, but rather to the construction of a new university based on recent experiences of "self-education" (edu-factory collective 2009) and the "self-reform" of the university, another term that Anomalous Wave mobilizes. It is not a proposal that is addressed to the government or some representative actor, nor does it allude to a reformist practice that tries to soften radical claims. It is precisely the contrary: it is the organized form of radical issues in order to construct autonomy in the here and now.

As in the case of black studies, "oppositional knowledges" (Mohanty 1990) and experiences of self-education are not immune from capture: in fact, academic governance and the political economy of knowledge live on their subsumption. In other words, the problem of governance is not that of exclusion, but rather domestication of the most critical and radical elements. In fact, we might claim that capitalist governance is the institutional form of the capture of the common. From this standpoint, before governance there is resistance. In other words, governance is not based on the fullness of control, but rather it is reproduced in a permanent crisis in that it is structurally dependent upon the creative *potentia* of its enemy, making governance an open process that is endlessly reversible.

To sum up: in modernity the public was what was produced by all of us but did not belong to any of us as it belonged to the state. The institutions of the common are the organizational force of the collective appropriation of what is produced by all of us. Thus, as Carlo Vercellone (2009) says, we have to in a certain way mimic finance: we have to find how it might be possible to take the state and corporations "hostage." In other words, how might it be possible to collectively reappropriate the social richness, sources, and forces frozen in the capitalistic dialectic between public and private? This is the question of the construction of a "new welfare," which would involve the reappropriation of what is captured by capitalistic rent. It is not a coincidence that this is a central topic in the university movements.

Now we can redefine the contradiction between forces of production and relations of production in an antidialectical fashion. When the common is the center of social relations, the distinction proposed by Michel Foucault between struggles over exploitation and struggles over subjectivation has to be reformulated since, from the perspective of the common, struggles over the production of subjectivity are simultaneously struggles against exploitation. It then becomes possible to rethink liberty in a materialist way. When liberty is embodied in the relationship between singularity and the common, in the collective control of the production of the *potentia* of living labor, it becomes a radical critique of exploitation. This is the liberty of the forces of production that, by breaking capitalist development, it opens the way for a different becoming: that is, a different tendency. It is a common liberty because it is partial/*of part*. The breaking of the "capitalist common" and of exchange value does not necessitate a return to the use value contained in the mythological notion of "common goods." Rather, this break is the construction of a new social relationship that reinvents a radical composition of liberty and equality

based on and continuously constituted by the common. Therefore, beyond the capitalist dialectic between private and public, to rephrase Marx (1976), the common is “collective possession as the basis of” singular ownership. Beyond the capitalistic dialectic between private and public, there is an autonomous *right to* and *property of the common*.

This political *gamble* might appear too unrealistic for those who in the past three decades have talked incessantly about the passivity of the new subjects of living labor, which were claimed to be dominated by “monological thinking”: that is, by so-called invincibility and the totalitarian aspects of neoliberal capitalism. In the aftermath of the global movements and the onset of the global crisis, this assessment no longer makes sense: neoliberalism is over. This does not mean that the effects of neoliberal politics have disappeared, but they are no longer able to constitute a coherent system. This is the crisis of capitalism as it is openly acknowledged every day by the mainstream media, notable economists, and even moderate governments. In this context it is difficult to remember that just twenty years ago these same actors proclaimed the “end of history.”

With regard to the apparent passivity of subjects, it would be wise to keep in mind Marx’s (1950) reply to Engels on 9 December 1851. In response to his friend, who lamented the “stupid and infantile” behavior of the Parisian people who failed to oppose Louis Bonaparte, Marx replied, “the proletariat has saved its forces.” According to Marx, the proletariat had in this way avoided engaging in an insurrection that would have reinforced the bourgeoisie and reconciled it with the army, inevitably leading to a second defeat for the workers. Similar to the ways in which the operaisti of the 1950s and 1960s found the potential of resistance within the so-called alienation and integration of what would become the mass worker, we have to find the possible lines of reversibility in the apparent passivity of the contemporary subjects of living labor. In order to build up a new theory and practice of communism, we must learn the new language of the common, starting with the optimism of the intellect.

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The tragedy of the capitalist commons

Massimo De Angelis

After several decades of relentless neoliberal enclosures, the idea of 'commons' is enjoying a renaissance amongst some neo-Keynesian economists and commentators, while political scientist Elinor Ostrom has just been awarded the Nobel prize 'for her analysis of economic governance, especially the commons'. Massimo De Angelis explains why capital's commons will always be distorted – because they are based upon social injustice – and why we can only reclaim the commons from capital by constructing common interests.

'Global commons' and climate change

During the heyday of neoliberal globalisation, amidst its assault on all forms of public and common ownership of resources – the era of the 'new enclosures' – an increasingly vocal part of the left started to conceptualise alternatives to neoliberalism and sometimes even capitalism in terms of *commons*: non-commodified forms of social cooperation and production. At the time commons seemed to offer a way out of the impasse between free-market capitalism and Eastern bloc-style state-capitalist planning.

In the last few years, however, the field of forces within which old and newly emerging commons operate has changed quite significantly. Increasingly, the idea of the commons seems to function less as an *alternative* to capitalist social relations, and more like their *saviour*. One example of this is the way the issue of climate change is being framed within a discourse of 'global commons'. Influential neo-Keynesian economist Joseph Stiglitz asserts that global commons are threatened by a 'tragedy of the commons'; that is, they are being overused because no one is charged for using or abusing them. Put simply, if polluting does not cost money, companies and individuals have an incentive to pollute. For Stiglitz, the problem cannot be solved by first assigning property rights, such as certificates that allow their owners to emit a certain amount of greenhouse gases, and then allowing markets to operate accordingly. This is the traditional neoliberal approach, but it won't work for two reasons: first and primarily, because such enclosures often engender resistance; and, second, because they create incentives to pre-empt them by even more rapacious resource extraction. Stiglitz therefore proposes a global tax on carbon emissions to make people pay for the costs they impose on others through their polluting activities. This carbon tax – if set at an 'appropriate rate' and effectively enforced – would enable markets to be 'efficient' and would reduce emissions to agreed targets. Stiglitz then argues that such a tax would create strong incentives for innovation in terms of energy efficiency and other 'green' technologies, enabling states to govern capitalist globalisation and promote virtuous, 'sustainable' growth.

This platform of management of the global commons is based on one key assumption: that capitalist disciplinary markets are a force for good, if only states are able to guide them onto a path of environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive growth. What this view forgets is that there is little evidence that global economic growth could be achieved with lower greenhouse gas emissions, in spite of increasingly energy-efficient new technologies, which in turn implies that alternatives might just be necessary to stop climate change. This raises the question of how we disentangle ourselves from the kind of conception of commons offered by Stiglitz, which allow solutions based on capitalist growth.

Common interests?

Commons also refer to common interests. To stay with the example of climate change, if there is any chance of significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions – without this implying some form of green authoritarianism – it is because there is a *common* interest in doing so. But common interests do not exist *per se*, they have to be constructed, a process that has historically proven to be riddled with difficulties – witness the feminist movement's attempts to construct a 'global sisterhood'; or the workers' movement's project of a 'global proletariat'. This is partly the case because capitalism stratifies 'women', 'workers' or any other collective subject in and through hierarchies of wages and power. And therein lies the rub, because it is on the terrain of the

construction of common *global* interests (not just around ecological issues, but also intellectual commons, energy commons, etc.) that the class struggle of the 21st century will be played out. This is where the centre of gravity of a new politics will lie.

There are thus two possibilities. Either: social movements will face up to the challenge and re-found the commons on values of social justice in spite of, and beyond, these capitalist hierarchies. Or: capital will seize the historical moment to use them to initiate a new round of accumulation (i.e. growth). The previous discussion of Stiglitz's arguments highlights the dangers here. Because Stiglitz moves swiftly from the presumed tragedy of the global commons to the need to preserve and sustain them for the purpose of economic growth. Similar arguments can be found in UN and World Bank reports on 'sustainable development', that oxymoron invented to couple environmental and 'social' sustainability to economic growth. Sustainable development is simply the sustainability of capital. This approach asserts capitalist growth as the *sine qua non* common interest of humanity. I call commons that are tied to capitalist growth *distorted commons*, where capital has successfully subordinated non-monetary values to its primary goal of accumulation.

The reason why common interests cannot simply be postulated is that we do not reproduce our livelihoods by way of postulations – we cannot eat them, in short. By and large, we reproduce our livelihoods by entering into relations with others, and by following the rules of these relations. To the extent that the rules that we follow in reproducing ourselves are the rules of capitalist production – i.e. to the extent that our reproduction depends on money – we should question the operational value of any postulation of a common interest, because capitalist social relations imply precisely the existence of injustices, and conflicts of interest. These exist, on the one hand, between those who produce value, and those who expropriate it; and, on the other, between different layers of the planetary hierarchy. And, it is not only pro-growth discourses that advocate the distorted commons that perpetuate these conflicts at the same time as they try to negate them. The same is true of environmental discourses that do not challenge the existing social relations of production through which we reproduce our livelihoods. Given that these assertions are somewhat abstract, let us try to substantiate them by testing a central environmental postulate on subjects who depend on capitalist markets for the reproduction of their livelihoods. Imagine I am a coal miner, or an oil worker. An environmental postulate tells me that 'our' common interest is to keep coal, or oil, in the ground because of long-run trends in greenhouse gas emissions. But this does not take into account that my family and I need food, shelter, clothing, etc. now and in a year's time, *as well as* in the long run. In order to satisfy those needs in the shorter term, I need to keep working as a coal miner or oil worker. Those making this postulation may or may not themselves have alternative sources of income from working in other industries; or they may even have chosen not to extract coal or oil for environmental reasons. However, their urging me to subscribe to this common interest by forfeiting my livelihood demonstrates that my livelihood is not a matter of *common* interest. An environmental discourse not tied to questions of forms of livelihoods alternative to capital's loops is one that regards my livelihood as expendable. Here we have an example of 'distorted commons', a common that is based on some form of social injustice. Ultimately, all environmental recommendations made without reference to the question of social justice and reproduction are arguments for distorted commons.

Capital and 'distorted commons'

Capitalism as a socio-economic system has a schizophrenic relationship to the commons. On the one hand, capital is a social force that requires continuous enclosures; that is, the destruction and commodification of non-commodified common spaces and resources. However, there is also an extent to which capital has to accept the non-commodified and *contribute to its constitution*. The degree to which it does so, and how it does so, is fundamental for its own sustainability and preservation. But it also has fundamental consequences for the sustainability and preservation of the planet and of many communities. Capital has to reconcile itself to the commons to some degree precisely because capitalism – as the set of economic exchanges and practices mediated and measured by money and driven by self-interest, economic calculus and profit – is not all-encompassing. Capitalism is itself a subsystem of far larger systems necessary for the reproduction of life. This in turn implies that capitalism always finds itself trapped within a shell that constitutes its presuppositions, whether ecological or in terms of non-commodified life practices (non-remunerated childcare, education, etc.). Capital constantly strives to escape this entrapment, to *overcome the barriers that constitute it* and, through this, to preserve and reproduce itself through perpetual growth.

For capital to now reconcile itself to the commons in order to overcome barriers to its own development, it has to strategically (driven by peoples' economic and political calculus) intervene and actively participate in the constitution of things shared. In other words, the forces of capital must participate in the constitution of the commons. And this is where capital's troubles, and everybody else's, begin.

Let's take an example. That capital has to engage with the realm of the shared, the non-commodified, is demonstrated by the fact that even the capitalist factory – the paradigmatic site of exploitation, struggle and the imposition of capital's measure – is a form of common. Those individuals who go to work there have to be *recombined* with one another and with elements of nature in order for commodity production to occur. Here we encounter three elements that are constituent of any commons. First, a pooling of resources: workers do not need to engage in commodity exchanges with one another when accessing tools and information. Second, the social cooperation of labour: at the assembly line, each worker's labour depends on the actions of the one before her. Third, a 'community' that creates rules and regulations and defines those of entry and exit: factory gates don't just open for anyone, and not every kind of behaviour is allowed within them. But we also know that these three constituent features of any commons – pooled resources, social cooperation of labour and community – apply to the capitalist factory in very specific, 'distorted' ways. The fact that resource-pooling and the social cooperation of labour are functional to the production of commodities implies the subordination of other aspects crucial for human reproduction (dignity, solidarity, ecological sustainability, happiness) to one ultimate aim: the accumulation of capital.

Reclaiming commons

So what about the problem of climate change? Changes in climate patterns are certainly going to impact on people across the globe, although these impacts are to a large extent graded by power and monetary affluence. In this sense, climate change transforms the pool of resources available to humanity to go about its social reproduction. For example, there will be less land available as sea-levels rise: communities in Bangladesh will be destroyed. As a result, climate change brings with it the need to change the social cooperation of labour at the general, planetary level, and also the modalities of labour in particular places. This because its currently highly destructive effects will have to be curbed, and because the resources (e.g. energy) that enable the contemporary organisation of labour might become scarce. Whether this will be an adaptation to the effects of climate change *based on* our dependency on capitalist loops, or whether we disentangle our reproduction from these loops and constitute our social cooperation on a *new common* basis, is a question that will be resolved on the open terrain of struggle. And, following on from this, climate change reveals the problem of what constitutes a 'global community', of who speaks for it, who decides for it. Will it be governments promoting green technologies *and* economic growth? Or will it rather be social movements demanding that planetary ecological sustainability be achieved through re-distributive justice, food sovereignty and grassroots empowerment?

The capitalist factory and many solutions to global climate change – although rather different examples – need to be understood in terms of distorted commons. Distorted because of the obvious problems generated by capital's drive towards self-preservation in constituting the underlying commons (cooperation in the factory and the biosphere), and the resulting social injustice. But they are commons nevertheless, because despite their distortions they are the product and presupposition of our doing and being in common. Recognising them as commons is crucial, because it constitutes a declaration of common ownership, hence of stewardship, responsibility and personal, as well as communal, 'investment'. It is a first step towards reclaiming them. Critically, this practice of reclaiming is complicated by the fact that we reproduce our lives through many distorted and 'non-distorted' commons simultaneously. Which is where we return to common interests: we need to do more than simply postulate them – we need to construct them *in struggle*.

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Autonomous Universities and the Making of the Knowledge Commons

by
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Introduction

This is the last of my four scheduled Russell Scholar lectures on the theme of academic freedom. I would like to briefly recapitulate for you their trajectory. In my previous lectures I discussed the threats to academic freedom coming from the state and market and I began to sketch a theory of academic freedom taking us beyond our need to defend academic work and institutions from these threats. I argued that the notion of a knowledge commons is crucial in defining the positive aspect of academic freedom and that the proper expression of academic autonomy in the 21st century is the preservation, defense and expansion of the knowledge commons.

In this lecture I address the role autonomous universities can play in the practical task of making the knowledge commons.

Communal Lessons from Maine's Lobster Gangs: From Hobbes to Rousseau

Let me begin with the conclusion of my previous lecture: *autonomous universities must be involved in the making of the knowledge common*. However, what exactly is required to make a knowledge commons or indeed any commons at all? Commons require at least three elements for their constitution: (a) a common-pool resource (i.e., a resource that combines "difficult excludability" and "high subtractibility"), (b) a set of people who desire continuous, long-term access to the resource (commoners), and (c) a set of rules and procedures that commoners use to manage the resource. Any attempt to go from this abstract framework to actual commons usually leads us to examples of either historical interest--evoking the cozy village commons in medieval England redolent of Tolkein's Shire--or commons in "exotic" locales, e.g., small forest communities in contemporary India (e.g., Shiva 1989).

But there is a world-famous commons in Maine that can help us to understand the making of a commons. The coast from Kittery to Eastport is one of largest commons on the planet. The common-pool resource is the millions of lobsters living there, the "commoners" thousands of lobstermen (and a few lobsterwomen) whose livelihood is based on selling lobsters, and the rules and procedures they use to manage the lobster fishery is a complex combination of informal "deals" among the lobstermen as well as formal laws. A rather remarkable feat of co-management between the "commoners" and the government is responsible for the survival and success of the lobster industry at a time when other types of fishing in the Gulf of are facing extinction.

The present management of the "lobster commons" is based on the "Zone Management" law of 1995 that gave legal authority to a pre-existing informal territory based system of access to local "gangs" (to use James M. Acheson's term) (Acheson 2003). The law divides the Maine coast into seven segments and each segment has its zone council made up of elected lobstermen who deliberate on issues like trap limits, the permissible size of lobsters taken to market, and licensing procedures in their area. The councils also arbitrate the inevitable disputes that come with lobster fishing. The most prominent ones being, of course, boundary disputes both among individual lobstermen in a zone and interzone conflicts between gangs.

A Solon from Maine did not devise the present "settlement" of lobster fishing that is based on the participants' self-management of the fishery. It arose out of more than a century of struggle among lobstermen themselves and between them and government officials. The making of this common was not irenic, but neither was it tragic.

This process had at least three stages. The first was territorial. A lobsterman who owned an island or a home on the coast presumed to have the surrounding waters as his fishing "turf." Thus, "the first fishing territories were small, close to shore, fished mainly in the warm months of year, and vigorously defended by their owner or owners, who were usually close kin" (Acheson 2003: 42). The battles to preserve these small areas mostly involved trap molestation (often by cutting traps' buoys and warp lines or destroying all or part of them) and had the quality of a Hobbesian war of all against all.

The second stage saw the emergence of the harbor or island gangs who organized the territory on the basis of the geographical features of their residence. The average tourist looking over a Maine bay would not see what the lobstermen see: the dividing lines separating the territory allotted to the members of a harbor gang and between different harbor gangs. These gangs also carefully control the entry of new lobstermen and often reject claimants by destroying their traps and in one way or another harassing them until they leave the fishery.

In both these stages territorial, access, and entry rules were informally created (and enforced) by individual lobstermen or by harbor (or island) gangs. This was the period when the commons was formed. The third stage has been one where the confrontation between commons and state initiated a gradual shift to the introduction of formal rules negotiated between lobstermen and officials. This process has been aided and abetted by the increase in law enforcement (e.g., stiffer penalties for trap molestation) and an expansion of lobster fishing into the open sea where traditional and legal territorial claims largely disappear.

This story of the evolution of Maine's lobster fishery can be read as a familiar transition from a Hobbesian "state of nature" to a Lockeian "social contract," but to do so misses the peculiar character of what has resulted in this process. For instead of rights to fish on private patches of waters sold to the highest bidder, the coast of Maine lobster fishery is organized primarily as a commons, where the "commoners" have a significant voice in the management of the resource. The political theory explanation of the development of the industry based on Hobbes and Locke neglects the fact that throughout these stages a "conservation ethic" has been growing, i.e., a collective lobstermen's concern to keep the common resource healthy and plentiful over the long run.

The Hobbes-Locke story misses what I would call the Rousseauian element. For Jean-Jacques Rousseau's "myth of social origin" is rooted in an attempt to prevent species (not individual) annihilation rather than a defense of one's private property (Locke) or a concern for one's bodily safety and comfort (Hobbes). He writes:

I suppose that men have reached the point where obstacles that are harmful to their maintenance in the state of nature gain the upper hand by their resistance to the forces that each individual can bring to bear to maintain himself in that state. Such being the case, that original state cannot subsist any longer, and the human race would perish if it did not alter its mode of existence (Rousseau 1987: 23).

In other words, the "resistance" that threatened to overwhelm dispersed human "forces" and bring about total human extermination was the stimulus "to form by aggregation a sum of forces that could gain the upper hand over the resistance, so that their forces are directed by means of a single moving power and made to act in concert" (Rousseau 1978:23). The beauty of Rousseau's myth is that it reduces the origin of society to a simple application of mechanics (sum of forces versus resistance). Moreover, it is plausible, since sociality arises out of physical necessity and does not suffer the circularity that other philosophical myths of origin like Hobbes' exhibit.

It also has a direct fit with what the change in lobstermen's attitudes before and after the cataclysmic developments in the 1930s when lobster catches went to historic lows. Colin Woodward describes the lobster industry then as heading straight to a "tragedy of the commons":

Between 1905 and 1929, Maine lobstermen increased the number of traps they used by 62 percent and fished over ever-longer seasons, but their catch fell by 28 percent. Only the ever-increasing prices kept an economic disaster at bay. The stock market collapse of 1929 dealt the final blow to the industry...Lobsters were by then an expensive luxury item, and both demand and prices crashed during the

Great Depression of the 1930s (Woodward 2005: 191).

The lobstermen in the 1930s discovered an overwhelming natural-social "resistance" that required their creation of a "sum of forces" as a response. They realized that their individual violations of conservation laws were leading to a collective catastrophe. As Acheson notes: "Increasingly, people became convinced that those violating the conservation laws were doing far more damage than they had thought previously" (Acheson 2003: 81).

The period since the 1930s has seen a remarkable reversal. "By the 1990s," writes Acheson, "the lobster conservation laws became almost self-enforcing" (Acheson 2003: 81). In many cases this trend was further intensified. For example, between 1997 and 1998 all the seven "lobster management zones" voted on "trap limits" (i.e., the maximum number of traps an individual lobsterman can operate). This was meant as a conservation measure, and was heavily supported even though it led to a sharp division in the various harbor gangs between the "big" fishermen and the others.

The success of this conservation ethic and the co-management of the lobster fishery has become evident in the survival and even flourishing (until the recent energy price jump and financial crash) of the industry. Thus we have an example of the more than century-long making of a commons. What does it teach us who are involved in the constitution of a knowledge commons?

Certainly the experience of the Maine lobstermen encourages a healthy skepticism towards both "top-down" governmental and "short term" market approaches to management of common resources. As the doyen of the academic study of common property resources, Elinor Ostrom, concludes: "A frequent finding [of studies of the commons] is that when the users of a common-pool resource organize themselves to devise and enforce some of their own basic rules, they tend to manage local resources more sustainably than when rules are externally imposed on them" (Ostrom 2000: 148).

Indeed, the commons operates in the conceptual "terra nullius" between market and government, hence the process of its "making" is different from the "makings" of the market and government as well. However, bourgeois political philosophers (with the partial exception of Rousseau) were hostile to the reality and concept of the commons and directed their arguments to the undermining of communal forms of ownership and management. Not surprisingly this hostility was first directed to de-legitimizing the indigenous Americans' claims to collective ownership of land--indeed, John Locke, as colonial administrator for the Carolinas, was especially anxious to accomplish this task (Arneil 1996: 153)--but it soon encompassed the claims of so-called "savage" peoples throughout the planet (Linebaugh 2008: 144-169). Thus when it came to genealogy, the key issues for political theory were the "making" of the market (private property and contract) and the "making" of the state (authority over life and death), both of which involved the "unmaking" of the commons!

Although 19th-century anarchists like Petr Kropotkin drew attention to "the making of the commons," the statist turn in the Socialist and Communism movements made the issue of the commons a matter of "pre-capitalist" history (Kropotkin 1955). So from Right to Left the problematic of the making of a commons was neglected until its renaissance in the late 20th century which developed in response to the triumph (and now tragedy) of neoliberalism (Caffentzis 2004, 2006). Cooperation, trust, reciprocity, "niceness," altruism and similar phenomena were revalorized and made central to political theory often under the rubric of "social capital" (e.g., Axelrod 2006, Kolm and Ythier 2006). In this context, the story of the Maine lobster common is especially enlightening, for it illustrates many of the themes of this turn to the commons.

Let us consider three central features required in the making of the lobster common: (i) increasing the shadow of the future, (ii) training in communal values, and (iii) struggling against both the anti-communal restrictions of the state and the temptations of the market.

*First, increasing the "shadow of the future" on the present is crucial for the making of a commons. In our case, this has two elements: the future shadow of the lobsters and the future shadow of the lobstermen. Lobstermen deal on a daily basis with other lobstermen who are largely local residents and whose livelihoods will depend upon their access to an abundant stock of lobsters far into the future. Moreover, they expect to communicate with and to make deals with the other potential competitors concerning the lobster stock in the future. So if someone breaks the evolving rules of the commons (especially conservation laws which affect the future stock of lobsters) s/he can expect to lose the cooperation of others and, given the need for continual interaction, this could be a heavy burden especially in Maine where trap molestation is a constant threat while social sanctions and ostracism of defectors can "be more effective than a dozen wardens" (Woodard 2004: 269).

Second, the training of the values of cooperation and reciprocity are important in the making of a commons, since they frame and weigh on the decisions concerning whether to cooperate with or defect from the rules of access and contribution to the common resource.

This is clearly seen in the informal apprenticeship served by all who enter into Maine lobster fishing, for it is an artisanal industry that requires enormous communal efforts especially in times of immediate danger (from storms to border defense). Lobstermen's communities or "gangs" carry on this education in values and skills and in the process they have created a remarkable social system over many generations that has survived both capitalist as well as ecological crises by creating a distinct "moral economy" in the midst of supplying an international market and exploiting an animal species that occupies a very fragile niche in the Atlantic's ecology.

Third, the commons needs to be valorized and its fetters need to be broken. Academic students of the commons know this process as "changing the payoffs," for all too often the state criminalizes communal cooperation and the market tempts many to break communal bonds and limits. Together they often nip commons in the bud, so it is at this point that the struggle with the state and market is especially pronounced in the drama. Consequently, in the making of a commons it is important to end the criminalization of pro-commons behavior and to show that following the commons rules leads to prosperity and not economic suicide.

The confrontation with state and capital in the making of the commons is especially clear in Maine's lobster industry. For almost a century many of the daily activities of the lobstermen and women (from territorial defense to the hazing of unwelcome entrants to a harbor or island gang) were considered violations of law that carried heavy penalties. It was only since the passage Zone Management Law of 1995 that these practices were transformed into the realm of quasi-legality. For example, "in 1999, the zone councils were...empowered to make proposals to limit the entry of new fishermen into their zone as older license holders retired" (Acheson 2003: 97). Similarly, the market continually tempts fishermen with a lot of capital to employ larger boats with many crew members and in general to "be a pig." This has led to something of a class struggle between the "big" and the "little" lobstermen. Before the 1995 law there were many informal efforts to impose trap limits with all the tensions and dangers such efforts imposed, but in the late 1990s formal, state-sanctioned and locally voted upon trap limits were installed throughout Maine.

Is the Making of the *Knowledge Commons* Possible?

With the general notion of a commons and a concrete example of the making of Maine's lobster commons established, I now turn to the question of autonomous universities' involvement in the making of the knowledge commons. According to the general definition of a commons cited above, at least three elements are necessary: (a) a common-pool resource; (b) a community that accesses the resource; (c) rules for accessing the resource and meta-rules for making these rules. A number of oddities and paradoxes posed by the notion of the knowledge commons must be successfully addressed before we can actually engage in its making.

The first difficulty is with the resource itself: knowledge. As I mentioned in the third Russell Scholar lecture, the notion of knowledge used here is a common-pool resource:

...made of texts, concepts, images, sounds encoded and stored in the form of binary electro-magnetic states or ink and paper or vinyl or magnetized tapes or film or even stone inscriptions. Although made up of individual points of access (often called commons as well), it is a vast (potentially infinite) expanse that includes anything from the languages of the ancient Mayans to the latest cultural productions in Portland.

This resource ontologically differs from the stock of lobsters on the coast of Maine, of course. After all, lobsters are spatially and temporally specific and have a relatively well-known process of reproduction. Knowledge has no defined location in space and time, its mechanisms of accumulation are not well known, and it spans the material/immaterial, the abstract/concrete, the specific/general and many other divides.

In a word, the totality of knowledge is hard to grasp but, *pace* the Maine Lobstermen's Association, it is more important for human existence than all the lobsters on the coast of Maine. In fact, it seems to escape from control by any particular government in the way "global commons" like the atmosphere, the oceans (and the minerals in the deep seabed), outer space, and Antarctica do. Similarly, the market (or Capital) is incapable of subsuming it, since the market itself requires this commons to operate (in the form of "background

information"). Hence the power relations between a Knowledge Commons, the State and the Market differ profoundly from the lobster commons that is pressed on each side by State and Market. After all, knowledge transcends and pre-conditions the State and Market. Finally, the end of the lobster commons is primarily to allow the commoners to make enough money to support their needs through selling a commodity to a buyer--whereas the end of the knowledge is not primarily monetary.

The immensity of the epistemic resource combined with its partial lack of tangibility makes it similar to language that also has a status of a potentially infinite resource (since anyone using the grammar and vocabulary of a human language can generate an infinite number of sentences). Just as language is a product neither of government nor market, but an immense diurnal communal product of millions of speakers, listeners, readers and writers, so too is knowledge a vast communal product being produced prodigiously on a daily basis. Just as one would be foolish to refuse to acknowledge the wealth of the gift of language because it is unruly and transcendent, one would be equally foolish to refuse to recognize the wealth of knowledge because it too is unruly.

Yet, however vast, wild and transcendent it is, knowledge is increasingly being privatized and commodified. Consequently, the powerful political charm of knowledge's "low subtractability,"--i.e., my use of an item of knowledge does not deprive you of its use--is being challenged by corporations and states. Corporations are often using copyright and patenting against their "original intent"--if I may be so bold in stealing a favorite term from conservative commentators on the Constitution--in forcing us to pay to use an item of knowledge that had previously been in the public domain, hence creating an artificial scarcity and increasing its subtractability. States are increasingly using their powers of secrecy and surveillance to make it possible, on the one side, to know that you and I know a particular item of knowledge and, on the other, to keep us ignorant of its knowledge of our knowledge. Together these transformations of knowledge (which reached a new maturity in the Bush Administration) create the need to protect the non-state and non-market access to the knowledge as a resource for life and set the stage for the knowledge common.

A second difficulty arises with the community managing the knowledge commons. "No Commons without Community" is an axiom of commons studies on both the Right and the Left (cf. (Mies and Bennholt-Thomson 2001), (Ostrom 1990)). In the case of the Maine lobster commons there has been clearly a specified community managing the common-pool resource for about a century and a half: the harbor and island "gangs." They have gone through many changes in number, equipment, self-definition and attitude (with the crisis of the 1930s perhaps being the most decisive), but they have provided a continuity of work and concern, since lobster fishing has been the basis of their livelihood. But what is the community of the knowledge common? Is it the set of human knowers? If so, then it must include all of humanity. If not, then what subset of humans is distinctly involved in the management of the resource knowledge? The intellectuals, the academics, the literate? None of these subsets seem correct, but then what is a commons that includes all of humanity? Is humanity a community?

These are pertinent questions and they pose conundrums galore, but they cannot be escaped by rejecting global solutions provided by global governance *tout court*. For just as environmental groups like Greenpeace must challenge the crimes of oil dumping and the killing of nearly extinct whale species that take place on the high seas far beyond the reach of local communities, so too must the access to the resource of knowledge be dealt with as a totality. It is true that at the moment most "global solutions only serve as a legitimization of a capitalist and imperial power" (Mies and Bennholt-Thomson 2001: 1022). This does not mean, however, that there cannot be ways of struggling on the level of the knowledge resource and in the process creating the type of communication and reciprocity that is an essential prerequisite for the creation of a coming human community. This indeed is happening with a number of efforts to create new forms of communal ownership and communication of knowledge--from the Creative Commons licenses, to free cooperation, open access, file sharing, peer-to-peer networks, etc.

A third difficulty arises from the rules of access and contribution to the common resource, knowledge. The access rules that were developed in the lobster commons--V-Notching, double gauging, escape venting, etc.--were devised as part of an effort by the lobstermen to both remain economically viable and escape from the "tragedy of the commons," i.e., the rules were functional to keeping the stock of lobsters large enough to sustain profitable catches. But what is the point of the rules for access and contribution for the knowledge common? How can rules be devised to avert the tragedy of the knowledge commons? Indeed, what is the "tragedy" in this case?

The true "tragedy" of the knowledge commons is the absorption of the totality of knowledge into the realm of state administration or market commodification (this, in Rousseau's terminology, is the "resistance").

Consequently, the aim of the knowledge commons community's rule-making is the creation of a "sum of forces" and practices that can prevent the overwhelming enclosure of the commons by state and market. The criterion for evaluating a successful set of rules would be whether the realm of free access to knowledge enlarges and the contributions to knowledge creation increase as well.

The Making of the Knowledge Commons

In a previous section we examined how the lobster common of Maine was made and noted three essential considerations to the making of a commons: increasing the shadow of the future, commoners learning communal values and practices, and increasing the "payoffs" for cooperation. We shall apply this scheme in examining the making of the knowledge common.

a. Increasing the "shadow of the future."

The "shadow of the future" element is the Rousseauian, apocalyptic or "revolutionary crisis" moment in the making of the knowledge common. A vision of the horrific total enclosure of knowledge by both state and market must be projected on to decisions made today. Such a mental temporal reversal is required in order to motivate the type of mass cooperation needed for the creation of the knowledge commons. Ironically, the Bush Administration's combination of the war on terrorism surveillance and the maximization of neoliberal intellectual property policies of the last decade has unleashed the social imaginary. It may well be that this period will become for the making of the knowledge common the equivalent of what the 1930s was for the making of the Maine lobster common.

There is now a generalized sense of crisis with respect to the access of knowledge being voiced across the intellectual spectrum. Phrases like "the enclosure of knowledge," "the crime of reason," "the tragedy of the anti-commons," "the silent theft of the knowledge commons," have become shibboleths of a movement that, like the ecological movement of the 1960s and 1970s warning of catastrophic climate change, is now envisioning the complete commodification and/or total sequestering of knowledge [(Caffentzis 1994), (Loughlin 2008), (Heller 1998), (Bollier 2002) respectively]. Let me review a small sample of this "prophetic" literature.

One of the salient recent expressions (brought to my attention by Prof. La Salla) of the extremity of our epistemic situation is by Noble-prize winning physicist, Robert B. Laughlin. He claims that the national security restrictions on knowledge as well as the patenting and copyrighting of knowledge have increasingly criminalized the exercise of reason and the pursuit of learning. This development justifies his introduction of the catch phrase, "the crime of reason," into the discussion of the contemporary epistemic scene. He writes:

Our society is sequestering knowledge more extensively, rapidly, and thoroughly than any before it in history. Indeed, the Information Age should probably be called the Age of Amnesia because it has meant, in practice, a steep decline in public accessibility of important information (Laughlin 2008: 5).

Laughlin sees in the "criminalization of learning" a profound contradiction between the desire to give to the Market and State powers to achieve their purported ends for the greater good and the lingering respect for one of the most basic of human rights, the right to know. This desire and this respect are now in contradiction. The consequences of the situation described by Laughlin's epigram, "The Age of Reason is being pushed out of its ecological niche by the knowledge economy," will only be fully felt in the future, but he argues that action to avoid it must begin now and that action will be costly (for many corporations) and dangerous (for many states).

David Bollier, a journalist and media activist, prophesizes that we are on the verge of a "copyright police state." He writes:

Copyright owners want strictly to control their creative and informational works--in all markets, on all media platforms, and even in how people can use copyrighted products. This is propelling an unprecedented expansion in the scope and duration of intellectual property protection, as well as more intrusive kinds of enforcement and new technologies of control (Bollier 2002: 120).

In effect, cries Bollier, there is an ongoing "silent theft" of the dozens of resources that US citizens collectively

own, especially knowledge. "Big Content," computer, and Internet corporations are the silent thieves who are enclosing and privatizing the immense wealth developed by thousands of generations of knowers without firing a shot.

Finally, consider the vision of Nancy Kranich, former president of the American Librarians Association, who claims that the impression of increased availability of knowledge during the Internet era is an illusion. She writes:

...even though more people than ever have access to computers and the Internet, much valuable information is being withdrawn, lost, privatized, or restricted from the public, who used to be able to rely on this same information. In effect, this "walled garden" or "enclosure" on line creates an increasing threat to democratic principles of informed citizens and academic principles of building on the shoulders of giants. Looks are deceiving: while it appears that we have more, we actually have less and less (Kranich 2007: 86).

It is difficult to assess her quantitative claims (is it more or less?), but the evidence she brings to bear on her prophecy is impressive. For example, she points out that libraries that subscribe to a data base have nothing to offer users if they discontinue leasing, even if they had paid fees for decades, due to restrictions on archiving and preserving the material on the data base! "When budget cuts come... 'The library has no trace of what it bought: no record, no archive. It's lost entirely'" (Kranich 2007: 89). Do we have more data now and less later?

These individual voices are joining many others to cast the shadow of the future onto the present. They are beginning to become self-conscious and slowly are forming a "sum of forces," i.e., a movement. We are now in a situation when these prophets' hellish vision of an electronic, "free market" Fahrenheit 451 are echoed by the practical efforts of some universities and "knowledge rights" organizations that challenge both the legal and administrative repression of free access to the knowledge commons (for a review of many of these efforts see [Kranich 2007]). These overt efforts to resist the growing privatized/secured knowledge order are observable peaks in an ocean of billions of acts of epistemic subversion that have become commonplace in the life of faculty members and students. Together these developments constitute a growing movement of resistance to the complete destruction of the knowledge commons.

This movement is posing to universities and academics a number of questions that cannot be avoided any longer:

- *Will *this* university be an advocate for open access to the knowledge common?
- *Will *this* university require that its faculty members make their research results available in the public domain?
- *Will *you and I* as faculty members self-archive the products of our research and demand that our work be available in the public domain?
- *Will *this* university's library "information commons" be transformed into a "copyright-free zone" where all material in the zone would be inalienably in the public domain (Beagle 2006: 187-188)?

These are not easy questions to answer for most universities, mainly because they put into doubt their economic strategy in the neoliberal era. If answered affirmatively, for example, universities would be in conflict with "content providers" like publishing, television, and film companies, and with Internet providers. Unless driven by a vision of a catastrophe, universities would lack the energy to deal with the "resistance" of these "providers" and claim their autonomy.

b. The training of communal epistemic values

The making of the knowledge commons also requires the training of "knowledge commoners" in communal epistemic values. Historically, of course, the creation of knowledge has been a social and even global process, as we now realize, but the ideology of individualism is still dominant in education. Learning is still treated as a singular enterprise. Schooling as a Robinsonade has been the center of early bourgeois philosophy of education and still has a residual power to this day. "Is this *your* work?" is the primary question of assessment and the violation of the rule of isolated self-creation is the primary sin for this philosophy even though it has been clear since ancient Greek days that knowledge is a collective product. The power of this paradigm is now giving way to a collective methodology of knowledge production.

The kind of training in communal epistemic values is now becoming inherent in the prevailing models of knowledge production. David Bollier writes:

From libraries to biotech researchers to musicians, many groups are coming to recognize the value of their own peer-based production and understandably wish to fortify and protect it. In one sense, this is simply a rediscovery of the social foundations that have always supported science, academic research, and creativity (Bollier 2007: 36).

These communal epistemic values that Bollier refers to in the above passage have been integrated in the technology of our time. How often do we begin our research on a listserv that makes it possible for us to coordinate our thoughts and knowledge with multiple interested others as if we were in the same room. Similarly, we have all been involved in information and file sharing in networks that stretch across continents. Indeed, the cooperative training of factory workers that Marx so praised in *Capital*-- "When the worker cooperates in a planned way with others, he strips off the fetters of his individuality, and develops the capabilities of his species" (Marx 1976: 447)--has now become diffused in the communication and epistemic technology inside and outside the factory or office. So the training in cooperation (that had such revolutionary consequences in Marx's thought) has now become a commonplace experience for workers both in and out of the waged workplace in the US.

Howard Rheingold, a writer on the social implications of technological change, identified eight different "technologies" that provide much of the training in cooperation that are now in use (Rheingold 2007). I will not examine them, but I will simply note his discussion of "knowledge collectives," which "Rather than treating knowledge as private intellectual property, they treat it as a common-pool resource, with mechanisms for mutual monitoring, quality assurance, and protection against vandalism and overconsumption" (Rheingold 2007: 56). These knowledge collectives need not be small. The most famous, Wikipedia, is organized as a wiki (an easy to edit Web page) that allows groups to create a large, self-correcting knowledge repository with millions of articles in hundreds of languages. But the key to such knowledge communities is the recognition of the exponentially growing power accruing in being a part of a huge coordinated group with enormous surplus capacity (for computation as well as for investigation).

This is one of most surprising developments of the "computer revolution." For along side the get-rich-quick ethos of Silicon Valley, a florescence of communal behavior has emerged. This will undoubtedly add a new dimension to the residual communality of the human species that has been preserved in thousands of agricultural villages throughout Africa, South America and Asia and promises to be the soil of the knowledge commons.

The autonomous university can have a vital role to play in developing the training of communal epistemic values in its involvement in the making of the knowledge common.

c. Changing the "payoffs": the struggle with state and capital

Once the commons is fore-grounded via the apocalyptic-prophetic message and the values of the commons are instilled in the coming generations, the makers of the knowledge commons must deal with the continual threats on the side of the state to criminalize communal behavior and on the side of the market to tempt the commoners to defect from the community. These threats require a structural response, if the knowledge commons is to be established.

The State has a long history of criminalizing a wide variety of "customs in common." For example, workers used to sell the wooden "chips" produced in building wooden ships in 18th century England to supplement their income. This was their custom in common. Samuel Bentham, Jeremy's brother, redesigned shipbuilding yards to make the surveillance of the workers more effective and to stop the custom of appropriating and selling the chips by making it illegal. This surveillance and law "reform" dramatically lowered the "pay-off" of cooperating with other workers in picking up the chips and smuggling them out of the ship yard (Linebaugh 1992).

The State's sequestering of knowledge and its support of copyrights and patents criminalizes the dissemination and reproduction of knowledge. The commons responses have been both on a legal level--the challenges to intellectual property laws in national and international courts--as well as by direct action--the sharing of music and film DVDs, the placing of copyrighted material on public domain web sites, etc. However uncomfortable this bifurcated struggle might make us, its power will be crucial to the survival and growth of the knowledge

commons in the coming years.

The second aspect of the shift in pay-offs requires a direct confrontation with the market and the rent-seeking character of intellectual property. An item of intellectual property is a sort of meta-commodity that one *rents* in order to produce another commodity or as an object of consumption, just as land is a meta-commodity that one rents in order to produce other commodities (wheat for sale) or subsistence goods (tomatoes for home consumption). The claim of the defenders of intellectual property is that without the possibility of receiving rent (in the form of leases, royalties or licenses) there would be no incentive for people to produce new texts, software, or machines.

Certainly, this rental "pay-off" is a temptation for many to accept the restrictions on textual reproduction and dissemination. Who would not be tempted to accept the royalties for a best selling novel (if one was the author) or the licensing fees of a successful "Windows"-like software program (if one were the designer) while accepting the restriction on copying? Thus intellectual property payoffs are the temptation to reject open access to portions of the knowledge common (even though the novel's plot was based on Macbeth and the program was based on Tim Berners-Lee's "Esquire" program!)

Though the temptation is real and is often the source of the destruction of commons, is its motivating premise empirically correct? Would innovation would stop without intellectual property rent incentives. This is hard to assess, but there are two major pieces of countervailing evidence. First, the human race has been innovating for tens of thousands of years before intellectual property legislation began to be introduced in the 18th century. Second, in the last few decades there has been an enormous amount of original work done on all levels of the internet (from designing the "world wide web" to writing an entry on an obscure 15th century Italian poet for Wikipedia) that has not been copyrighted or patented.

This evidence reminds us that there are many ways of rewarding people for innovations not based on rents (and their excessive restrictions on reproduction). These range from wages and profits, to "prizes," to "fame," to "gifts." Each of these forms of incentive has weaknesses and strengths, of course, but no argument has yet demonstrated that the rental model is the best. On the contrary, the historical evidence mentioned above puts it in question. Consequently, an important element in the making of the knowledge common is the construction of an alternative, non-rent based form of incentive for contributions to the knowledge common.

Universities are prepared to challenge the rent-based incentives because they have been evaluating scholarly productivity on a different basis for centuries.

Conclusion: The Threat, an Exodus from the University similar to one between the Reformation to the French Revolution

There will be grave consequences, if universities fail to declare their autonomy and independence from State and Market and refuse to take part in the creation of the knowledge commons. I began to understand the gravity of the universities' position a while ago when I was teaching the history of early modern philosophy and I noticed an odd commonality in the cv's of the major philosophers of that era (Bacon, Hobbes, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Rousseau, Diderot): they were not university professors. From medieval times up until the Reformation, most major philosophers were involved in university life. Creative philosophers only began to be professors again in the 19th century. In other words, philosophy absconded from the university between 1517 to 1789.

Why did the conceptual revolutions in philosophy take place then largely outside of the university?

The answer is clear: the level of theologico-political surveillance, inquisition and punishment was so high after the Reformation and Counter-Reformation that it became physically dangerous to inhabit such open epistemic spaces. Philosophers could not afford to present their theories in environments crushed between the forces of Church and State. They went on to develop a whole set of new "occult" spaces (scientific societies, invisible colleges, anonymous publications) to carry on the essential functions of innovative intellectual life (including the training of new generations of philosophers). It was only with the return of academic freedom to the universities in 19th universities, surprisingly especially in Germany, that philosophy again returned to the universities.

If the universities of the 21st century are not to experience a similar exodus, becoming empty shells for the

manipulation by Capital and the State, the fostering of both positive and negative academic freedom have to be a priority.

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The Financialization of Student Life: Five Propositions on Student Debt

Written by Morgan Adamson
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"Student poverty is merely the most gross expression of the colonization of all domains of social practice. The projection of all social guilty conscience onto the student masks the poverty and servitude of everyone."

—Situationists International, 1966 (1)

Of all the transformations that have taken place in the American university during the post-1968 era, perhaps the most radical is the shift toward financing higher education through borrowed money. The vast amount of unforgivable debt students have incurred since the 1970s signals the birth of a new regime that has come to shape the post-modern university. Each year the sum of student debt seems to grow exponentially: the graduating class of seniors in 2007 had an average debt of \$21,900, an increase of 8% from 2006 and almost 100% from 1997.⁽²⁾ These astounding statistics do not even take into account the debt that most students take on if they choose to seek graduate or professional degrees. Despite the gravity of the situation facing students, academia, particularly the humanities, has afforded surprisingly little attention to the problem of student debt. Of the recent discussions that do critique student debt, most are largely nostalgic for a notion of the "public" university and find the rise in student debt to be yet another symptom of the death of the welfare state.⁽³⁾ While these accounts often present impassioned de-nunciations of student debt and argue for a return to state-financed education, they systematically lack a critique of the very mechanisms of late capitalism that go into producing the student-in-debt. One must emphasize the limitations of nostalgia for the public university when confronting the problem of student debt, noting that privatization is but one facet of a complex process. Instead, it seems that the student-in-debt is a necessary nexus of forces of power and control under current configurations of capitalism. The following propositions are gestures towards a broader exploration of how the student-in-debt is expressive of some of the most insidious mechanisms of control deployed in the transition from industrial to financial capitalism we have witnessed since the late 1960s.

1. The student is no longer a student confined but a student in debt.

In his 1990 essay, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," Gilles Deleuze concisely updates Michel Foucault's writings on disciplinary societies with the following re-mark: "man is no longer

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a man confined but a man in debt.”(4) This cryptic passage is a condensation of his powerful diagnostic of the unbounded financialization of life within societies of control. The debt Deleuze speaks of is, importantly, not only a financial obligation between two contractual parties. When alluding to the status of debt in control societies, Deleuze refers to something like a form or structure of life that is bounded to capital while being indefinitely deferred. Explicitly, financial debt is only an index of a form of life that is itself generated through debt. In this way, the debt within societies of control is a debt that can never be repaid, yet at the same time acts as a motor for constant “undulation,” movement, and adaptation.(5)

For Deleuze the most fundamental feature of the transition from disciplinary to control societies is the “breakdown of interiors”: “family, school, army, and factory are no longer so many analogous but different sites converging on an owner, whether it be state or private power, but transmutable or transformable coded configurations or a single business where the only people left are administrators.”(6) When looking at the crisis of the university in the post-1968 period, Deleuze’s discussion helps to articulate a process of reconfiguration and dilapidation of institutional structures of confinement in excess of the discourse on privatization. In disciplinary societies, it does not matter who is the proprietor of an institution, be it the state or private industry: what matters is the form of power deployed. The crumbling of the walls of analogous confined spaces through which the disciplinary subject moved in the period of her life produces new channels for the “ceaseless control of open sites.”(7) Offering an alternative to the discourse on the university that laments the passing of the welfare state—one focused on the privatization of a public good—the concepts of both discipline and control can help us to situate the institution within forms of power that exceed the public/private duality. To illustrate a similar point John R. Thelin presents the argument that for most of the twentieth century the American university functioned as a “knowledge factory” modeled on industrial forms of business management that resembled the auto and steel industries.(8) Furthermore, the financial restructuring of the university in the early 1970s was conditioned by the general decline of industrial society in America.(9) In disciplinary societies, the university functioned as an interiority, a “knowledge factory” one of the many “analogical” sites of confinement (factory, school, army, etc.) that functioned to individuate and discipline the subject within a delimited zone. In contrast, within control societies, the university functions as a dispersive and modulating system within a larger network of control. As Deleuze writes, what differentiates disciplinary societies from societies of control is that, “we’re no longer dealing with a duality of mass and individual. Individuals become ‘dividuals,’ and masses become samples, data, markets or ‘banks.’”(10)

Deleuze finds the methods of control in education to be exemplified by the model of “continuing education” and “continuous assessment;”(11) in fact, he sees the introduction of a business model into the university system as precipitating a “move away from any research in universities.”(12) Time has illustrated, however, that the opposite is true. Research remains crucial in shaping the role of the university in contemporary capitalism, though both the concept and function of research have been transformed. The breakdown of the interior that was the

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university also includes the breakdown of various interiors within the institution: the classical disciplines. The push towards interdisciplinary in the past thirty years is a symptom of the reconfiguration of the university into a digital mode of business management. Interdisciplinary research, both fundamental and applied, maximizes profitability while allowing new lines of inquiry not molded on any disciplinary concern, but rather directly on the interests of capital. Universities introduce countless "interdisciplinary initiatives" as models for cutting costs and allowing direct corporate sponsorship of research. To gain any grant or award, one must constantly emphasize her interdisciplinarity, a term which has lost much of its radical content and points, rather, to the flexibility of academic labor. The "continuous assessment" that Deleuze associates with control societies manifests itself in the ceaseless demand that academic labor be able to form new and innovative assemblages of thought and to exceed the limits of particular discursive structures—those associated with the classical disciplines.

Within this ever-changing context that rewards malleability, we find the student to be no longer individuated within the mass, but one of these open sites of control, at every moment "plugged in" to global networks of popular culture, and, as I am arguing here, global financial markets. Where Deleuze sees the workings of control societies in schools expressed by the demands of continuing education, I find them to be most evident in the problem of student debt, particularly in the United States. The breakdown of the interior of the university has directly exposed those once thought to be in a liminal state, isolated from the concerns of the world, to the most callous practices of the global financial system. At the same time, this debt ensures that intellectual futures are bound to the production of surplus value. We might say, then, a student is no longer a student confined but a student in debt. The form of life that is produced by finance capital is life that is in debt, but a debt that cannot be repaid, rather a structural debt. If institutions within disciplinary societies such as schools, factories, and hospitals resembled the nineteenth century criminal prison, we might say that within control societies, the whole of life takes on the agitated character of the debtor's prison.

2. Students are not simply one among many groups in American society that have been targeted by predatory lending; rather, since the early 1970s, students have been at the center of new experiments in the financial management and control of life through debt.

Students have been a type of testing ground for the bomb that is de-regulated financial practices, the catastrophic effects of which global markets are only now beginning to feel. The history of the indebted student closely traces the ascendancy of finance capitalism in the late twentieth century. The global political upheaval of the late-1960s led to a widespread financial

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crisis that forced, among many things, the United States to abandon the gold standard, effectively ending the terms of the Bretton Woods agreement. Removing the dollar from the gold standard not only saved the global financial system from complete collapse, but also ushered in a reconfiguration of capitalist forms, fully expressing a tendency characteristic of capitalism from its inception.(13) While the structuring logic of capital since the early 1970s has been given many names—postmodernism, post-fordism, late capitalism, etc.—financialization is the concept I find to be the most useful in describing a process that deploys debt in order to configure new relations of power. The liberation of global financial markets from the constraints of the gold standard forced the international credit system into prominence, allowing capitalism to both adapt to and profit from the crises of late-1960s.

It is from this historical constellation that the predominance of the “man in debt” emerges. In the *Financialization of Daily Life* Randy Martin charts how since the early 1970s technologies of consumer debt—access to easy credit—have increased “beyond the wildest imaginings of their architects in the 1920s,”(14) leading to a population without savings, in “a perpetual present without a buffer for the future.”(15) Though mechanisms of control through consumer lending have been pervasive since the early 1970s, financial markets, with the consistent collusion of the federal government, have most rigorously targeted the student population. In 1972, merely a year after Richard Nixon declared the end of the gold standard, the federal government instituted the first federally based aid policy that utilized student-loan debt. The creation of Sallie Mae (Student Loan Marketing Association) was the beginning of the trend towards market-based solutions for university funding. While the federal loan program expanded the number of students attending the university, it quickly became the largest source of federally funded aid for higher education.

Today Sallie Mae, a privately traded corporation since 2004, owns the university debt of over ten million Americans.(16) As Jeffery Williams notes in his essay “The Pedagogy of Debt,” the state-business partnership proved one that profits the financial industry at the expense of students. Williams notes that Sallie Mae receives an average of 37% profit from its loans offered through the federal programs due to the unusual structure in which the federal government actually insures student loans: “In other words, banks bear no risk, and the structure of federal loan programs provides a safety net for banks, not students.”(17) Student debt is the only sector of the consumer credit market that is insured by the state; in this way, the state has played a key role in attracting banks to an otherwise risky population, students.(18) The proliferation of student debt is a direct result of the exposure of the student to predatory lending practices in which the role of the state is to protect and ensure profitability for investors. Student debt represents the fourth largest sector of consumer debt—after home, auto, and credit card debt—and the amount that is borrowed annually through federal programs has reached \$50.5 billion in 2004, up \$30.6 billion from \$19.9 billion in 1992, more than doubling the amount of money owed and number of indebted students in a little more than decade.(19) Though rampant expansion of credit markets in the past two decades affected all sectors of consumer society, the intensive growth of student loan programs was unparalleled during this period.(20)

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University infrastructure acts as a mediator between banks and students, deliberately constructed to facilitate this relationship with so-called financial aid packages, websites, and offices that directly link students to sources of credit and allow them to take out massive loans with surprising ease. Furthermore, many public universities have direct ties to private banking institutions and allow branches to be located on campus, thus encouraging students to take out even more dangerous private loans to supplement their deficient financial aid packages.(21) The mechanisms of predatory lending and financial control are inscribed into the very architecture and quotidian operations of the contemporary university.

With all the contingencies afforded by federal programs, such as income-based repayment options and subsidized loans, student debtors lack the most fundamental right of the indebted class: bankruptcy. The 1976 bankruptcy laws passed by congress assured that student debtors have a singular status under the law, further illustrating the exceptional situation created for the financial control over this population. Isolating the student by assigning her to a vulnerable legal status, the production of the student in debt is an experiment in the development and dissemination of techniques of financial control. Unlike the victims of the bad loans that led to the recent sub-prime mortgage crisis, the indebted student class in America can never start over.

3. The financialization of student life is an extension of the means of primitive accumulation deployed by contemporary finance capitalism. New technologies of financial control targeted at the student, "Human Capital Contracts," exemplify the unbounded scope of these means in an attempt to control all domains of student life.

Whereas Marx writes that primitive accumulation, accumulation by "conquest, en-slavement, robbery, murder,"(22) is akin to the "original sin" of capitalist accumulation, Deleuze and Guattari argue that "primitive accumulation is not produced just once at the dawn of capitalism, but is continually reproducing itself."(23) Increasingly, Marxist thought from the later half of the twentieth century into the present has been revisiting the concept of primitive accumulation in order to illustrate its persistent relevance to contemporary capitalist forms.(24) Far from only representing a historical stage in the development of capitalism, primitive accumulation should be understood as a technique for both managing crisis and bringing new raw materials—be they social practices, living entities, or territories—into the fold of capital. David Harvey's *The New Imperialism* argues for a renaming of this concept that wrests it from its teleological sense, calling it instead, "accumulation by dispossession." Consistent with Marx's association of primitive accumulation with the rise of the banking system, Harvey notes "finance capitalism is the cutting edge of accumulation by dispossession in recent times."(25) As the proprietors of much of the spoil inflicted on the third world, international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF are at the center of Harvey's analysis of the relationship between debt and primitive accumulation. However, he does mention that primitive accumulation does not always

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necessitate an “outside,” or a non-capitalist mode of production to poach. Sectors of the economy that have “not yet been proletarianized,” including education, are areas ripe for the techniques of primitive accumulation to take hold.(26)

The implementation of student debt as a mechanism of financial control has subjected the student population in America to a process of proletarianization. As a testing ground for new technologies of financial control at the centers of capitalist accumulation, the student is an important figure for understanding the manner in which accumulation by dispossession functions within consumer markets. However, student debt is perhaps only the seed of new and more virulent forms of accumulation by dispossession that are presently encroaching on student life.

In common parlance, the situation of indebted students is often likened to indentured servitude.(27) While this claim might appear to be hyperbolic, it indexes the growing sense that financial institutions are engaged in forms of exploitation that exceed the bounds of what is permissible within the bourgeois framework of free labor. Though student debt is not necessarily a form of indentured servitude, it has produced a fertile ground for new and more menacing financial technologies to emerge. The current crisis of funding in higher education, induced by economic restructuring, has led to a call for further market-based solutions to solve this manufactured problem. Perhaps the most disturbing trend is the push from within the financial sector towards financing higher education through “Human Capital Contracts.” First introduced by Milton Friedman in 1945, the Human Capital Contract creates “a financial instrument that would allow investors to ‘buy’ part of a student’s future income.”(28) The concept of human capital, developed by neo-classical economists in the mid-twentieth century, is a radical model of valuing human life that renders the knowledge, skills, and education of an individual as a form of fixed capital. Milton Friedman writes of education, “it is a form of investment in human capital precisely analogous to investment in machinery, buildings, or other forms of non-human capital. Its function is to raise the economic productivity of the human being.”(29) A Human Capital Contract, then, treats funding a student’s education as an investment in fixed capital or increasing “equity,” and the returns come from the investor receiving a pre-determined percentage of the student’s income for a large portion of her working life.

It is important to note that the Human Capital Contract is not a loan, though it might masquerade as one. It is a legal contract of a different kind, as it signifies the ownership not of a debt, but of a portion of the actual “human capital,” the knowledge and skills acquired through education, possessed by the student. Though it is a departure from the practices of predatory lending, the Human Capital Contract is merely the grossest expression of the encroachment of financial institutions on the life of the student. It produces between the financier and the student a relationship that is akin to servitude.

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Though the trade in human capital pales to the direct violence of modified and full servitude that have been utilized at different moments in the history of capitalist accumulation, it is useful to understand how the Human Capital Contract employs techniques of accumulation by dispossession through an implementation of a form of indenture.⁽³⁰⁾ In fact, the predation inflicted by the student loan market has produced a situation in which selling one's human capital on the market would appear to be a more viable option than loans. The modified form of indenture that the Human Capital Contract creates is but one expression of a complex mixture of processes through which accumulation by dispossession functions, and through which the credit system opens up new speculative zones for investment.

In *Investing in Human Capital*, Miguel Palacios Lleras, who is both a fellow at the University of Virginia and a co-founder of LumniTM, a company that invests in human capital, champions the ability of Human Capital Contracts to fix the "broken" system of financing higher education, especially in developing countries. Palacios Lleras argues that Human Capital Contracts are far more attractive because it is the investor, not the student, who takes on the bulk of the financial risk. In this sense, the student's ability to learn and become a productive member of the Post-Fordist work force now becomes a risk factor for the investor. For Palacios Lleras, speculation on human capital as equity has the potential to produce generous returns:

Equity is used for investments with high-risk profiles where the use of loans would be excessively costly, if not impossible. The use of equity suits risky investments better because investors compensate possible loss through significant financial upside potential, well above the original value of the investment.⁽³¹⁾

In other words, the "financial upside potential" of human capital allows investors to carefully calculate risk on the potential for increase in value of human capital they purchase, and to be financially rewarded far beyond the interest on a loan if a student is able to perform above expectations. The promise of limitless potential, embodied in the human faculty to learn, makes the student an ideal object for this kind of speculation. Human Capital Contracts, according to Palacios Lleras, will bring students into the university system whose financial profile and academic achievement had previously disallowed their participation. Much like the arguments used to expand student loan programs in the 1970s, the argument for Human Capital Contracts presents itself through a discourse that promotes "access to higher education," eliding the fact that these financial instruments are primarily geared towards the production of surplus value.

Though the trade in human capital does not presently account for a significant portion of either financial markets or university funding, it is expressive of the tendencies of accumulation by dispossession already at work within student debt. These tendencies, however, are taken to an

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extreme that challenges the limits of what is permissible within the confines of existing legal and ethical frameworks. Like the original designers of the Human Capital Contract, Palacios Lleras attempts to buffer himself from the charge that the purchase and trade of human capital is servitude by arguing that human capital is the ownership of the rights to future income not future activity.(32) Therefore, the trade in human capital “does not involve a suppression of an individual’s will.”(33) Such a distinction seems flimsy at best, as it ignores the underlying technique of human capital contracts which transforms human life into fixed capital.

The coincidence of the emergence of human capital markets and the real sub-sumption of the capacities of humans into modes of production is not in itself re-markable—it is yet another space for the conquest of life under contemporary capitalism. Though evident in the explosion of modified forms of servitude across areas of the Third-World, the rise of economies of servitude also seems to be taking place at the centers of capitalist production in open and legal forms. Utilizing the tools of risk assessment and management that drive financial markets, the mechanisms of accumulation by dispossession have opened the ability to learn from financial speculation. In a market where human capacity to think, speak, and produce affect is exploited, the student becomes a key site for experimentation with methods that allow the further extraction of profit from the human brain’s ability not only to perform, but also to develop these capacities. The Human Capital Contract treats the brain as an open question, a zone of limitless potential, while at the same time, attempting to squeeze the maximum amount of profit from the unfolding of the brain’s potential. Beyond the discourse of the subject, Deleuze highlights the importance of the brain in control societies as a “boundary of a continuous two-way movement between Inside and Outside, this membrane between them.”(34) Purchasing the rights to the future of the brain’s potential, finance capitalism attempts to capture the potentials of labor power at this very site, the frontier where creative interaction occurs.

In this sense, the development of the Human Capital Contract, while differing from student debt, is an extension of the modes of accumulation by dispossession that have been utilized to both control and proletarianize the student population. David Harvey writes that with accumulation by dispossession, “capitalism internal-izes cannibalistic as well as predatory and fraudulent practices,” and that primitive accumulation “can occur in a variety of ways and there is much that is both contingent and haphazard about its modus operandi.”(35) Though the financialization of student life can take various forms, be they debt or the sale of human capital, all of the forms are indicative of a similar process through which capital is currently reconfiguring the student towards its own ends.

4. Student debt is counterrevolution.

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In contrast to a strictly violent and suppressive movement, Paolo Virno defines counterrevolution as, revolution in reverse, ... an impetuous innovation of modes of production, forms of life, that, however, consolidate and again set in motion capitalist command ... The counterrevolution enjoys the very same presuppositions and the very same (economic, social, and cultural) tendencies that the revolution would have been able to engage.(36)

The conquering of student life through debt is the capture of a site of revolution-ary potential manifested in the late-1960s. What was previously a location of dynamism, innovation, new forms of social networks, creativity, and unpredictability, the student has now become a locus for experiments in financial control, aiming to cultivate and capture these very attributes. Student debt promises that the energy formed in the life of the student will be channeled into the production of surplus value. It is truly a revolution in reverse in that it speculates on, and thus frames, not only the present direction of a student's intellectual activity, but also the direction towards which future efforts will be channeled.

The radical model of the student-worker developed by student movements in the 1960s has been countered with the student overburdened with financial obligation, fully enmeshed in the world outside of the university, and increasingly isolated, over-worked, and resentful. As Marc Bousquet illustrates in *How the University Works*, undergraduates have increasingly been beleaguered by work-study scams that seek to profit from the creation of low-wage, non-union positions that feed private industry.(37) Rather than seeing college life as a liminal space within American society, Bousquet's important claim, "students are already workers,"(38) insists that students are deeply entangled in larger processes of exploitation and wage deflation in America before they ever enter the work-force outside of the university. In addition to the great expansion of so-called work-study, however, the 1960s demand that students become connected with proletarian life has also been countered with the great burden of debt. These responses to the demands of radicalized students are both negative and counter-revolutionary. The financialization of student life is a reaction to the disturbances caused by a population that disciplinary measures had failed to contain. It is for this reason that new techniques of financial control have been directed at the student population before moving, virally, into other sectors of the economy. Some examples include the targeting of low-income populations with predatory lending,(39) denial of bankruptcy, and the use of public trusts for insurance on bad loans. In addition, lending activities that now reign in consumer markets are evidence that financial markets are expanding the tools used in the deployment and management of student debt since the 1970s to other areas of the economy. Some examples of this include the recent sub-prime mortgage crisis, the 2005 changes to bankruptcy laws that benefit the credit card industry, and the purchase of bad mortgage assets by the federal government. Because students were a locus of revolutionary activity in the 1960s, they have become the object of the most counter-revolutionary tendencies of financial capitalism: the drive to control all facets of life through debt.

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Innovations made in the management of this population must be seen as the inverse of the demands of revolutionary student movements from across the globe; at the same time, students must also understand the deliberately induced poverty of student life in tandem with other counter-revolutionary measures that have been inflicted by international financial institutions since the 1960s. The politicization of student debt redefines the terms of the struggle over the university by again putting the student at the center of these struggles.

5 In opposition to the infinite debt that structures sovereign power, debt in societies of control functions through the production of “the bankrupt,” an indefinite form of life. It is on this terrain that struggles over student life must take place.

When Deleuze writes, “man is no longer a man confined, but a man in debt,” he is speaking of debt not only as financial obligation, but also as a form of life of which financial debt is only a symptom. As a figure fully imbricated in debt, the student is formed in and through the instruments of power that produce debt as a form of life. Defining debt and the manner in which it structures asymmetrical power relations, however, is a complicated matter. One could argue that within contemporary capitalism, life-in-debt is a historical remnant of the model of debt we find in the Christian theological tradition—a tradition that holds the belief that life itself is conditioned by an infinite debt to a transcendent divine. Contemporary theorists such as Giorgio Agamben have found this model of primary debt adequate to our political situation. In *The Coming Community*, when speaking of the problem of original sin, Giorgio Agamben describes debt as an ontological given: “humans, in their potentiality to be and to not-be, are, in other words, always already in debt; they always already have a bad conscience without having to commit any blame-worthy act.”(40) For Agamben, then, ethics grounds the infinite debt of the human in its relation to an elusive, primary debt to non-being.

In contrast to Agamben’s attempt to describe primary debt as an ontological fact, Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus*, following Nietzsche, rails against such a presupposition. Instead, they claim that it is only with the introduction of the “Barbaric Despot Machine,” the state accompanied by Christianity, that it becomes possible to conceive of debt as infinite. From the “finite blocks of debt” circulated in primitive economies, debt becomes, “an infinite relation in the form of tribute,” and “the entire surplus value of code is an object of appropriation.”(41) Sovereign power is based on a system in which debt becomes an infinite process channeling the social “flows” into one unitary payment to a figure removed from circulation. According to Deleuze and Guattari’s account, the ethico-Christian problem of debt—the primary debt of being—needs to be thought of as a material, historical, and political process of the appropriation of surplus from the standpoint of an always-historical form of fullness rather than a constitutive deficit. Infinite debt, then, is useful for thinking of a structure of lack that is an after-effect of subjugation.

The Financialization of Student Life: Five Propositions on Student Debt

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Though infinite debt may offer a beginning for thinking about the flows of credit and debt within late capitalism, I would argue that in the modern era a new modality of debt has been in the process of eroding the sovereign structures of power described above. Financial capitalism is perhaps the most adequate expression of the outcome of this transformation. Instead of the subject of infinite debt, within finance capitalism, debt relations become manifest in the figure of "the bankrupt." In the *Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith uses the term "bankrupt" in an anachronistic manner. For Smith, one can "make a bankrupt," but also, one can be "a bankrupt." When speaking of the systems of bank credit in both Scotland and England Smith writes that, "if when a bill becomes due, the acceptor does not pay it as soon as it is presented, he becomes from that moment a bankrupt."⁽⁴²⁾ This more archaic use of word "bankrupt" is notable in that we can easily understand what it means to be in bankruptcy, or to say so-and-so is bankrupt; however, it is another thing to say that someone becomes, from the moment she is unable to pay, a bankrupt. Here a bankrupt is not descriptive, but nominal. How is it that a subject can be an event, a rupture, or a break? The bankrupt is a figure of insolvency and openly outward flows, "a trader who secretes himself" according to the Bankruptcy Laws passed by Henry VIII in England in 1539.⁽⁴³⁾ The term to "secrete" oneself here has the dual significance of both acting in secret in order to hide financially irresponsible actions, but also literally to secrete his property in order to pay back his creditors.

The bankrupt is a figure of debt that can only arise with modernity and the advent of the banking system. It is a figure whose embankments have been broken and who is in a process of liquidation. Though the bankrupt looks a great deal like the subject of infinite debt, it is also its limit. Rather than its wholeness being constituted by an originary, infinite debt to a sovereign figure removed from circulation, the bankrupt is constituted by an opening. Just as money no longer reflects the value of the general equivalent, the bankrupt does not reflect any transcendent figure, but is rather a nexus of forces. In this way, I would say that the debt of the bankrupt is not infinite, but indefinite. Infinite debt works through the myth of an originary gift, one that can be paid in full only through death, hence Freud's insistence, "thou owest nature a death."⁽⁴⁴⁾ The debt of the bankrupt cannot be paid through death, but rather operates on the indefinite character of life.

The student-in-debt is an emblematic figure of "the bankrupt" precisely because she cannot declare bankruptcy, but, rather, must live a life conditioned by an indefinite debt. In the *Ethics*, Spinoza distinguishes the indefinite existence of life from the infinite power of substance. The indefinite is always associated with duration and extension of modal being, and in this way, indefinite life can always be measured.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Infinity, for Spinoza, is an attribute of a monist ontology that does not exist within duration, but instead is manifested in intensity, that which cannot be measured, the fullness and plentitude of life as it is expressed through a non-transcendent notion of God. By operating on thought as an indefinite attribute of life, student debt places limits on the infinite expression of the common. By assigning measure to the life of the mind, student debt relegates it to an indefinite and controlled existence. It is at this conjunction, between the infinite life of the common as general intellect, and the indefinite life of

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the bankrupt, that we can begin to see the problem of student debt through a phenomenon that Paolo Virno calls “a publicness without public sphere.”(46) Further expressing the collapse of the public/private distinction, for Virno, in post-fordism, “the ‘life of the mind’ becomes, in itself, public;” at the same time, “if the publicness of the intellect does not yield to a realm of a public sphere, of a political space in which the many can attend to common affairs, then it produces terrifying effects.”(47) The student within post-fordism exemplifies the tension that lies within “a publicness without public sphere.” Transforming the life of the mind into a bankrupt capitalizes on the openness and desire for common expression of thought, creating an indefinite mode of being through the instruments of financial control. That which was thought to be outside of intellectual life has become its deepest internal limit; finance has been folded into the life of the mind, becoming, more than ever, the un-thought of thought. Overflowing business schools are but one manifestation of this process—every one of the ten million students who annually take on debt in America is contracted to devote a portion of the fruits of her intellectual labor to the banks.

As a site where the expression of thought as common has great potential, the student must be seen as a key node in a struggle over the life of the mind and life as such. Binding the life of the mind to capital, either through debt or the new trade in the human’s generic ability to learn, is the advance of counter-revolutionary mea-sures that place limits on the common character of thought as it is actively, politi-cally, and materially conceived. Furthermore, we must be wary of liberal solutions to the problem of student debt that are either nostalgic for the welfare state, or let banks set the terms of the discussion. The struggle over the life of the mind cannot be won through a renegotiation of payment options.(48) If student debt produces the bankrupt, then this figure is the inverse of the open expression of the common we seek, and the unbearable nature of indefinite debt, equal and opposite to the joy of collective resistance.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

1 Situationist International, "On the Poverty of Student Life," in Situationist International Anthology, ed. Ken Knabb (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1989), 320.

2 "Student Debt and the Class of 2007," available on-line at www.projectonstudentdebt.org.

3 The vast majority of research that has been conducted on student debt in the past twenty years has been in the area of education policy. Two good examples of this vein of research are: Derek V Price, *Borrowing Inequality: Race, Class, and Student Loans* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004) and *Condemning Students to Debt: College Loans and Public Policy*, ed. Richard Fossy and Mark Bateman (New York: Teachers College Press, 1998). As one of the only scholars in the humanities who has written extensively on the problem of student debt, Jeffrey Williams presents powerful arguments on the extensive negative effects of student debt on the student population and university education. However, at times, Williams' analysis falls into a similar nostalgia for the welfare state as the authors mentioned above; this is evidenced in his article "Debt Education: Bad for the Young, Bad for America" *Dissent* (Summer 2006): 56.

4 Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," in *Negotiations, 1972-1990*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 181.

5 As Deleuze writes in his essay on control, "disciplinary man produces energy in discrete amounts, while control man undulates, moving among a continuous range of different orbits." *Ibid.*, 180.

6 *Ibid.*, 181.

7 *Ibid.*, 175.

8 John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004), 318.

9 *Ibid.*

10 Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," 180.

11 *Ibid.*, 179.

12 *Ibid.*, 182.

13 The end of the gold standard is used as a historical marker for the beginning of Postmodernism in Fredric Jameson's *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), xx. It is used as a marker of Post-Fordism in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000) 238, 266.

14 Randy Martin, *Financialization of Daily Life* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 19.

15 *Ibid.*, 40.

16 <http://www.salliemae.com/about/>

17 Jeffery Williams, "The Pedagogy of Debt," *College Literature* 33.4 (Fall 2006): 161.

18 The type of insurance offered to banks in order to encourage lending to students is now being expanded as the federal government is taking increasing responsibility for the "toxic assets" of banks who held defaulted home mortgage loans in the Troubled Asset Relief Program (October 2008) and the unfolding "Bank Bailout" under the Obama administration.

19 "ACE Issue Brief: Federal Student Loan Debt: 1993-2004." Report from the American Council on Education available at <http://www.acenet.edu/resources/policy-research/>.

20 This fact is articulated most powerfully in the recent book by Allan Michael Collinge, *The*

Student Loan Scam (New York: Beacon Press, 2009), which chronicles the ascendancy of Sallie Mae profits from the late-1990s to the present through the expansion of student loan markets and the further erosion of consumer protections in both federal and private student lending. Specifically, Collinge illustrates that Sallie Mae's record profits are actually a direct result of fees and penalties inflicted because of the high rate of student loan defaults (37).

21 According to the American Council on Education, the amount of private loans, that is loans that are not regulated and insured by the federal government has increased exponentially during this period: "the College Board estimates that students borrowed almost \$10.6 billion through these programs [private lenders] in 2003-04, a seven-fold increase from just under \$1.3 billion in 1995-96." *Ibid.*, 5.

22 Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume One: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 874.

23 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurly, et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 231.

24 Here are just a few examples of this trend not mentioned in the body of my essay: Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (Autonomedia, 2004), 7-17; Louis Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings: 1978-1987*, trans. G.M. Goshgarian (London: Verso Press, 2006); Jason Read, *The Micropolitics of Capital Marx and the Prehistory of the Present* (New York: New York State University Press, 2003); Michael Perelman, *The Invention of Capitalism: Classical Political Economy and the Secret History of Primitive Accumulation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

25 David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 147.

26 By proletarianization, I believe Harvey is referring to the process through which viable, and often middle class institutions and populations are systematically pillaged by the interests of capital and mechanisms of accumulation by dispossession, creating degraded working conditions and poverty.

27 The analogy between student debt and indentured servitude appears in a wide range of contexts, both academic and non-academic, including Jeffrey Williams', "Student Debt and the Spirit of Indenture," *Dissent* (Summer 2008): 35-40; "The Monitor's View: America's Indentured Undergraduates," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 6, 2006, Commentary Section; Diana Jean Schemo, "Private Loans Deepen a Crisis in Student Debt," *New York Times*, June 10, 2007.

28 Miguel Palcios Lleras, *Investing in Human Capital: A Capital Markets Approach to Student Funding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 41.

29 Milton Friedman, "The Role of Government in Education," in *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 100-1.

30 A contract of indenture is generally a form of servitude that limits the terms of ownership to a temporally confined period.

31 *Ibid.*, 2.

32 *Ibid.*, 106.

33 *Ibid.*

34 Gilles Deleuze, "Control and Becoming" in *Negotiations, 1972-1990*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 176.

35 David Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, 149.

36 Paolo Virno, "Do You Remember Counterrevolution?," trans. Michael Hardt, in *Radical*

Thought in Italy, ed. Michael Hardt and Paolo Virno (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 241.

37 Marc Bousquet, *How the University Works: Higher Education and the Low-Wage Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 125-156.

38 *Ibid.* In the chapter "Students Are Already Workers," 125-156, Bousquet takes the case of UPS's consistent and widespread exploitation of the undergraduate labor-pool to illustrate the proletarianization of students.

39 The targeting of underprivileged and minority groups by student loans is well documented in Derek V. Price's, *Borrowing Inequity: Race, Class, and Student Loans*.

40 Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 43-4.

41 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 194-5.

42 Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations, Volume One* (Homewood, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1963), 238.

43 Oxford English Dictionary Online available at www.dictionary.oed.com.

44 Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887-1904*, trans. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 343.

45 Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. G. H. R. Parkinson (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), 114, 175.

46 Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, trans. Isabella Bertolotti, et al. (Los Angeles: Semiotext[e], 2004), 40.

47 *Ibid.*, 37, 40.

48 Though I have great respect for Rev. Jesse Jackson's new push to reduce the interest rate of student loan payments to 1% (see <http://www.reducetherate.org>), I find that this response elides the structural, counter-revolutionary character of any form of student debt.

Students Are Already Workers

I know that I haven't updated in about two and a half weeks, but I have an excuse. UPS is just a tiring job. You see, before, I had an extra 31 hours to play games, draw things, compose music . . . do homework. But now, 31+ hours of my life is devoted to UPS.

I hate working there. But I need the money for college, so I don't have the option of quitting. My job at UPS is a loader. I check the zip codes on the box, I scan them into the database, and then I load them into the truck, making a brick wall out of boxes.

—“Kody” (pseud.), high-school blogger in a UPS “school-to-work” program, 2005

The alarm sounds at 2:00 AM. Together with half a dozen of her colleagues, the workday has begun for Prof. Susan Erdmann, a tenure-track assistant professor of English at Jefferson Community College in Louisville, Kentucky. She rises carefully to avoid waking her infant son and husband, who commutes forty miles each way to his own tenure-track community college job in the neighboring rural county. She makes coffee, showers, dresses for work. With their combined income of around \$60,000 and substantial education debt, they have a thirty-year mortgage on a tiny home of about 1,000 square feet: galley kitchen, dining alcove, one bedroom for them and another for their two sons to share. The front door opens onto a “living room” of a hundred square feet; entering or leaving the house means passing in between the couch and television. They feel fortunate to be able to afford any mortgage at all in this historically Catholic neighborhood that was originally populated by Louisville factory workers. It is winter; the sun will not rise for hours. She drives to the airport. Overhead, air-freight 747s barrel into the sky, about one plane every minute or so. Surrounded by the empty school buildings, boarded storefronts, and dilapidated underclass homes of south-central Louisville, the jets launch in post-midnight

salvos. Their engines lack the sophisticated noise-abatement technology required of air traffic in middle-class communities. Every twelve or eighteen months, the city agrees to buy a handful of the valueless residences within earshot.¹

Turning into the airport complex, Susan never comes near the shuttered passenger terminals. She follows a four-lane private roadway toward the rising jets. After parking, a shuttle bus weaves among blindingly lit aircraft hangars and drops her by the immense corrugated sorting facility that is the United Parcel Service main air hub, where she will begin her faculty duties at 3:00 AM, greeting UPS's undergraduate workforce directly as they come off the sort. "You would have a sense that you were there, lifting packages," Erdmann recalls. "They would come off sweaty, and hot, directly off the line into the class. It was very immediate, and sort of awkward. They'd had no moment of downtime. They hadn't had their cigarette. They had no time to pull themselves together as student-person rather than package-thrower." Unlike her students, Susan and other faculty teaching and advising at the hub are not issued a plastic ID card and door pass. She waits on the windy tarmac for one of her students or colleagues to hear her knocking at the door. Inside, the noise of the sorting facility is, literally, deafening: the shouts, forklift alarms, whistles, and rumble of the sorting machinery actually drown out the noise of the jets rising overhead. "Teaching in the hub was horrible," recalled one of Erdmann's colleagues. "Being in the hub was just hell. I'd work at McDonald's before I'd teach there again. The noise level was just incredible. The classroom was just as noisy as if it didn't have any walls." In addition to the sorting machinery, UPS floor supervisors were constantly "screaming, yelling back and forth, 'Get this done, get that done, where's so and so.'"

Susan is just one of a dozen faculty arriving at the hub after midnight. Some are colleagues from Jefferson Community College and the associated technical institution; others are from the University of Louisville. Their task tonight is to provide on-site advising and registration for some of the nearly 6,000 undergraduate students working for UPS at this facility. About 3,000 of those students work a midnight shift that ends at UPS's convenience—typically 3:00 or 4:00 AM, although the shift is longer during the holiday and other peak shipping seasons.

Nearly all of the third-shift workers are undergraduate students who have signed employment contracts with something called the "Metropolitan College." The name is misleading, since it's not a college at all.

An “enterprise” partnership between UPS, the city of Louisville, and the campuses that employ Susan and her colleagues, Metropolitan College is, in fact, little more than a labor contractor. Supported by public funds, this “college” offers no degrees and does no educating. Its sole function is to entice students to sign contracts that commit them to provide cheap labor in exchange for education benefits at the partner institutions.² The arrangement has provided UPS with over 10,000 ultra-low-cost student workers since 1997, the same year that the Teamsters launched a crippling strike against the carrier. The Louisville arrangement is the vanguard of UPS’s efforts to convert its part-time payroll, as far as possible, to a “financial aid” package for student workers in partnership with campuses near its sorting and loading facilities. Other low-wage Louisville employers, such as Norton and ResCare have joined on a trial basis.

As a result of carefully planned corporate strategy, between 1997 and 2003, UPS hired undergraduate students to staff more than half of its 130,000 part-time positions (Hammers). Students are currently the majority of all part-timers, and the overwhelming majority on the least desirable shifts. Part of UPS’s strategy is that only some student employees receive education benefits. By reserving the education benefits of its “earn and learn” programs to workers who are willing to work undesirable hours, UPS has over the past decade recruited approximately 50,000 part-time workers to its least desirable shifts without raising the pay (in fact, while pushing them to work harder for continually lower pay against inflation) (“Earn and Learn Factsheet”). The largest benefit promises are reserved for students who think they can handle working after midnight every night of the school week.

Between 1998 and 2005, UPS claims to have “assisted” 10,000 students through the Metropolitan College arrangement (Conway). Of the 7,500 part-time employees at UPS’s Louisville hub in May 2006, some were welfare-to-work recipients picked up in company buses from the city and even surrounding rural counties. A few hundred were Louisville-area high school students in school-to-work programs. Three-quarters of the part-timers—5,600—were college students (Howington). More than half of the students—about 3,000—were enrolled in Metropolitan College, which, with few exceptions, accepts only those willing to work the night shift. Metropolitan College “enrollment” and “recruitment” activities are entirely driven by UPS’s staffing needs. Ditto for scheduling: all of the benefits enjoyed by Metro College students are

contingent on showing up at the facility every weeknight of the school year at midnight and performing physically strenuous labor for as long as they are needed.

The consequences of night-shift work are well documented, and the preponderance of available evidence suggests markedly negative effects for the Louisville students. Every instructor to whom I spoke reported excessive fatigue and absenteeism (due to fatigue, but also an extraordinarily high physical injury rate: "They all got hurt," Erdmann reports). Students who signed employment contracts with Metro College showed substantial failure to persist academically. "I would lose students midterm, or they would never complete final assignments," Erdmann said. "They would just stop coming at some point." Erdmann served as chair of a faculty committee that attempted to improve the academic success of students employed by UPS at her institution. The group scheduled special UPS-only sections between 5:00 and 11:00 PM, both on campus and at the hub, and began the ritual of 3:00 AM advising. Since nearly all of the faculty involved taught and served on committees five days a week, their efforts to keep students from dropping out by teaching evenings and advising before dawn resulted in a bizarre twenty-four-hour cycle of work for themselves. The institutions even experimented with ending the fall semester before Thanksgiving for the thousands of UPS employees, in order to keep their finals from conflicting with the holiday shipping rush (and the one season a year when the students could be assured of a shift lasting longer than four hours). Even in the specially scheduled classes and shortened terms, Erdmann recalls classes with dropout rates of 30 to 40 percent. "It was most definitely worse for those with children," she concluded:

It was a disaster for those with children. Students who had family obligations tended to do poorly. When you had younger, more traditional age students with a very clear and limited goal—and they were often men—if they had a limited goal, such as "I am going to get Microsoft certified," and if they were healthy and young, and physically active, those individuals might be okay.

Whenever you had people with children—you know, people who can't sleep all day, they would get tremendously stressed out. I feel like very few of them actually did well with the program, the ones with family.

Pressed to offer instances of individual students who undisputably benefited from the program, Erdmann described just two individuals, both at the extreme margins of economic and social life. One was a single mother who worked multiple jobs and saved some of her wages toward a down payment on a residential trailer, thus escaping an abusive domestic life. The other was a young man coping with severe mental illness.

Rather than relieving economic pressure, Metropolitan College appears to have increased the economic distress of the majority of participants. According to the company's own fact sheet, those student workers who give up five nights' sleep are typically paid for just fifteen to twenty hours a week. Since the wage ranges from just \$8.50 at the start to no more than \$9.50 for the majority of the most experienced, this can mean net pay *below* \$100 in a week, and averaging out to a little over \$120. The rate of pay bears emphasizing: because the students must report five nights a week and are commonly let go after just three hours each night, their take-home pay for sleep deprivation and physically hazardous toil will commonly be less than \$25 per shift.

In fact, most UPS part-timers earn little more than \$6,000 in a year. Most have at least one other job, because their typical earnings from UPS in 2006–2007 would generally have covered little more than the worker's car payment, insurance, gasoline, and other transportation-related expenses. "Everyone had another job," Erdmann says. "Even the high school students had another job. The high school students were working two jobs. For some people, that meant working Saturday nights as a waitress, but for others, it was much more extensive. For a lot of people, it meant that they got up every day and went to work in the afternoon before going in to classes and UPS in the evening." Every instructor to whom I spoke confirmed the pressure that the ultralow wage added to the unreasonable working hours and physical hazards as a detriment to students' chances for academic persistence. "That was when they skipped class," affirmed another instructor, "when they were going to another job. I was just amazed how many of them were going to another job."

UPS presents a triple threat to students' prospects for academic persistence: sleep deprivation and family-unfriendly scheduling; ultralow compensation, resulting in secondary and tertiary part-time employment; and a high injury rate. Student employees report being pressured to skip class. Especially at the end of the fall term, the night sorts can

run four or five hours beyond the anticipated 4:00 AM completion: “Each time I said I was unwilling to miss class for an extended sort, the supe would tell me to ‘think long and hard about my priorities,’” reports one student employee. “I got the message.”

UPS refuses to provide standard statistics that would permit evaluation of the impact that this triple threat is actually having on the students it employs. None of its partner institutions appears to have responsibly studied the consequences of the program for its students in terms of such major measures as persistence to degree, dropout rate, and so on.

Amazingly, all of the press coverage of the UPS earn and learn programs in general, and the Louisville Metropolitan College arrangement in particular, has been positive. In fact, most of the coverage appears to have been drawn closely from UPS press releases themselves or conducted with students selected for their success stories. Acknowledging that the night shift “took some getting used to,” one local newspaper’s coverage is typical in quoting a student shrugging off the challenges, “I just schedule my classes for the afternoon” (Howington). Other stories are more meretricious, suggesting that the UPS jobs keep students from partying too much. One quotes a UPS supervisor who suggests that college students “are staying up until dawn anyway” (Karman).

Ironically, UPS has received numerous awards for “corporate citizenship” and was named one of the “best companies for minorities” in connection with the program. It emphasizes recruitment among Latino students, and numerous Hispanic organizations have either endorsed the program or published unedited UPS press releases marketing the program to “nontraditional students, such as retirees and moms re-entering the workforce” (LatinoLA).

“I Dread Work Every Day”

UPS has long pioneered low-cost benefitless employment, abetted by the Teamsters themselves, who under Jimmy Hoffa Sr. signed one of the first contracts in American industry to permit the regular use of part-time employees in 1962. This second tier of employment was massively expanded after the Teamsters agreed to 1982 protocols that raised the wages of full-time workers while freezing those of part-timers. In that year, part-time UPS employees started at \$8 an hour, the equivalent in

2007 of about \$17 per hour (\$34,000 a year). Similarly, in 1982, part-time employees averaged about \$10 per hour, the equivalent in 2007 of \$22 per hour (\$44,000 a year).

Not incidentally, at the 1982 wages, a UPS part-time worker could indeed successfully fund a college education. One employee from the 1970s recalls:

At the old full and fair rate prior to the 1982 UPS wage reduction, despite soaring volume and profits, a part-time worker in exchange for back-breaking work could afford to rent a room, pay tuition, buy food and clothing, and afford to own and operate a used car. This was a good deal that was profitable to the student and society, as well as profitable to UPS. I went through six years of college that way and am very grateful to the Teamsters for the good pay. I find it a national disgrace that UPS has effectively reduced the pay by nearly 65% adjusted for inflation since 1982 and destroyed a positive job for over a hundred thousand workers and for society as well. There are [UPS] part-time workers living in homeless shelters in Richmond, California, and other parts of the country. ("saintteamo," Brown Café weblog, 2003; punctuation regularized)

As with Wal-Mart and other predatory super low-wage employers, many of UPS's student workers are homeless. At the Louisville hub, "I knew people sleeping in their cars," Erdmann recalled.

After the union's concession to a radically cheaper second tier of employment, 80 percent of all new UPS jobs were created in the "permanent part-time" category. While the pay between part-time and full-time diverged slowly between 1962 and 1982, the differential accelerated rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s. Serving as a UPS driver is still a coveted blue-collar position. From the Reagan years to the present, these full-time Teamsters continued to enjoy raises, job security, due process with respect to their grievances, and substantial benefits, including a pension. But over the same period of time, these and other full-time positions became the minority of employees covered by the contract.

In less than fifteen years, permanent part-timers became the majority of the UPS workforce in the United States. The ratio of permanent part-timers was particularly pronounced at the Louisville main hub, where a high-speed, high-pressure night sort was conducted. As the wages of the part-time majority steadily shrank against inflation, opportunities to

join the full-time tier all but disappeared. Today, even the company's human resources recruiters admit that while full-time positions "still exist," it can take "six to seven years or even longer" to get on full-time. A single-digit percentage of the company's part-time employees last that long. Few of those who do persist are actually offered full-time work. During the long night of Reagan-Bush-Clinton reaction, according to employees, the company unilaterally abrogated work rules, including safety limits on package size and weight. Injuries soared to two and a half times the industry average, in especial disproportion among part-time employees in the first year.

As jointly bargained by UPS and the Teamsters, the part-time positions devolved into one of the least desirable forms of work in the country, with one of the highest turnover rates in history. Featuring poor wages, limited benefits, a high injury rate, and unreasonable scheduling, the Teamster-UPS agreement created compensation and working conditions for the part-time majority so abysmal that most rational persons preferred virtually any other form of employment or even not working at all.

Most part-timers departed within weeks of being hired. According to George Poling, director of the Louisville Metropolitan College, the average term of employment for part-time workers on the night sort was just eight weeks. At the Louisville facility, 90 percent of part-time hires quit before serving a year. Across the country in 1996, UPS hired 180,000 part-timers on all shifts, but only 40,000 were still with the company at the year's end. In part as a result of steadily accelerating turnover, UPS agreed in just sixteen days to the most publicized core demand of the 1997 Teamsters strike, the creation of 10,000 new full-time jobs out of some of the new part-time positions.

Overlooked during the press coverage of the Teamsters' apparent victory was the fact that these new "full-time" positions were paid well below the scale of existing full-timers and would earn just 75 percent of the rate of regular full-timers by the end of the contract. This introduced a new, lower-wage tier in the ranks of the full-timers. The lower wages of this group would continue to support the wage increases and benefits of the union's powerful minority constituency, the shrinking core of long-term full-timers. (Readers employed in academic circumstances will recognize this strategy as having been pioneered in their own workplaces, with the institution of nontenurable full-time lectureships as one of the "solutions" that the long-term tenured faculty have

accepted to management's expansion of part-time faculty.) It would take three years of foot-dragging through arbitration and federal court before UPS delivered even these watered-down full-time jobs.

Despite credulous ballyhoo about the strike as the decade's exemplar of labor militance and solidarity between full-timers and part-timers, the part-time majority of UPS workers benefited little from the Teamster "victory." The starting wage for part-timers, which had remained at \$8 for fifteen years (since 1982) was raised in the 1997 contract a grand total of 50 cents. Ten years later, the Teamster-negotiated starting wage for UPS part-time package handlers working between 11:00 PM and 4:00 AM remains just \$8.50, or exactly one raise in a quarter-century. This is a loss against inflation of more than half. In 1982, the \$8 per hour starting wage for part-timers was more than twice the minimum wage (of \$3.35), and slightly above the national hourly average wage (of \$7.72). In 2006, the UPS starting wage was about half of the national average hourly wage of \$16.46 for nonsupervisory workers. With the "minimum" wage so low that only half a million Americans earn it, the \$8.50 per hour UPS starting wage in 2006 was equal to or lower than what most traditionally "minimum wage" occupations actually earn and lower than the statutory metropolitan living wage established in many major cities. This isn't eight or nine bucks an hour for eight hours a day, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. This is eight or nine bucks an hour for showing up five nights a week at midnight and working three and one-half to five hours, depending on the flow of packages for physically demanding, dangerous, night-shift work at the company's convenience.

Moreover, there is at least half an hour, often more, of unpaid commuting around airport security on either side of the paid three hours. The commute each way can total as much as an hour, even for students who live just a mile or two from the facility: "When I was there, you'd have to be in the parking lot by 11:30 at the latest if you wanted the shuttle bus to get you to the gate by 11:40, where you'd then wait to have your ID checked, and then walk through the maze of hub buildings for 500 yards before finding your workspace and clocking in," one recalled. "The point being if I got parked at 11:45, I'd be late and get bawled out. The traffic outside UPS leading into the shift is nightmarish, so you'd really need to leave the house an hour before work to have a shot at getting to the sort station on time." With the unpaid commute, that's five hours of third-shift time, being paid close to the minimum wage for just three hours.

In the past twenty-five years, working conditions at UPS have eroded even faster than the wage. With the union's lack of interest in part-time workers, UPS has increasingly introduced ultrashort shifts, technology-driven speedup, and managerial surveillance of every aspect of the work process, including real-time tracking of errors. Employing constant surveillance by a battalion of "part-time supes," themselves generally students, UPS deploys cameras and manned watchtowers throughout the multilayer sort. "They're always watching you work from tall perches that exist nearly everywhere in the plant," one former student worker recalls; "the perches are ostensibly ladders to other layers of the sort, but the consistent presence of management at the stair landings creates the feeling of almost total surveillance. Even when you can't see them, you know they're in hidden rooms watching you on camera." Nearly all student workers are repeatedly tested by "salting" packages with bad address labels; employees decry the practice as a "particularly nasty" form of continuous stressing of their work environment.

Several current or former UPS employees have begun weblogs to chronicle the high-speed, high-stress nature of their employment. One, writing as "Brown Blood," explained that he'd begun the weblog for "the employees of UPS to express their true feelings about their job in all aspects," noting, "I must apologize now for any foul language that may . . . *will* occur in this community because most of these jobs not only test the limitations of your physical capacity it also shatters all anger management." On the JobVent weblog, UPS workers' rating of the workplace were commonly *below zero*:

Little did I know that I would spend 4 hours a day in a dark, oven hot dungeon being screamed at by idiotic powertrippers who having given up believing life has some kind of meaning and now want to make themselves feel better by humiliating the only people in their lives that they have any sort of advantage over. All this while you are sweating liters and giving your back life-long injuries. I couldn't help but laugh in disbelief when I received my first paycheck for \$120. IF YOU EVEN THINK OF WORKING AT UPS, realize that if you don't want to spend the next ten years of your life being treated like toilet paper just to become a lousy driver then go work for FedEx, the benefits are as good, the pay is better and you get just a little respect, a friend of mine worked there for 5 days and became a driver. UPS is no less than 7-10 years. Bottom line: UPS SUCKS A BIG ONE!!!!!!! I dread work every day.

According to at least one long-term Teamster full-timer, the part-time students working the night sort are driven particularly hard: “They cram eight hours work into five.” Agreeing with this characterization of the workload for undergraduate employees, one student worker said, “Around finals time, I’d go for days without sleep. The scary thing is, I’d see the sleepless period coming, know there was nothing I could do about it other than quit school or quit work, and then learn to psych myself up for it.”

Most bloggers complained of the pay (“pathetic”), schedule (“random, terrible hours”), injuries (“I was killing myself physically”; “constant muscle pulls/strains, a lot of safety hazards”; “horrible; you’ll sweat like a dog in the summer and freeze in the winter—unsafe—watch out for sharp objects and falling boxes”), and supervisory harassment. As a whole, the evaluations were resoundingly negative: “This was the worst job I ever had”; “You can imagine it’s bad when the highest UPS scores with me in any category is a minus 2”; “If you’re thinking of working here, DON’T DO IT!” Many of the bloggers give a vivid portrait of the nature of the stressful nature of the work. Every error is tracked, and a minimum standard for error-free sorting is one error in 2,500. How often do you make an error while typing? If you’re like me, you make several typing errors per page, for an error rate per word of 1 in 60 or so. At UPS, an error of 1 in 500 is considered extremely poor. The student workers are particularly likely to be placed in these high-stress positions. If younger, they are commonly inexperienced at work generally. If older, they have typically suffered substantial economic or personal distress. Either way, those who don’t express rage and disappointment, or vote with their feet by quitting, appear likely to internalize management’s construction of them as slow-moving failures. Students sometimes contribute to weblogs like “Brown Blood” less to complain than to get coping advice (“Is there a better way of doing this without going miserably slowly? . . . I want to show that I can be competent in some form of employment.”)

The work of the loaders intensifies during the holiday rush:

I hate how UPS is always fucking you over. On a normal day I load 3 trucks and lately it’s been a total of about 800–900 packages. . . . They told me I would only have the 4th car one day per week. Well guess what . . . they gave me 4 cars 3 days this week. Today I had a total of over 1600 packages with no help, the bastards. My loads

were shit and my drivers were bitching, but what the hell can I do about it?

I suppose the fact that I've slept less than 5 of the past 55 hours had something to do with my despising work today. But Red Bull helps with that.

I'm so f——ing glad it's a long weekend. ("hitchhiker42")

These notes of stress, fatigue, and powerlessness on the job are nearly uniform throughout the UPS permanent part-timers.

Employee of the Month

Some 70 percent of the workers in the main UPS hub in Louisville are women. The average age is thirty-four, and many are parents. Some of the women work in data entry, but most of the work involves package handling. For every teenage worker, there's another part-timer well into her forties.

The reality of the undergraduate workforce is very different from the representation of teen partiers on a perpetual spring break, as popularized by television (*Girls Gone Wild*), UPS propaganda ("they're staying up until dawn anyway"), and *Time*: "Meet the 'twixters,' [twenty-somethings] who live off their parents, bounce from job to job and hop from mate to mate. They're not lazy—they just won't grow up" (Grossman; for more, see Bartlett).

There are more than 15 million students currently enrolled in higher ed (with an average age of around twenty-six). Tens of millions of persons have recently left higher education, nearly as many without degrees as with them. Like graduate employees, undergraduates now work longer hours in school, spend more years in school, and can take several years to find stable employment after obtaining their degrees. Undergraduates and recent school leavers, whether degree holders or not, now commonly live with their parents well beyond the age of legal adulthood, often into their late twenties. Like graduate employees, undergraduates increasingly find that their period of "study" is, in fact, a period of employment as cheap labor. The production of cheap workers is facilitated by an ever-expanding notion of "youth." A University of Chicago survey conducted in 2003 found that the majority of Americans now think that adulthood begins around twenty-six, an age not co-

incidentally identical with the average age of the undergraduate student population (Tom Smith).

The popular conception of student life as “delayed adulthood” is reflected in such notions as “thirty is the new twenty” and “forty is the new thirty” (Irvine). The fatuousness of these representations is confounded by looking at the other end of one’s employment life. Few people are finding, in terms of employability after downsizing, that “fifty is the new forty”: people in their fifties who lose their jobs often find themselves unemployable. What are the economic consequences for a person whose productive career can begin in their middle thirties or later, then end at fifty or sooner? This pattern presents real obstacles for both women and men wishing to raise a family. Yet mass media representations of extended schooling and the associated period of insecure employment are often cheery, suggesting that it’s a stroke of good fortune, an extended youth free of such unwelcome responsibilities as home ownership, child-rearing, and visits to health-care providers. In this idealistic media fantasy, more time in higher education means more time to party—construing an extended youth as a prolonged stretch of otherwise empty time unmarked by the accountabilities of adulthood.

Concretely, the apparently empty time of involuntarily extended youth associated with higher education is really quite full. It’s full of feelings—the feelings of desperation, betrayal, and anxiety, the sense that Cary Nelson has captured for graduate employees under the heading of *Will Teach for Food*. Writers like Anya Kamenetz and Tamara Draut have captured the similar feelings of upper-middle-class college graduates in books like *Generation Debt* and *Strapped*. Many of the persons Draut and Kamenetz describe will have added graduate school to successful bachelor’s degrees at first-tier or second-tier institutions. But little attention has been paid to the role of higher education in organizing the vast majority of the lives it touches—those who don’t graduate or those who graduate with community college, vocational, or technical degrees.

“Employee of the Month” (“The Dance That Is My Life”) is typical of the more successful students employed by UPS. As she tells it on her weblog, this “mom/stylist,” aged thirty, the mother of children aged three and five, is a fan of Christian apocalyptic fiction and a part-time student who hopes to become a teacher. She has an “A” average. She depicts her husband as a substance abuser who provides no contribution to the household finances; during the months covered in her

weblog, he moves in and out of the house. Like most students who find a job with UPS, she was already working hard before signing on with Big Brown. While parenting and starting school, she was working three jobs, including office work and hair styling. In the first few weeks, she enjoys the work: "I am digging this job! I get to work out for 4–5 hours a night," plus collect education benefits. Anticipating the 50-cent raise, she writes, "The pay sucks at first but within 90 days I should be ok." She plans to continue working as a stylist, but feels that she can quit her other two job part-time jobs, "with doing hair 3 days a week I will be making just as much as I have been making [with three jobs] and only working about 35–37 hours a week total. Woo Hoo!"

Rather than a partying teen, this typical working undergraduate is a devout thirty year old who is thrilled simply to be able to work a mere full-time equivalent at two different jobs, in addition to schoolwork and solo parenting of two small children.

After the Christmas rush, and still in her first two months of employment, the upbeat blogger notes: "I am getting muscles in my arms and shoulders, my legs are getting a little toned. I do need to lose about 25 lbs so the more muscle thing is a good start. . . . I am getting better at my job now that I am a little stronger and can lift the boxes up to the top shelf." Within six months, by March 2006, she had made "employee of the month" at her facility. In the same month, she had her first work-related injury: a strained ligament from working with heavy packages. On a physician's orders, she was placed on "light duty," dealing with packages weighing one to seven pounds (seven pounds is approximately the weight of a gallon of milk). She had also grown discouraged about her prospects of continuing her education and was considering dropping out of school.

Her family life is increasingly stressed by the UPS job. In order to collect less than thirty bucks a night, she has to leave her children to sleep at her mother's house five nights a week. Now that the holiday rush is past, she finds that, on her UPS salary and even with a second job, she is unable to afford such everyday staples as Easter baskets for her children, which her sister provided. "A guy at work told me about a job at a private school, I applied and had an interview. I hope I get the job. I need to pay bills and the UPS job isn't enough," she concludes:

My kids did have a good Easter, thank you to my sister. We went down to her house and she bought my kids candy, toys, and each kid a

movie!! I thought that was above the call of duty. I can't tell you how much I appreciate my family for coming to my aid in my time of need this past year. I know I could get another job and put my kids in day-care all day again and be able to support them better, but I wouldn't be able to go to school. It's hard right now, but I am already a year into school and I will be a teacher in a few years. I can't stop now. Even with this drama going on in my life I have still kept a 3.6 grade point average. I want to finish it. My son still wants me to be a teacher, so I have to show him that with work and perseverance you can accomplish anything despite your circumstances. Facts don't count when it comes to reaching a goal. ("The Dance That Is My Life")

In other words: for UPS to receive one super-cheap worker, that worker's parents have to donate free child care and other family members have to donate cash, time, and goods. Like the vast majority of her coworkers in a UPS earn and learn arrangement, this A student and employee of the month is so sapped by the experience, physically injured, under-compensated, and domestically disarranged that she's on the verge of quitting school.

Despite her qualifications, energy, and commitment, the only thing keeping this UPS worker going is the desire to shore up achievement ideology for her children ("I have to show him that with work and perseverance you can accomplish anything despite your circumstances"), to create a Disney narrative out of their lives when she drops them off to sleep at their grandparents five nights a week, a Disney narrative that will prove that "facts don't count when it comes to reaching a goal."

Supergirl: "My Back Hurts So Fricken Bad"

This five-foot two-inch, 110-pound, twenty-three-year-old undergraduate woman writing under the moniker of "supergirl" has a charming sardonic flair: "America needs no more cheese, ham, huge-ass boxes of summer sausage, holiday popcorn tins, or kringles. . . . I think I've moved enough of these that every man, woman and child should already have one by default. No wonder obesity is an epidemic."

As with most, her daily UPS shift is a second job. After a year, she's ready to quit. She's had one work-related arm surgery: "I really don't want to have another, or worse, risk permanently damaging the nerves

in both arms,” she writes; “and I sincerely don’t think I’m being paid enough to stay there 2 years and blow out both arms unfixably. . . . I know pain and can tolerate it, but I can’t even fucking sleep because every position somehow puts pressure on a nerve in my arm that’s already got problems and is being pushed to the limits.” When I asked another Louisville student employee to comment on “supergirl’s” representation of the injury rate, he called the physical toll exacted by the workplace a “key point,” adding, “The physical harm this work does will long outlast the span of the job.”

She complains of the culture of UPS—of speedup, the pressure to deny injuries and work through them, and the pressure to continue employment through the milestones that dictate education benefits such as loan and tuition remission. Under the rubric “don’t make UPS yours,” she warns other prospective student employees away:

My back hurts . . . so fricken bad. It doesn’t benefit me to say I hurt because I’ve noticed that if you hurt of any kind the sort super just asks you to quit (in not so many eloquently and legal to say to an employee words). . . . I lift tons of shit that’s got 20–30 pounds on me . . . but as I stand; a girl of 5’2” and a buck ten . . . I can’t do that kinda shit everyday. . . . I guess I can be supergirl fast or supergirl strong or a normal mix of either . . . but I can’t be both every fucking day. Who can, anyway?

What disturbs her most is the pressure (from family, coworkers, supervisors) to work through her injuries to benefit-earning milestones. She understands the pressures driving everyone else to push her to continue, “but shit why can’t I just say I’d like to not be at a job like that?” In any event, she writes, “everyone should know I’ll probably just stay there anyhow . . . cause I’m too damn busy to find anything else anyway.”

10,000 Students and 300 Degrees

There’s little mystery regarding UPS’s motivation for the earn and learn programs—not benevolence, but the cheapness and docility of the student workforce. In addition to the ultralow wage, students’ dependency on UPS includes loan guarantees and tuition remissions, which are lost or reduced if the student resigns “prematurely” from the program. As a

result of its campaign to hire undergraduates, UPS's retention of part-time package handlers has improved markedly, despite speedup and continued stagnation of the wage between 1997 and 2007. Average time of employment for part-timers grew by almost 50 percent, and retention increased by 20 percent, with some of the most dramatic improvements in the Louisville main hub. This tuition benefit is tax-deductible and taxpayer-subsidized. It's a good deal for UPS, which shares the cost of the tuition benefit with partner schools and communities and saves millions in payroll tax (by providing "tuition benefits" instead of higher wages), while holding down the part-time wage overall. All earn and learn students must apply for federal and state financial aid. Many of its workers attend community colleges, where tuition is often just a few hundred dollars. Many students are subjected to a bait and switch: attracted to the program by the promise of tuition benefits at the University of Louisville (currently over \$6,000 a year), program participants are instead steered toward enrollment in the community colleges—a decision that doesn't reflect their academic needs, but as Metropolitan College director Poling admits, exclusively the desire of the state and UPS to contain costs. Studying on a part-time basis, as most in the program do, a student seeking a B.A. can therefore remain in a community college for three or four years before earning the credits enabling transfer to a four-year school. One student pointed out that trying to schedule around the UPS jobs was a "lot harder than it sounds," and for many it was "downright impossible to do this and get the degree in any reasonable period of years." Students who attend inexpensive schools or qualify for high levels of tuition relief (as is often the case in the economically disadvantaged groups targeted by UPS recruiters) substantially reduce UPS's costs. Undergraduate students also represent lower group health insurance costs.

Another way in which students reduce UPS's cost is by quitting before they become eligible for benefits, by taking an incomplete, or failing a class. No benefits are paid for failed or incomplete classes. Students who drop out of school but continue to work for UPS also significantly lower UPS's cost.

To put UPS's costs in perspective, look at these figures. In a decade, it has spent no more than \$80 million on tuition and student loan redemption in over fifty hubs. By contrast, its 2006 deal with the state of Kentucky—for a 5,000-job expansion of just one hub—involved \$50 million in state support over ten years. Company officials are fairly

frank about UPS's dependency on cheap student labor, supported by massive taxpayer giveaways. "It would have been nearly impossible to find an additional 5,000 workers [for the expansion] without the resources of Metropolitan College," a public relations vice president told the Louisville business press (Karman and Adams). It has expanded earn and learn programs to fifty other metropolitan centers, to Canada, and to for-profit education vendors such as DeVry.

It's a lot less clear whether this is a good deal for students. "We've solved employee retention," Poling admits, "but we've got to work more on academic retention." Of the 10,000 students Poling's program claims to have "assisted" with their higher education since 1997, in a fall 2006 interview, he was able to produce evidence of just under 300 degrees earned: 111 associate's and 181 bachelor's degrees. Since both UPS and Metropolitan College refuse to provide public accountability for the academic persistence of undergraduate workers, it's hard to estimate what these numbers mean in comparison with more responsible and conventional education and financial aid circumstances. The most favorable construction of the evidence available for Metropolitan College shows an average entry of slightly more than 1,000 student workers annually. Based on two and one-half years of data after six years of program operation, according to Poling, the program between 2003 and 2006 showed approximate annual degree production of about 40 associates' and 75 bachelor's degrees. This approximates to a 12 percent rate of persistence to any kind of degree.

UPS's student employees in the Metropolitan College program are more likely to be retained as UPS employees than they are to be retained as college students. In May 2006, of the 3,000 or so Metropolitan College "students" working at UPS, only 1,263 were actually taking classes that semester. This means that during the spring term, almost 60 percent of the student workers in UPS's employ were not in school; "another 1700 or so," in Poling's words, "took the semester off" (Howington).

Of the minority actually taking classes, at least a quarter failed to complete the semester. UPS pays a bonus for completing semesters "unsuccessfully" (with withdrawals or failing grades) as well as "successfully." Counting the bonuses paid in recent years for "unsuccessful" semesters together with the successful ones, Poling suggested that during terms in which between 1,200 and 1,700 student workers were enrolled, between 900 and 1,100 students would complete at least one

class. These numbers appear to hang roughly together. If in any given year, the majority of UPS night-shift workers are “taking the semester off,” and 25 percent or more of those actually enrolled fail to complete even one class in the semester, this seems consistent with an eventual overall persistence to degree of 12 percent.

In plain fact, it would seem that UPS counts on its student workers failing or dropping out. Because of the high rate of failed classes, withdrawals, and dropping out, UPS ends up paying only a modest fraction of the education benefits it offers. If each of the 48,000 students who had passed through its earn and learn program as of 2005 collected the full UPS share of tuition benefits over a five-year period, it would have cost the company over \$720 million. In fact, it spent just 10 percent of that total—\$72 million—on tuition remission, or an average of only \$1,500 per student (the equivalent of just one semester’s maximum tuition benefit per participant). Similarly, the loan remission benefit (theoretically as much as \$8,000 after four years of employment) would total almost \$384 million. But as of 2005, UPS has had so far to pay off just \$21 million, an average of just \$438 per student worker, well under 10 percent of its liability if all of its student workers actually persisted to completion of a four-year degree (UPS, “Fact Sheet”).

In the absence of meaningful accountability by UPS and its partners, we can only raise questions about this arrangement, not answer them. Since the program has been in operation for ten years, there are plenty of data. These are questions that can be answered. And these are questions that parents, students, partner institutions, and host communities should demand be answered. Many of these are similar in form to questions I posed to UPS through its press representative and which it refused to answer:

1. On average, how long do student workers remain employed with UPS?
2. What percentage of student workers exiting UPS’s “earn and learn” programs remain enrolled in school?
3. What percentage of UPS student workers have additional employment?
4. What percentage of current or former UPS student workers earn associates’ degree within three years and bachelor’s degrees within six years?

5. Do these percentages vary by shift worked?
6. What is the total and average amount of loans taken by earn and learn students? How much of those loans have been paid off by UPS?
7. What is the grade-point average of students enrolled in UPS programs?
8. UPS advertises that students can earn up to \$25,000 in tuition and loan benefits. What is the average tuition and loan benefit actually paid per student?

One of the major unanswered questions is this one: Why haven't the partner institutions asked UPS for these answers already? Don't they have a responsibility to ask whether their students are being well served by these arrangements? If a promise to fund a citizen's higher education actually results in reduced likelihood of educational success, shouldn't the institution, the state, and the city revise or discontinue the arrangement?

One reason the University of Louisville hasn't asked these questions is because, in connection with its willingness to contract its students out to UPS, it collects tuition revenue and other subsidies, and the Metropolitan College partnership contributes heavily to new building plans across the campus, most notably erecting a series of new dormitories to house the UPS student workforce recruited from all over the state. Nor has it wanted to draw attention to the success rate of its own students. When the Metropolitan College program began in 1997–1998, the University of Louisville's six-year graduation rate was under 30 percent. This compares unfavorably with the institutions in its own benchmarking. The six-year graduation rate for Mississippi State is 58 percent; Florida State is 65 percent, and North Carolina State–Raleigh is 66 percent. A six-year graduation rate of around 30 percent means that if 2,000 undergraduates enter as first-year students, *close to 1,400 will not have graduated six years later.*

That figure is almost twice the number at many comparable institutions. Over ten years, a gap this size in academic persistence means that many thousands of individuals are not receiving degrees, in contrast to students in benchmark institutions. Over the past ten years, that graduation rate has crawled up to 33 percent, but even the improved number places the University of Louisville dead last among its own benchmark institutions, and dead last among thirty-eight comparator institutions

generated by the IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System) database. Louisville and the state of Kentucky consistently rank near the bottom of educational attainments by a variety of indicators. Since the educational success rate of students at the institution and surrounding community was already so low, the success rates of UPS students flies under the radar.

One dean of students with whom I spoke claimed not to have studied the UPS students' success rate but shrugged off concerns with the impression that their attainments were "probably roughly comparable" to the low rate of other Louisville students. Using the measure of "year-to-year persistence," Poling was willing to compare his Metropolitan College student workers to other Louisville students, but not when it came to comparing persistence to degree.

Good for UPS and Who Else?

One of the reasons few hard questions have been asked of arrangements like Metropolitan College is that the superexploitation of undergraduate workers is not just a matter of UPS's individual dependency but a system of profound codependency, extending through the web of local, national, and even global economic relations.

As John McPhee's *New Yorker* profile of the Louisville hub makes clear, working for UPS at the Louisville main hub is really working for a lot of companies. A short distance from the sorting facility, UPS maintains millions of square feet of warehouse facilities, where its employees fill orders from online vendors for books, computers, underwear, and jet engine parts. When a Toshiba laptop breaks, Toshiba sends the repair order to UPS, who directs a driver to pick up the machine; from the local hub, it is flown in a UPS jet to an industrial park abutting the Louisville airport, where eighty UPS computer technicians repair Toshiba computers with Toshiba parts, returning the machines to their owners in about seventy-two hours. UPS is a major outsourcing contractor for fulfillment of products sold across the globe: the entire inventory of companies like Jockey is kept in UPS facilities in Louisville and handled exclusively by UPS employees from the point of manufacture to the consumer or retail outlet.

So the "good deal" that UPS is getting from the state and working students of Kentucky is also a good deal for all of the companies with

which it has outsourcing contracts and, ultimately, for all of its customers. Shipping from the Louisville Worldport is faster and cheaper than ever before. It's a good deal for the full-time Teamsters, who no longer have to feel pressure to negotiate better for a significant fraction of UPS's new employees.

Chris Sternberg, senior vice president of corporate communications at Papa John's International, is frank about the multilayered economic advantages of the Metropolitan College arrangement for local businesses:

Anytime new jobs are added to the Louisville economy, we are happy both from a community standpoint as well as for our business. When you have more people employed and the economy is thriving, we'll sell more pizzas. We are obviously pleased with the announcement. From an employment standpoint, many of our part-time workers also work part time at UPS, where they may work a four-hour shift at UPS and another four-hour shift at Papa John's. It's worked very well, and we like that shared employment arrangement. (quoted in Karman and Adams)

The local businesses associated with student consumption—such as pizza, fast food, banks, and auto dealers—benefit directly from this employment pattern: feeding workers, processing their loans and paychecks, and so on. The chairman of the largest auto group in Louisville was thrilled—student workers buy cars in order to commute between school and work. The local newspaper estimated that the 5,000-job expansion could mean as much as \$750 million annually to the local economy.

But as Sternberg makes clear, for certain businesses relying on service workers, the UPS arrangement provided a double benefit by drawing a super-cheap workforce that needed to supplement its four hours after midnight at UPS with another four hours before midnight in a pizza shop.

Internal Outsourcing and 10 Million "Students Who Work"

As it turns out, UPS is just one of thousands of employers large and small whose business plans revolve centrally around the availability of

a workforce who primarily consider themselves something other than workers.

To the extent that one function of education is people production, the question of subjectivity is unavoidable: What sort of consciousness is being framed by this experience? In the case of Louisville educators and UPS, the most common subjectivity produced appears to be that of failure—of persons who fail to persist, and therefore end up believing that they deserve their fate. “They all blame themselves,” confirmed every instructor with whom I spoke regarding UPS student workers. “The only ones who didn’t blame themselves were some of the high school students,” said Susan Erdmann. “Some of them blamed UPS, rightly so.” In general, student workers view themselves through a classic lens of modernity, as someone who is really someone and something very different than their embodied self at work: I am not a package handler; I am a student working as a package handler for a while.

Very little work of any kind has been done on the question of undergraduate labor. Of particular interest is Laura Bartlett’s *Working Lives of College Students* website, featuring the original compositions of scores of student workers regarding their experience. Even in its early stages, Bartlett’s site is a rich resource for understanding the experience of undergraduates who work. The essays feature the complexity of student consciousness regarding their working lives. Some emphasize positive dimensions, such as the student who acquired her educational sense of purpose from her part-time job assisting the disabled. Others attempt to make a virtue of necessity, hoping that working while studying will teach them “time management and multi-tasking” or to “build life-long coping skills”; one added the afterthought that, “hopefully, I will survive!” (“Work, Meet Education”; “School-Work Connection”). More widespread was a sense of exploitation, sounded in the common notes of “stress” and the running analogy to “imprisonment” in several contributions. Some wrote of physical injury and mental anguish, even in light-duty service and office positions, or wrote of repeated indignities, sexual harassment, and bullying: “I am treated as if I am subhuman” (“Wonderful World of Work”). One made precise calculations of the huge gap between the costs of education and the wages earned from the university and other employers (tuition, books and fees at an Ohio State campus consuming nearly the whole of a forty-hour week’s wages, leaving just \$6 a week for housing, transportation, food, clothing, entertain-

ment, medical expenses, and the like). Some described the need for simultaneous multiple part-time jobs in addition to loans and grants.

Most of the contributors viewed their work as something very different from the “real” work they hoped to land after graduation. After describing her work-related injuries in a pretzel concession at an Ohio Wal-Mart as akin to imprisonment and torture, for instance, one of the contributors concludes by observing, “Someday, this little pretzel shop will be just something I did once upon a time just to get through college” (“Rude Awakening”).

We could go any number of ways from here. For instance, we could ask what are the consequences of separating one’s consciousness from “being” the pretzel baker or package handler? One terribly important answer is that persons who were unable to recognize their own humanity in pretzel baking or package handling are perhaps less likely to acknowledge the humanity of others who handle packages, or clean toilets, or paint walls, or operate cash registers. I’ll return to this point before concluding.

Over 70 percent of U.S. high school grads enter college, 67 percent in the fall immediately after high school. Fewer than half of these complete a four-year degree. Those who do average far more than four years to do it. About 40 percent of those with a baccalaureate go on to graduate school. This professionalization of everything—the provision of degrees for so many different kinds of work—is one form in which higher education acts opportunistically. That is: it attracts more customers for credit hours with the (increasingly hollow) promise of the kinds of security nostalgically associated with the classical professions of law, medicine, education, and so forth.

There is a social bargain with youth-qua-student that goes something like this: “Accept contingency now, in exchange for an escape from it later.” The university’s role in this bargain is crucial: it provides the core promise of escaping into a future, without which their “temporary” employment would otherwise require larger enticements. The campus brokers the deal: give us, our vendors, and our employing partners what we want (tuition, fees, and a fair chunk of labor time over several years), and you can escape the life you’re living now.

Higher education is an industry, like others in the service economy, that is “structurally and substantially” reliant on youth labor (Tanock). Campuses of all kinds are critically dependent on a vast undergraduate workforce, who (as is in the fast-food industry) are desirable

not just because they are poorly paid but because they are disposable and “more easily controlled” (Schlosser). This is true regardless of whether campus workers are unionized or whether the school is located in a state with a relatively labor-friendly legislative environment. For an example of a school that has campus unions and a more responsible legal climate, we might take SUNY Oswego, Jerry Seinfeld’s alma mater. Oswego is a fairly modest employer of student labor, directly employing 2,000 undergraduates as part-time workers, or a bit more than a quarter of the student population. Nonetheless, students are overwhelmingly the largest sector of the workforce on campus, substantially outnumbering all other employment groups combined; taking full-time and part-time together, the campus only employs 1,500 nonstudent employees. Measured by full-time employee equivalent, it appears that student workers provide as much as half the labor time expended on campus (SUNY Oswego, “Fast Facts”).

At Oswego and nationally, student labor time is expended in work that mirrors similar low-wage benefitless positions in the service economy at large: food service, day care, janitorial work, building security, interior painting and carpentry, parking enforcement, laundry service, administrative assistance, warehouse restocking, and so on (SUNY Oswego, “Student Employment”). These activities are far more typical than the tutorial, library, community service, and internship activities that provide the public image of student work. (The nature of the work in “internship” and “community service” positions is another story, but is itself commonly similar service-economy activity such as data entry, document reproduction, and so forth.)

Student employment offices function as temp agencies or outsourcing contractors for local businesses and campus units. At a typical public campus, the student employment office has hundreds of positions advertised by off-campus employers, generally entirely without benefits or unemployment insurance, with a wage in the vicinity of \$6 or \$7 per hour (sometimes more and often less). The off-campus work includes farm labor, satellite installation, short-order cooking, commission sales, forklift operation, and personal care in nursing homes, as well as clerking in banks, malls, and insurance offices. Public universities will sometimes provide cheap workers for nearby elite private universities (which often place limits on the number of hours that their own undergraduates can work). The federal government employs cheap student labor in general office work and, for instance, as receptionists for the Social

Security Administration, in positions that formerly provided full-time employment for a citizen with reasonable wages and benefits. Student workers often replace full-time unionized staff.

Sometimes the temp-agency function is quite frank: at the University of Illinois–Chicago, for instance, the student employment office maintains a separate Student Temporary Service exclusively for the purpose of providing near-minimum-wage day labor on a just-in-time basis to any location on the campus. That frank admission by UIC that they’re running a temp agency may seem quite up to date and cutting edge, but it is, in fact, quite old school of them. The real cutting edge is MonsterTRAK, a subsidiary of the online job service Monster.com, which has standardized an interface with hundreds of public campuses. Initially providing on-campus interview services for graduates, the all too suggestively named Monster.com has moved into the lucrative business of managing undergraduate temp labor for hundreds of campuses, including federal work-study positions on major public campuses (Cal Tech, University of Virginia, University of Wisconsin). At all of these campuses, students cannot get work—even work-study positions funded with public money and which represent themselves as a citizenship entitlement, that is, “financial aid”—without registering with this private corporation, obtaining a password from them, and entering a nationwide temp agency, a world of work that is password protected and shielded from public view.

In the United States, only 20 percent of undergraduates do not work at all. About 50 percent of all undergraduates work an average of twenty-five hours per week. The remaining 30 percent work full-time, more than full-time, or at multiple jobs approximating the equivalent of full-time, averaging thirty-nine hours a week. This means that about 10 or 12 million undergraduates are in the workforce at any given moment. Indeed, if you’re a U.S. citizen under age twenty-five, you are more likely to be working if you are a student than if you are not. Over 3 million persons aged twenty to twenty-four are unemployed. Being a student isn’t just a way of getting a future job—it’s a way of getting a job right now.

Here’s something to think about. The main demographic fault line employed by the National Center for Education Statistics is a fairly reasonable sounding division of the school-work continuum into two groups, Students Who Work and Workers Who Study. This sounds very clean, scientific, even empirical. In fact, however, those divisions in-

volve no empirical criteria. They're entirely subjective, based on the self-reporting of subjects who are given just two choices for self-description: "I consider myself a student who works," or "I consider myself a worker who studies." There are patterns within that self-reporting, but they aren't clear-cut at all: a huge fraction of persons describing themselves as "students who work" work full-time or more, and likewise a large proportion of those self-reporting as "workers who study" work part-time and go to school on a full-time basis (NCES, *Profile of Undergraduates*; NCES, *Work First, Study Second*).

My point is not that self-reporting of this kind is a somewhat questionable primary organization of a core national database, though it is, in my opinion. My point is that these researchers resorted to the gambit of subject self-reporting as a primary organization because in the current relationship between schooling and work, including the regulation environment, there isn't any clear way of "distinguishing" between students and workers.

This isn't just a problem for investigators with the NCES; it's also a problem for the most thoughtful analysts of labor, social justice, and the social function of higher education. Although I'm going to use an essay by Barbara Ehrenreich as an example, let me emphasize that I am not criticizing her but suggesting the pervasiveness of the intellectual and emotional hurdle represented by the legal, cognitive, and affective label of "student."

In fall 2004, Ehrenreich penned a column for the *Progressive* called "Class Struggle 101." It's about the exploitation of the higher education workforce, and it does an excellent job of making the necessary parallels to the wages, hypocrisy, and union-busting of Wal-Mart, while pointing out the good things that Harvard and Stanford undergraduates have done in support of what she calls "campus blue-collar workers." Throughout this piece, she uniformly identifies students and workers as two mutually exclusive groups, generally assigning social and political agency to "the students" and helplessness to "the workers." This is well intentioned but clearly not accurate, even on privileged campuses. At her Harvard example, for instance, labor militancy has a lot to do with the culture disseminated and maintained by one of the most noteworthy staff unions in the country, mainly comprised of, and wholly organized by, women. Similarly, at Yale, it was the militant "blue-collar" and "pink-collar" unions with a \$100,000 grant that put the union of students on its feet. It is difficult, in other words, to do the usual thing in

left theory or in labor studies and write about an “alliance between students and labor,” when we haven’t made sense of the fact that students *are* labor. As one of Laura Bartlett’s student contributors observes, “Work, Meet Education, Your New Roommate.”

In short, I believe the left is correct in assigning a powerful agency to the undergraduate population but at least partly for the wrong reasons—that is, while they do have a degree of agency as students and credit-hour consumers, they also have a powerful and enduring agency *as labor*.

The Social Meaning of Student Labor

According to one observer, in 1964, all of the expenses associated with a public university education, including food, clothing, and housing could be had by working a minimum-wage job an average of twenty-two hours a week throughout the year. (This might mean working fifteen hours a week while studying and forty hours a week during summers.) Today, the same expenses from a low-wage job require fifty-five hours a week fifty-two weeks a year.

At a private university, those figures in 1964 were thirty-six minimum-wage hours per week, which was relatively manageable for a married couple or a family of modest means and would have been possible even for a single person working the lowest possible wage for twenty hours a week during the school year and some overtime on vacations. Today, it would cost 136 hours per week for fifty-two weeks a year to “work your way through” a private university (Mortenson). In 2006, each year of private education amounted to the annual after-tax earnings of nearly four lowest-wage workers working overtime.

Employing misleading accounting that separates budgets for building, fixed capital expenses, sports programs, and the like from “instructional unit” budgets, higher education administration often suggests that faculty wages are the cause of rising tuition, rather than irresponsible investment in technology, failed commercial ventures, lavish new buildings, corporate welfare, and so on. The plain fact is that many college administrations are on fixed-capital spending sprees with dollars squeezed from cheap faculty and student labor: over the past thirty years, the price of student and faculty labor has been driven downward massively at exactly the same time that costs have soared.

For the 80 percent of students who are trying to work their way through, higher education and its promise of a future is increasingly a form of indenture, involving some combination of debt, overwork, and underinsurance. It means the pervasive shortchanging of health, family obligations, and, ironically, the curtailment even of learning and self-culture. More and more students are reaching the limits of endurance with the work that they do while enrolled. One major consequence of this shift of the costs of education away from society to students, including especially the costs of education as direct training for the workforce, is a regime of indebtedness, producing docile financialized subjectivities (Martin, *Financialization of Daily Life*) in what Jeff Williams has dubbed “the pedagogy of debt.” The horizon of the work regime fully contains the possibilities of student ambition and activity, including the conception of the future.

Overstressed student workers commonly approach their position from a consumer frame of analysis. They are socialized and even legally obliged to do so, while being disabled by various means, including employment law, from thinking otherwise. To a certain extent, the issue is that student workers are underpaid and ripped off as consumers. In terms of their college “purchase,” they are paying much more, about triple, and not getting more: the wage of the average person with a four-year degree or better is about the same today as in 1970, though for a far greater percentage, it takes the additional effort of graduate school to get that wage. From the consumer perspective, the bargain has gotten worse for purchasers of credit hours, because there are many more years at low wages and fewer years at higher wages, plus there are reductions in benefits, a debt load, and historically unprecedented insecurity in those working “full-time” jobs.

But the systematically fascinating, and from the perspective of social justice far more significant, difference is that the U.S. worker with only a high school education or “some college” is paid astonishingly less than they were in 1970, when the “college bonus” was only 30 to 40 percent of the average high-school-educated worker’s salary. Now, the “going to college” bonus is more than 100 percent of the high-school-educated worker’s salary, except that this “bonus” represents exclusively a massive reduction in the wage of the high school educated and is in no part an actual “raise” in the wages of the college educated.³

So while it is true and important that higher education is much less of a good deal than it used to be, we also have to think about the role

higher education plays in justifying the working circumstances of those who can't make the college bargain. Whether one is inclined to accept higher education as an unspecial and seamless path—school to work—or alternatively as something “special,” without any necessary or obvious relation to work, it can be considered straightforwardly as a distribution issue. That is: Who should enjoy the “specialness,” whether that specialness is college as self-culture or college as a relatively larger and safer paycheck? On what terms? Who pays for it? What kinds and just how much specialness should the campus distribute? Why should the public fund a second-class and third-class specialness for some working lives, and provide the majority of working lives none at all? Wouldn't it be a straighter—not to mention far more just—path to dignity, security, health, and a meaningful degree of self-determination, even for the most highly educated, if we simply agreed to provide these things for everyone, regardless of their degree of education? Why should education be a competitive scramble to provide yourself with health care?

And here we've run up against the classic question of education and democracy: Can we really expect right education to create equality? Or do we need to *make equality* in order to have right education? With Dick Ohmann, Stanley Aronowitz, Cary Nelson, and others, I think the “crisis of higher education” asks us to do more than think about education, educators, and the educated. It challenges us to make equality a reality. It asks us to identify the agencies of inequality in our lives (including the ideologies and institutions of professionalism), to find a basis for solidarity with inequality's antagonists, and to have hope for a better world on that basis.

For me, the basis of solidarity and hope will always be the collective experience of workplace exploitation and the widespread desire to be productive for society rather than for capital. So when we ask, “Why has higher education gotten more expensive?” we need to bypass the technocratic and “necessitarian” account of events, in which all answers at least implicitly bring the concept of necessity beyond human agency to bear (“costs ‘had to’ rise because . . .”). Instead, we need to identify the agencies of inequality and ask, “To whom is the arrangement of student debt and student labor most useful?” The “small narratives” of technocracy function to obscure the fundamental questions of distribution. Not just: Who pays for education? But: Who pays for low wages?

The employer doesn't pay. By putting students to work, UPS accumulates more than it would otherwise accumulate if it put nonstudents to

work, because of the different material costs represented by persons who claim citizenship in the present, not citizenship in the future. These low wages aren't cheap to society; they're just cheap to employers. Students themselves subsidize this cheapness: by doubling the number of life hours worked, by giving up self-culture and taking on debt. The families of adult students subsidize the cheapness, both in direct labor time and in sacrificed leisure, in time lived together, and other emotional costs. Other service workers subsidize the cheapness, as the huge pool of cheap working students helps to keep down the price of nonstudent labor. And student workers, located, as I've said, in a kind of semiformal regulation environment, are themselves inevitably patrons of the larger informal economy of babysitters, handymen, and the cheap-work system of global manufacturing and agribusiness.

So, on the one hand, the labor time of the low-wage student worker creates an inevitable, embodied awareness that the whole system of our cheap wages is really a gift to the employer. Throwing cartons at 3:00 A.M. every night of one's college education, it becomes impossible not to see that UPS is the beneficiary of our financial aid, and not the other way around. As Dick Ohmann has commented of another group of campus flex-timers, the contingent faculty, there's some potential in this experience for militancy—for new kinds of self-organization for workplace security—and even a quest for new alliances with other hyperexploited and insecure workers. And in the United States, there are always more than 10 million people who are simultaneously workers and students at any given time, for many of whom the prospects of an "escape" from contingency are dim at best. Even under present conditions of extreme labor repression, the transformative agency of the millions of student employees is evident in the anti-sweatshop movement and in graduate-employee union movements, which have allied themselves with other insecure workers and not with the tenured faculty. "Professional" workers increasingly have interests and experiences in common with other workers.

On the other hand, especially for those for whom schooling does indeed provide an escape from contingency, these long terms of student work can also serve to reinforce commitments to inequality. The university creates professional workers who understand the work that everyone else does in a very particular way: they see manual work and service work through the lens of their own past, through their own sense of their past selves as students, likely comprising all of the feelings of

the non-adult, of the temporary, of the mobile, of the single person. As one contributor to Bartlett's *Working Lives* site put it, it's "something I did once upon a time just to get through college." For the professional workers created by the university, these "other" workers, no matter their age or circumstances, are always doing the work of someone who isn't really a full citizen and who doesn't make the full claims of social welfare—just like themselves when they were not (yet) full adults and citizens. Their feeling is that these other workers, like the students who aped them for a few years, really ought to be moving on—out of the sphere of entitlement, out of "our" schools and hospitals, out of "our" public. The view of globalization from above is assisted by the voice of the beat cop to the guest worker loitering around the health-care system: move along, move along.

From here, we could go on to explore the meaning of contingency: not just part-time work but the insecurity and vulnerability of full-time workers. We could ask, for whom is this contingency a field of possibility? And for whom is contingency, in fact, a field of constraint?

It takes a village to pay for education and to pay for low wages and to pick up the cost for life injuries sustained by the absence of security and dignity. So perhaps the village should decide what education and wages should be, and the sort of dignity and security that everyone should enjoy, very much apart from the work they do.

Reforming Revolution

Written by edu-factory collective
Friday, 25 June 2010 15:48

We would like to thank Jeffrey Williams for his important article (<http://dissentmagazine.org/atw.php?id=171>): we are happy to deepen and extend both his contribution and the very productive debate surrounding these strategic questions.



“Revolutionary U”: The title of Jeffrey Williams’ article is certainly a good one, but it also carries with it a question: what does it mean to be revolutionary today? How do we rethink the topicality of revolution, and where? These are fundamental questions which are not at all abstract. Let us begin with the last one: the where, or the problem of the space and time of capital and political action in the contemporary era. The label we use is of little importance, as long as we are all in agreement regarding the new role played by knowledge in labor and in the global accumulation of capital. We say that edu-factory is a transnational project in order to point to a global context in which States don’t disappear but which are also continuously exceeded – by worker mobility, by commodities, by struggles and by capital. They are no longer the center of sovereignty, nor of political action.

This doesn’t mean the world is “flat” or generally homogenous: there are many differences and, on occasion, even great differences between one context and another. Nevertheless, capital translates these differences into an abstract language every day; each day difference is translated into the language of value and accumulation. Put concretely, the global university is not a university that works in the same way all over the world, but rather one that indicates trends in a global transformation (corporatization; the precarization of labor; a new relationship with the market, etc.), trends which are translated into different forms in various contexts. From New York to Dubai, from London to San Paolo, from Sydney to Shanghai, from Moscow to Johannesburg, we are seeing the rise of a “global university,” even in its different (sometimes dramatically different) forms of translation into particular regional contexts.

In accordance with this analysis, we are not at all suggesting that “local” political actions and

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practices are less important. On the contrary, they are the very basis and driving force of the edu-factory network and we're all involved in them – the collective includes activists from Italy, France, Holland, Russia, the US, Canada, Brazil, Taiwan and Australia while the email list counts over 700 people from all over the world. Today the “local” is also an immediately global space: it has its own peculiarities but, at the same time, it is interdependent with a world system. In order to avoid limiting ourselves to a strictly local vision (one that presupposes a static capitalist scenario), our problem is connecting territorial political practices across a common transnational space and time. This doesn't mean creating a global political party or to reducing differences to some sort of homogenous plane, rather it is a question of collectively translating these many different practices and actions across a common space, one that is radically alternative and antagonistic to the global university.

In adopting the transnational as our strategic space-time, we have said that edu-factory is a political machine. Since the very beginning, it has developed not only a place of debate but also a project rooted in university struggles as most of the people who participate in the listserv are also directly involved in processes of political organization. The web-based project is only one form with which to compose and recompose “offline” political activities and conflicts. The project's hypothesis – a political one – is that struggles at the global level tend to assume a series of common characteristics. We have encountered these common characteristics along our project's trajectory: conflicts emerging in the production of knowledge and against privatization, the rise of a new figure of the student, the struggles against the *déclassement* of education and the workforce, struggles against “precarization”, etc. Furthermore, over the last year our political machine has been working on taking another yet another step: it was involved in the networking process in North America (i.e., around the 4th of March events) and in Europe (with the Vienna mobilization and in a transnational meeting in Bologna); edu-factory is a direct protagonist in the political process of university transformation in Brazil and it is carrying forward a new political debate in some parts of Asia and in Australia. In short, edu-factory is becoming a transnational network of struggles.

This is a very concrete process, but not at all one that acts as an alternative to theoretical production. In fact, we continue to maintain that there is no revolutionary organizational process without revolutionary theory. But who are the subjects of this? The classical distinction between intellectual work and political activity is blurring – in the changing forms of labor, inside and against contemporary capitalist accumulation, a new figure of the militant is emerging. Knowledge production is no longer an intellectual activity to be carried out in aid of class struggle, it is immediately a part of class struggle. In this way, we are also trying to build our political machine through multiple articulations, using a variety of tools (the list, the website, the journal, the meetings, the campaigns, etc.), in order to connect transnational levels and spaces.

In this framework, following Williams' article, is it still possible to propose the classical division between reformists and revolutionaries? We are not so sure. On the one hand the distinction might still appear to be a useful to some: there are anti-capitalist practices and politics while others who try to soften, calibrate, or otherwise improve capitalism. On the other hand, we feel

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that in our contemporary setting, the space of “pure” reformism is definitively finished. This is both the effect of and what is so significant about the double crisis (the global economic crisis and the crisis of the global university that was explored in the zero issue of our journal). It is becoming increasingly difficult to reform global capital and crisis has become its permanent condition. Against this backdrop, hard distinctions between revolution and reform lose their usefulness. Indeed, some of our own campaigns (like the one recently launched against student debt for example) might even be seen as “reformist,” but their goal, like that of edu-factory itself, is to move far beyond reform, toward the production of the common. We are also involved in a process of higher education “reform” in Brazil around increasing the enrollment of black students in universities: this is not merely an affirmative action program but one that we see as questioning the curricula and the very organization of knowledge within the university. One could say that we are more interested in revolutionary reformists, or reformist revolutionaries, than in re-proposing tired discussions of where to draw the line between them!

In the last century, it was suggested that humanity had two possible destinies: socialism or barbarism. But socialism (with its cult of the State and of the public) intervened in the current financial crisis as to save capital, that is, to further its barbarism. The state and corporations, public and private, are two sides of the same coin. Hence, we would say: the common or barbarism. This is not at all an abstract concept: the common is what we produce and what we lay claim to. If we look to the struggles occurring all around the world, we can see that it is becoming a concrete terrain of organization and struggles. It bespeaks the centrality of the struggles against the privatization of our knowledge and lives and the demand for the collective re-appropriation of our commonwealth. Conflicts over wages and against precariousness, conflicts surrounding knowledge production and the possibility of a new welfare, conflicts against intellectual property and for the free circulation of knowledge and culture – all of these are struggles over the common. Precisely because we are involved in these kinds of struggles every day, our problem is not that of labels or policing the purity of our projects: we know that gaining a salary increase or defeating one instance of precariousness is revolutionary to the degree in which it improves our collective power over the production of the common. In fact, the struggles over the common ultimately involve a re-thinking of the relationship between movements and governance.

At the “Beneath the University, the Commons” conference in Minneapolis, the last April, we launched a proposal, together with other activists and collectives: the aforementioned debt abolition movement (see the statement: http://www.edu-factory.org/edu15/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=356). This is not the conquest of the Winter Palace, nor is it a reformist contention. The abolition of the debt in its various forms (student debt, home mortgages, healthcare as well as the debt imposed by the organizations of international capital in postcolonial countries, the claim for our right to bankruptcy), is the reappropriation of our common lives and needs, of our social wealth. It indicates the path of common composition among the different struggles and figures of labor at a global level, inside and outside the university, or living on its borders as we do. This is our

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challenge: can we carry this proposal forward together, beyond regional differences and in both a common and practical manner?

Perhaps we could call this (quite ambitiously for sure) a new workers' international in the contemporary era. Is there anything that could be more concrete than this?

Campaign against Debt



Documentation

Written by edu-factory collective

Wednesday, 16 June 2010 13:49

Call for Action Against Debt

We, students, teachers, migrant and precarious workers, call for a debt abolition network to organize a global day of action against student debt.

We struggle everyday in movements all around the world against the privatization of the university, the precaritization of work, the new enclosures of our knowledges and for the reappropriation of our commonwealth.

We have identified debt as a primary component in all of these struggles.

Debt is the main instrument of enclosure of our social wealth: education, knowledge, access to healthy food, housing and healthcare. In nearly every aspect of our lives, the access to credit is necessary in order to live our lives.

Debt is a fundamental political question because it is a key component of control of our lives and bodies. This control is exercised as blackmail on an individual level as well as generalized social exploitation on a large scale.

Debt has been used as a management strategy to separate, divide and maintain supremacy over individuals, communities, countries and even entire continents for over 30 years.

Debt is a necessary parasitical function of financial capitalism today. Without continued lending and deeper debt, capital cannot continue to function. The current economic crisis exemplifies this principle.

Debt is therefore an inequitable system that produces profits for the financial industry at the expense of our education and our lives.

Student debt is one of the first forms where of this unjust system is put into practice. As students, we are forced to borrow to have access to education. These predatory lending strategies have created generations whose futures are indentured to banks and financial institutions.

Student debt means the corporatization and financialization of the university. It is the enclosure of our knowledge and passions, and the precarization of our labor and lives.

Student debt is therefore part of a general struggle against the contemporary slavery of credit cards, mortgages, and the international debt system. It is our singular battle in the common struggle for a more just world.

We therefore claim the right to bankruptcy for all and we claim the right to access credit for all. We call for the immediate abolition of debt and we call for civil disobedience against the debt system.

We won't pay back the debt!

Links and Resources about Debt:

[The Magic of Debt, or, Amortise This!](#) By Brett Neilson

[Crisis as an allegory of production](#) By Brett Neilson

[In Praise of Usura](#) By Melinda Cooper and Angela Mitropoulos

[Debt Education](#) by Jeffrey Williams

[Speculating on Student Debt](#) by the Committee for Radical Diplomacy

[The Financialization of Student Life: Five Propositions on Student Debt](#) by Morgan Adamson

[Workers against Debt Slavery and Torture: An Ancient Tale with a Modern Moral](#) by George Caffentzis

[Financialization as Biopower](#) by Stefano Lucarelli



THE STUDENT LOAN SCHEME

GATEWAY DRUG TO DEBT SLAVERY

-2ND EDITION-

Everyone knows we Americans are swimming in credit card debt.

But just this year a new debt has quietly surpassed our consumer spending addiction.

Student loans,
now at \$829 billion.

How did this happen?

Lets start from the beginning...



1965

Lyndon Johnson signs the Higher Education Act (HEA) as part of his 'Great Society'. Millions of students are now able to afford college with Federally guaranteed loans and scholarships.

1978

After stories surfaced of some doctors and lawyers discharging their student loan debt by filing for bankruptcy immediately after graduation, the Bankruptcy Reform Act disallowed discharge for 5 years after first payment. The actual discharge rate at the time was less than 1%.

1990

The non-discharge period was extended to 7 years.

1998

Congress completely eliminated the ability to discharge student loan debt in bankruptcy. The same rules apply to debt from criminal acts (you murder someone and are sued) and debt from fraud. Loans for education are the only type of loan that has this Federal 'no-escape' clause.

2005

Amendments to the Bankruptcy Code provide the same non-discharge protection to private student loan lenders. Now all student loans, government and private are almost impossible to discharge.

Additionally, the following protections were **removed** from student loans.

Statute of limitations on collections

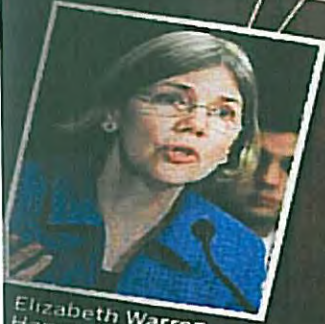
Truth in Lending Act

Fair Debt Collection Practices Act

The right to refinance

Adherence to state usury laws

"Student-loan debt collectors have power that would make a mobster envious"



Elizabeth Warren
Harvard Law Professor
Chair of the TARP Congressional Oversight Panel

The harshest collection methods are reserved for student loans. Miss a few payments and you can be subject to:

Wage garnishment without a court order

Suspension of state professional licences

Garnishment of social security/disability income

Withholding IRS tax refunds

Now wait just a minute. Why are we treating our fledgling students like criminals?



LOL! Because it's obscenely profitable of course. Why else?



Albert Lord
CEO of SLM Corp
(Sallie Mae)

Here is how it works

Sallie Mae is the largest originator of student loans.

Sallie Mae loans you \$20,000 with a 12 year term.

The federal government guarantees the full amount of this loan. There is no risk to Sallie Mae.

You pay off the loan at 8.8% interest over 12 years. Total finance charges: \$23,376

You are unable to make the monthly loan payments of \$293.

After 270 days, the loan is in default status.

The federal government pays Sallie Mae the balance of the loan plus interest.

GRC is owned by Sallie Mae. This is known as the second bite of the apple.

GRC adds 25% to the loan as a collection fee. GRC also gets a 28% commission on the loan, which you have to pay for.

The government needs to get it's money back so it sends the debt to a collections agency like General Revenue Corporation (GRC), the nations largest.

GRC can then take money from your paycheck and tax refund until they are paid.

There is no statute of limitations on your student loan debt. You WILL pay, even if it has to be deducted from your social security checks or those of your cosigner.

When ever there is millions of losers there is always a few giant winners. Al Lord and Tim Fitzpatrick have taken home over \$400 million from Sallie Mae over the past decade.



This is why it's so profitable for everyone involved when you default. Sallie Mae get huge returns with no risk and the government eventually gets its money back with interest. Defaulting students are a money machine. It even benefits the school.

How are defaulting students a benefit to schools?

Since defaulted loans are a net gain to the government and its collection agencies, they have no incentive to moderate school prices. High prices means higher loans. Higher loans means more defaults and more profit for everyone. This has allowed school tuition to rise at twice the rate of inflation and four times the rate of wage growth.

Well there can't be too many students who default. All you have to do is get a job and pay it off.



25% of government student loans default.
At community colleges its 30%.
At two year colleges it's 40%.

At the height of the subprime mortgage mess, default rates were 25%. And those were loans people could walk away from in bankruptcy or even be bailed out by the government. But don't expect any bailouts for students, since it's the government doing the loan sharking here.

Didn't Obama overhaul the student loan program this year? He called it "one of the most significant investments in higher education since the G.I. Bill."

Obama's changes are big wins for the government and tax payers. He basically cut lenders like Sallie Mae out of the loop by eliminating the subsidies. So all loan profits that used to go to private lenders, now go back to the government.

Despite the rhetoric this is not a big win for students. They still don't have the consumer protections and rights they need. Huge for-profit collection agencies like GRC have been replaced with huge non-profit collection agencies like EdFund whose job is the same; spin a \$37,000 loan into a \$100,000 repayment. Since the government is making even more money, they have even less of an incentive to keep tuition prices in check.



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University Struggles at the End of the Edu-Deal

By George Caffentzis

We should not ask for the university to be destroyed, nor for it to be preserved. We should not ask for anything. We should ask ourselves and each other to take control of these universities, collectively, so that education can begin.

- From a flyer found in the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts originally written in the University of California

Since the massive student revolt in France, in 2006, against the Contrat Première Embauché (CPE), and the 'anomalous wave' in Italy in 2008, student protest has mounted in almost every part of the world, suggesting a reprise of the heady days of 1968. It reached a crescendo in the Fall and Winter of 2009 when campus strikes and occupations proliferated from California to Austria, Germany, Croatia, Switzerland and later the UK. The website Tinyurl.com/squatted-universities counted 168 universities (mostly in Europe) where actions took place between 20 October and the end of December 2009. And the surge is far from over. On 4 March 2010, in the US, on the occasion of a nationwide day of action (the first since May 1970) called in defense of public education, one of the co-ordinating organisations listed 64 different campuses that saw some form of protest.¹ On the same day, the South African Students' Congress (SASCO) tried to close down nine universities calling for free university education. The protest at the University of Johannesburg proved to be the most contentious, with the police driving students away with water cannons from a burning barricade.

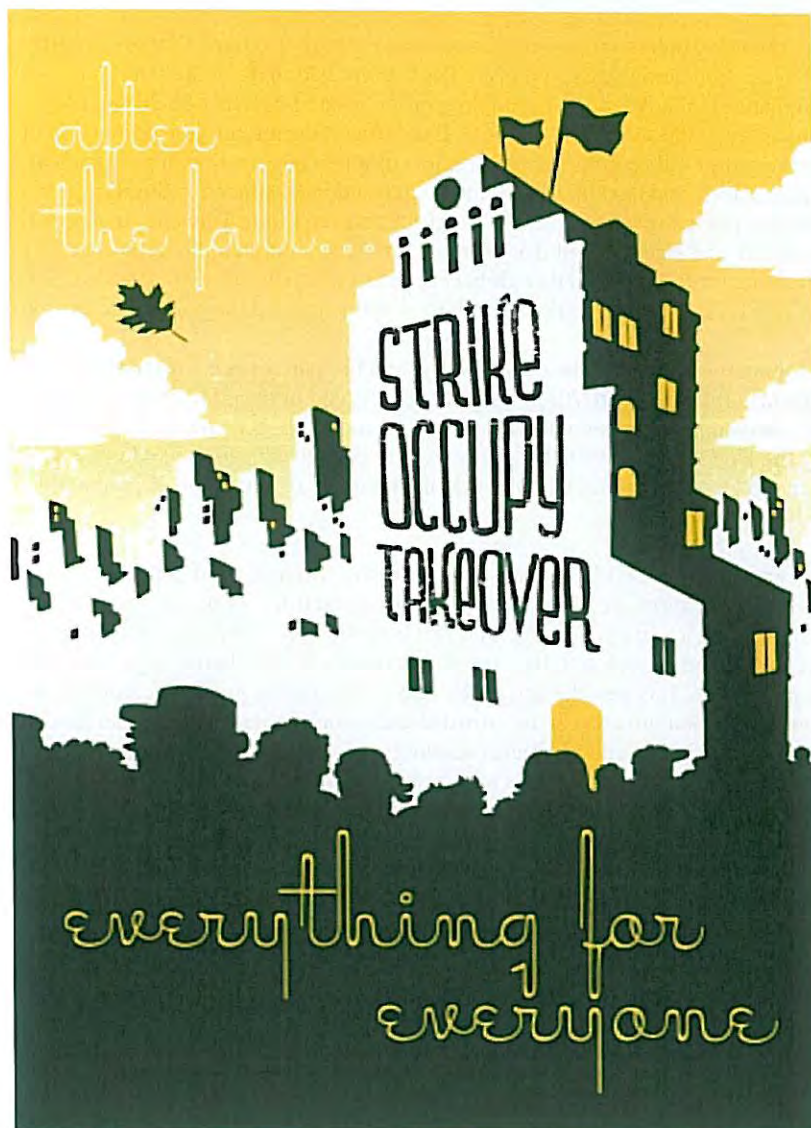


Image: Cover of *After the Fall: Communiques from Occupied California*, February 2010

At the root of the most recent mobilisations are the budget cuts that governments and academic institutions have implemented in the wake of the Wall Street meltdown and the tuition hikes that have followed from them; up to 32 percent in the University of California system, and similar increases in some British universities. In this light, the new student movement can be seen as the main organised response to the global financial crisis. Indeed, 'We won't pay for your crisis' - the slogan of striking Italian students - has become an international battle cry. But the economic crisis has exacerbated a general dissatisfaction that has deeper sources, stemming from the neoliberal reform of education and the restructuring of production that have taken place over the last three decades, which have affected every aspect of student life throughout the world.²

The End of the Edu-Deal

The most outstanding elements of this restructuring have been the corporatisation of the university systems and the commercialisation of education. 'For profit' universities are still a minority on the academic scene but the 'becoming business' of academe is well advanced especially in the US, where it dates back to the passing of the Bayh-Dole Act of 1980, that enabled universities to apply for patents for 'discoveries' made in their labs that companies would have to pay to use. Since then, the restructuring of academe as a money-making venture has proceeded unabated. The opening of university labs to private enterprise, the selling of knowledge on the world market (through online education and off-shore teaching), the precarisation of academic labour and introduction of constantly rising tuition fees forcing students to plunge ever further into debt, have become standard features of the US academic life, and with regional differences the same trends can now be registered worldwide.

In Europe, the struggle epitomising the new student movement has been against the 'Bologna Process', an EU project that institutes a European Higher Education Area, and promotes the circulation of labour within its territory through the homogenisation and standardisation of schooling programs and degrees. The Bologna Process unabashedly places the university at the service of business. It redefines education as the production of mobile and flexible workers, possessing the skills employers require; it centralises the creation of pedagogical standards, removes control from local actors, and devalues local knowledge and local concerns. Similar developments have been taking place in many university systems in Africa and Asia (like Taiwan, Singapore, Japan) that also are being 'Americanised' and standardised (for example, in Taiwan through the imposition of the Social Science Citation Index to evaluate professors) - so that global corporations can use Indian, Russian, South African or Brazilian, instead of US or EU 'knowledge workers', with the confidence that they are fit for the job.³

It is generally recognised that the commercialisation of the university system has partly been a response to the student struggles and social movements of the '60s and '70s, which marked the end of the education policy that had prevailed in the Keynesian era. As campus after campus, from Berkeley to Berlin, became the hotbed of an anti-authoritarian revolt, dispelling the Keynesian illusion that investment in college education would pay down the line in the form of an increase in the general productivity of work, the ideology of education as preparation to civic life and a public good had to be discarded.⁴

But the new neoliberal regime also represented the end of a class deal. With the elimination of stipends, allowances, and free tuition, the cost of 'education', i.e. the cost of preparing oneself for work, has been imposed squarely on the work-force, in what amounts to a massive wage-cut, that is particularly onerous considering that precarity has become the dominant work relation, and that, like any other commodity, the knowledge 'bought' is quickly devalued by technological innovation. It is also the end of the role of the state as mediator. Students in the corporatised university now confront capital directly, in the crowded classrooms where teachers can hardly match names on the rosters with faces, in the expansion of adjunct teaching and, above all, in the mounting student debt which, by turning students into indentured servants to the banks and/or state, acts as a disciplinary mechanism on student life, also casting a long shadow on their future.

Still, through the 1990s, student enrolment continued to grow across the world under the pressure of an economic restructuring making education a condition for employment. It became a mantra, during the last two decades, from New York to Paris to Nairobi, to claim that with the rise of the 'knowledge society' and information revolution, cost what it may, college education is a 'must' (World Bank 2002). Statistics seemed to confirm the wisdom of climbing the education ladder, pointing to an 83 percent differential in the US between the wages of college graduates and those of workers with high school degrees. But the increase in enrolment and indebtedness must also be read as a form of struggle, a rejection of the restrictions imposed by the subjection of education to the logic of the market, a hidden form of appropriation, manifesting itself in time through the increase in the numbers of those defaulting on their loan repayments.

SOLIDARITY WITH STUDENT OCCUPATIONS WORLDWIDE



SABATOGUE ALL SYSTEMS - OF SOCIAL CONTROL -

Image: Anarchist student solidarity poster

There is no doubt, in this context, that the global financial crisis of 2008 targets this strategy of resistance, removing, through budget cutbacks, layoffs, and the massification of unemployment, the last remaining guarantees. Certainly the 'edu-deal', that promised higher wages and work satisfaction in exchange for workers and their families taking on the cost for higher education, is dissolving as well. In the crisis capital is reneging on this 'deal', certainly because of the proliferation of defaults and because capitalism today refuses any guarantees, such as the promise of high wages to future knowledge workers.

The university financial crisis (the tuition fee increases, budget cutbacks, furloughs and lay-offs) is directly aimed at eliminating the wage guarantee that formal higher education was supposed to bring and at taming the 'cognitariat'. As in the case of immigrant workers, the attack on the students does not signify that knowledge workers are not needed, but rather that they need to be further disciplined and proletarianised, through an attack on the power they have begun to claim partly because of their position in the process of accumulation.

Student rebellion is therefore deep-seated, with the prospect of debt slavery being compounded by a future of insecurity and a sense of alienation from an institution perceived to be mercenary and bureaucratic that, into the bargain, produces a commodity subject to rapid devaluation.

Demands or Occupations?

The student movement, however, faces a political problem, most evident in the US and, to a lesser extent, in Europe. The movement has two souls. On the one side, it demands free university education, reviving the dream of publicly financed 'mass scholarship', ostensibly proposing to return to the model of the Keynesian era. On the other, it is in revolt against the university itself, calling for a mass exit from it or aiming to transform the campus into a base for alternative knowledge production that is accessible to those outside its 'walls'.⁵

This dichotomy, which some characterise as a return to the 'reform versus revolution' disputes of the past, has become most visible in the debate sparked off during the University of California strikes last year, over 'demands' versus 'occupations', which at times has taken an acrimonious tone, as these terms have become complex signifiers for hierarchies and identities, differential power relations, and consequences for risk taking.

The contrast is not purely ideological. It is rooted in the contradictions facing every antagonistic movement today. Economic restructuring has fragmented the workforce, deepened divisions and, not least, it has increased the effort and time required for daily reproduction. A student population holding two or three jobs is less prone to organise than its more affluent peers in the '60s.

At the same time there is a sense, among many, that there is nothing more to negotiate, that demands have become superfluous since, for the majority of students, acquiring a certificate is no guarantee for the future which promises simply more precarity and constant self-recycling. Many students realise that capitalism has nothing to offer this generation, that no 'new deal' is possible, even in the metropolitan areas of the world, where most wealth is accumulated. Though there is a widespread temptation to revive it, the Keynesian interest group politics of making demands and 'dealing' is long dead.

Thus the slogan 'occupy everything': occupying buildings being seen as a means of self-empowerment, the creation of spaces that students can control, a break in the flow of work and value through which the university expands its reach, and the production of a 'counter-power' prefigurative of the communalising relations students today want to construct.

It is hard to know how the 'demands/occupation' conflict within the student movement will be resolved. What is certain is that this is a major challenge the movement must overcome in order to increase its power and its capacity to connect with other struggles. This will be a necessary step if the movement is to gain the power to reclaim education from the hands of the academic authorities and the state. As a next step there is presently much discussion about creating 'knowledge commons', in the sense of creating forms of autonomous knowledge production, not finalised or conditioned by the market and open to those outside the campus walls.

Meanwhile, as *Edu-Notes* has recognised,

already the student movement is creating a common of its own in the very process of the struggle. At the speed of light, news of the strikes, rallies, and occupations, have circulated around the world prompting a global electronic tam-tam of exchanged communiqués, slogans, messages of solidarity and support, resulting in an exceptional volume of images, documents, stories.⁶

Yet, the main 'common' the movement will have to construct is the extension of its mobilisation to other workers in the crisis. Key to this construction will be the issue of the debt that is the arch 'anti-common', since it is the transformation of collective surplus that could be used for the liberation of workers into a tool of their enslavement. Abolition of the student debt can be the connective tissue between the movement and the others struggling against foreclosures in the US and the larger movement against sovereign debt internationally.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank the students and faculty I recently interviewed from the University of California, the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna and Rhodes University in South Africa for sharing their knowledge. I also want to thank my comrades in the *Edu-Notes* group for their insights and inspiration.

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Footnotes

1 See, <http://defendededucation.org>

2 Edu-Factory Collective, *Towards a Global Autonomous University*, Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2009.

3 See, Silvia Federici, George Caffentzis, Ousseina Alidou, *A Thousand Flowers: Social Struggles Against Structural Adjustment in African Universities*, Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2000, Richard Pithouse, *Asinamali: University Struggles in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, Trenton: Africa World Press, 2006 and Arthur Hou-ming Huang, 'Science as Ideology: SSCI, TSSCI and the Evaluation System of Social Sciences in Taiwan', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Volume 10 2009, Number 2, pp. 282-291.

4 George Caffentzis, 'Throwing Away the Ladder: The Universities in the Crisis', *Zerowork I*, 1975, pp. 128-142.

5 *After the Fall: Communiqués from Occupied California*, 2010, Accessed at www.afterthefallcommuniques.info

6 *Edu-Notes*, 'Introduction to *Edu-Notes*', unpublished manuscript.

Commonify Everything, Now.

The commons must be created through the act of occupation, of re-appropriation; a shared resource cannot be handed over by the owners.

Protests don't have clear beginnings and ends, they blossom from the bullshit of everyday oppression and exploitation. They disrupt and defy the usual powerflows, forming the spaces and taking the time to refuse the promised life and create new ones.

One response was announced at Schillerplatz a month ago with broken glass and the sound of a fire alarm; fire-engines, firemen, and journalists; enacted upon a 20 foot dollar sign creeping into the privatised halls of what's now, one of many, 'burning' universities. After statements and demands, a slightly questioning voice declared: "the academy is now occupied!" For a moment, everybody stayed put - a unanimous uncertainty perhaps as to what an occupation is exactly, or a non-understanding of what should come next. In the liberated space of the Aula, a number of crucial questions and issues had been collectively cracked open. It's important to recognise that what's happened has emerged as a collective and communal process of knowing - of asking questions concerning what we want, and how we might achieve it. A process whereby knowledge itself has become productive, an act of doing. A practice embedded in a fight against hierarchy, against the logic of management and teaching, and against knowledge's 'production'.

Who'll be Slave to the new Masters?

How does one say something to somebody, and leave behind the avant garde position of being 'the one who knows'? Isn't it our political task to demand that we do not know, to say fuck off to our would be leaders and to the possibility of becoming them, to dump the student union in favour of the general assembly and begin to demolish the many hierarchies created by universities and education? There is knowledge in the university, but outside too, the walls are being ripped down and built again with new price tags. The question is not how do we rebuild the ivory tower, but how can subjugation to knowledge production be prevented? What do we do with the university to tackle the exploitation that flows through its walls? Trade Unions and Student Unions are being made obsolete by a knowledge capitalism intent on subjecting everyone to 'life long learning'; the requirement of eternally re-skilling on edu-courses in order to keep our positions as wage labourers. There are no students and workers anymore, just people at different levels of precarity and exploitation, in need of new forms of organisation.

Did you make this jumbled garbage or did I, or did we somehow make it together?

It's no longer possible to under-stand. Not the divisions between teacher and student, not the authority of state, nor management, not the demand to understand. Refuse understanding. Rise up instead. To teach is an intense learning experience - to be a student; a stultifying process whereby the student is made reliant on the explication of their teacher. Why not explode this hierarchy in a community of teacher-learners? The words teacher and student don't fit the learning environment. The problem isn't that teachers get paid a wage, it is that students do not. The work done by students produces profits, be it working directly for a professor, for large companies via third party university funding, working shit mcjobs® to pay the rent and fees, or simply playing their part in reproducing capitalism. To pay in order to have ones labour power sucked out in the edu-factory is deserving of the term hyper-exploitation; students are the agents of their own suffering, consumer and consumed, manager and managed. The time has come for students to demand a wage. And to connect with all other forms of paid and unpaid labour in the process.

How does one embrace ignorance, and simultaneously try to tell people that you know its important, necessary maybe?

Learning takes place outside of the categories ,teacher' – ,student', but more fundamentally the constructed gap between the teachers knowledge and the students ignorance does not exist. It provides the basis for constructing a capital-labour relation within the classroom whereby the student plays obedient worker - receiving credits as wages - to the teachers ownership of the means of knowledge production. As long as the rigid terms apply, there is no possibility for emancipation, only the chance of fighting against co-students in order to become the next manager.

Let's mess up the terms; theres a necessity of recognising oneself as a learner, with the ability to listen, and as a teacher with the ability to know - to begin discussions as people and not as functions and to place that process within a practice of equality. Not an all knowing avant garde leadership, but a movement based upon opening up questions and discussions. At the academy of refusal there was an absence of predetermined meaning as to what an occupation should be, but simultaneously a shared knowledge of the fact that we do not know. It is exactly in these spaces, opened up by a collective ignorance and shared knowledge that a level playing field of meaning, a potential for something else, a different way of organising things, a structure without hierarchy and based on equality - becomes possible.

What is Commonification?

Its the outraged response to the steady privatisation of everything, the fight back against the frozen, crumbling neoliberal nightmare, an uprising against the drive to enclose what is common, to limit access and place it in ,free' markets, destructive competition relations, so that people can be made to pay for public services and institutions such as hospitals, schools and universities. Commonification is the counter-attack - the war on the commodification of our bodies and brains. The construction of new commons by re*claiming what belongs to all. Another world isn't possible; its necessary - occupy and commonify everything, now.

A community has formed, maybe its a community, let's call it a community, a community of witches, a group of people standing in solidarity against a system of death and deadlines, and the destruction of our livelihoods and lives.

AG WITCHCRAFT

the academy of refusal

Allmendifiziere* Alles und Jetzt.

Allmenden, Gemeingüter und geteilte Ressourcen müssen durch den Akt der Besetzung geschaffen werden, durch Rück-Aneignung. Sie können nicht einfach von den Besitzer_innen übergeben werden.

Proteste haben keine deutlichen Anfänge und Ausklänge; sie erblühen auf dem Mist alltäglicher Unterdrückung und Ausbeutung. Sie entziehen sich den üblichen Machtstrukturen, indem sie Räume formen und sich Zeit nehmen, um sich dem versprochenen Lebensentwurf zu verweigern und neue zu kreieren.

Vor einem Monat am Schillerplatz wurde eine Antwort verkündet, mit zerbrochenem Glas und der Sirene des Feuersalarms; Feuerwehr, Feuerwehrleute, Presse, inszeniert auf einem 25 Meter großen Dollarzeichen, das sich bis in die privatisierten Hallen erstreckt, die nun eine von vielen „brennenden“ Universitäten darstellen. Nach Redebeiträgen und Forderungen verkündete eine zögerlich fragende Stimme: „Die Akademie ist hiermit besetzt!“. Für einen Moment blieben alle ruhig – in einer vereinten Unsicherheit vielleicht darüber, was eine Besetzung eigentlich genau bedeutet, einem Nicht-Verstehen, was als nächstes passieren sollte. In der befreiten Aula wurden dann eine Reihe von entscheidenden Fragen gemeinsam aufgebrochen. Es ist wichtig anzuerkennen, dass was passiert ist, aus einem kollektiven und gemeinschaftlichen Prozess des Wissens entstanden ist – aus der Frage, was wir wollen, und wie wir es erreichen können. Ein Prozess, in dem das Wissen begann, selbst produktiv und ein aktives Element zu werden. Eine Praxis eingebettet in einem Kampf gegen Hierarchien, gegen die Logik von Management und Lehre, und gegen des Wissens’ ‚Produktion’.

Who will be slave to the new MA*stars?

Wie kann man einer Person etwas sagen, ohne den Avant-Garde-Rang der Wissenden zu beanspruchen? Ist es nicht unsere politische Aufgabe, das Recht auf Unwissenheit einzufordern, „Schleich dich!“ zu sagen zu unseren vermeintlichen Führungskräften und der Möglichkeit, Sie zu werden, die ÖH abzuservieren für das Plenum, und zu beginnen, die vielen Hierarchien abzubauen, die von Universitäten und anderen Bildungseinrichtungen erschaffen wurden? Wissen gibt es nicht nur innerhalb, sondern auch außerhalb der Universitätsgebäude; ihre Wände werden niedergedrückt und mit neuen Preisschildern wieder hochgezogen. Die Frage ist nicht, wie man den Elfenbeinturm neu erbauen kann, sondern wie man die Unterwerfung zur Wissensproduktion verhindern kann. Was können wir an den Universitäten tun, um die Ausbeutung, die durch ihre Gänge fließt, zu bewältigen? Gewerkschaften und Hochschülerschaften werden überflüssig gemacht von einem Wissenskapitalismus, der alle Menschen dem „lebenslangem Lernen“ zu unterwerfen beabsichtigt: der Anforderung, sich immer und ewig weiterzubilden in Schulungen, um unsere Posten als Lohnarbeitende zu behalten. Es gibt nicht mehr „Studierende“ oder „Arbeitende“; sondern nur noch Leute, die in verschiedenen Graden von Prekarisierung und Ausbeutung leben und die unbedingt neue Organisationsformen brauchen.

Hast du diesen ungeordneten Müll geschrieben, oder ich? Oder haben wir das irgendwie gemeinsam getan?

„Under-standing“ (Verstehen - Unterstehen) ist nicht länger möglich; nicht die Trennung zwischen Lehrenden und Studierenden, nicht die Autorität des Staates, und auch nicht die Forderung, etwas zu verstehen. Laßt uns „under-standing“ verweigern und stattdessen aufstehen. Zu lehren ist eine intensive Lernerfahrung – zu studieren ist ein Verblödungsprozess, bei dem die Studierenden von den Erklärungen der Lehrenden abhängig gemacht werden. Warum sollte man diese Hierarchie nicht sprengen und eine Gemeinschaft von Lehr-LernerInnen schaffen? Die Wörter „LehrerIn“ und „StudentIn“ passen nicht in einen Lern-Raum. Das Problem ist nicht, dass Lehrende bezahlt werden – es ist, dass Studierende nicht bezahlt werden. Die Arbeit von Studierenden produziert Profite, sei es direkt für die Professor_innen, für Firmen

durch Sponsoring der Universität, durch beschissene mcjobs®, um ihre Miete und Studiengebühren zu bezahlen, oder indem sie einfach ihre ihnen zugedachte Rolle in der Reproduktion des Kapitalismus spielen. Bezahlen müssen um die eigene Arbeitskraft in der Bildungsfabrik ausgesaugt zu bekommen verdient die Bezeichnung Hyper-Ausbeutung; Studierende bearbeiten ihr eigenes Leiden, sind Konsument_innen und Konsumierte, Manager_innen und Gemanagte. Es ist Zeit, dass Studierende Lohn verlangen und sich unterdessen mit allen anderen Formen bezahlter und unbezahlter Arbeit zusammenschließen.

Wie kann mensch Ignoranz begrüßen, und Leuten erklären, dass sie wichtig ist, notwendig vielleicht?

Lernen findet außerhalb der Kategorien „Lernende/Studierende“ statt, oder rudimentärer gesagt, die konstruierte Diskrepanz zwischen dem Wissen der Lehrenden und der Ahnungslosigkeit der Studierenden existiert nicht. Diese bietet die Basis für die Konstruktion einer Kapital-Arbeits-Beziehung im Klassenraum, bei welcher die Studierenden die gehorchenden Arbeitenden spielen – bezahlt mit Zeugnissen - im Gegensatz zu Lehrenden, die in Besitz der Wissensproduktionsmittel sind. Solange diese starren Bedingungen bestehen, gibt es keine Möglichkeit zur Emanzipation, alleine die Chance, gegen Kommiliton_innen im Kampf um den nächsten Managementposten anzutreten.

Lasst uns die Bedingungen aufmischen: Es besteht die Notwendigkeit, sich selbst sowohl als Lernende, mit der Fähigkeit zuzuhören, als auch als Lehrende, mit der Fähigkeit zu Wissen, zu erkennen - um Diskussionen als Menschen und nicht als Funktionen zu beginnen und um den Lernablauf in eine Praxis der Gleichheit einzuschreiben. Keine allwissende avantgardistische Leitung, sondern eine Bewegung, die Fragestellungen und Diskussionen eröffnet. In der akademie der verweigerung existierte die Abwesenheit einer im Vorhinein definierten Bedeutung davon, was genau Besetzung sein sollte, aber gleichzeitig ein geteiltes Wissen darüber, dass wir es eben nicht wissen. Es sind genau diese Orte, eröffnet von kollektiver Ignoranz und gemeinsamem Wissen, an denen faire Voraussetzungen – wie das Potenzial für etwas Anderes, neue Formen der Organisation, Strukturen ohne Hierarchien basierend auf Gleichheit - möglich werden.

Was ist Allmendifizierung?

Es ist die empörte Antwort auf die andauernde Privatisierung von Allem, der Kampf gegen den erstarrten, zerbröckelnden neoliberalen Albtraum, ein Aufstand gegen den Drang, Allgemeingüter einzukapseln, um Zugang und Platz im „freien“ Markt und in destruktiven Wettbewerbssystemen zu limitieren, damit Menschen gezwungen sind für öffentliche Dienste und Institutionen wie Krankenhäuser, Schulen und Universitäten zu bezahlen. Allmendifizierung ist der Gegenangriff - der Kampf gegen die Kommodifizierung unserer Körper und unseres Verstandes. Die Schaffung neuer Gemeingüter durch das zurück-fordern dessen, was allen gehört. Eine andere Welt ist nicht möglich; sie ist notwendig - alles besetzen und ver*all*gemeinern, jetzt.

Eine Gemeinschaft hat sich gebildet, vielleicht ist es eine Gemeinschaft, nennen wir es eine Gemeinschaft, eine Gemeinschaft von Hexen, eine Gruppe von Personen, die solidarisch gegen ein System von Tod und Deadlines und die Zerstörung von Lebensräumen und Leben auftreten.

AG HEXENKRAFT

academy of refusal

FREE ASSOCIATION

Means in Common

16beaver group

Appearing in the order of:

Martin Lucas

Rene Gabri

Ayreen Anastas

Paige Sarlin

Pedro Lasch

Benj Gerdes

Jesal Kapadia

The “workiness” we share

My shift at the Park Slope Food Coop in Brooklyn, New York - Receiving Squad B - a job for the multitude. The job description -- all of the labor connected with running a food store and ancillary services for an internally fairly democratic co-operative organization. While there are perhaps a dozen paid employees, basically the division of labor assumes much of the work will be organized so anyone can do it.

Common Work



Over the thirty-five-odd years since the Coop was founded the work has evolved to optimally accommodate the possibilities of unskilled but willing labor. There are signs near relevant locations, how to deal with specific vegetables, how to price a chicken, etc. And people fill you in. Every ‘customer’ is an employee, a source of “how it is done.”

The distribution of work is a combination of need and individual initiative. Some people do the same thing every shift because it appeals to them. Others do whatever comes along, from actually pulling food off of trucks to putting vegetables out for sale to various forms of office work. There is one store-wide intercom system used for all types of communication including pleas for workers to deal with a specific task, but also incoming phone calls, customer queries, children needing parents, etc.

The shared understanding that constitute the commons is one that is built into institutional culture... a vernacular work space, realistic (people moan and groan about the work and the institution) but a shared space of labor.

The franchise as vernacular exploitation

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Welkom bij McDonald's

Nieuw bij McDonald's: De McDonald's Academy
Een uniek, eigen opleidings-traject voor medewerkers, waarmee het mogelijk is een landelijk erkend mbo-diploma te behalen.

1 in 10 workers in the United States has been employed by McDonalds.*

Here is organized precarity. Here, in the realm of vernacular labor, is a situation where people are flexible, can be brought in and out of the labor market and perform in highly specific ways at very short notice, part of an extremely elaborate and successful chain of global profit extraction.

* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McDonald's>. Another source quoted suggests the number is 1 in 8.

The CIA 'torture manual' can be understood as an attempt to extend the state of exception or emergency into the realm of the 'normal' using the form of the franchise.

Insects

15 DOJ

(TUE) MAY 10 2005

May 2005

~~TOP SECRET~~

"You would like to place Zubaydah in a cramped confinement box with an insect. You have informed us that he appears to have a fear of insects."

U.S. Dep
Office of

"You plan to inform Zubaydah that you are going to place a stinging insect into the box, but you will actually place a harmless insect, such as a caterpillar into the box. If you do so, ensure you are outside the predicate."

Office of the Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Washington

MEMORANDUM FOR JOHN A. RIZZO
SENIOR DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL, CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Re: Application of 18 U.S.C. §§ 2340-2340A to the CIA
in the Interrogation of High Value al Qaeda

In our Memorandum for John A. Rizzo, Senior Deputy Intelligence Agency, from Steven G. Bradbury, Principal Deputy Office of Legal Counsel, Re: Application of 18 U.S.C. §§ 2340-2340A, That May Be Used in the Interrogation of a High Value al Qaeda ("Techniques"), we addressed the application of the anti-torture statute, 18 U.S.C. §§ 2340-2340A, to certain interrogation techniques that the CIA might use on a high value al Qaeda operative. There, we considered each technique in application of the statute to the use of these same techniques

Dear Fellow Drifters,

It seems the days, months, years are not long enough. We meet, speak, hope, consider, propose, disappoint, reassemble, contradict, separate, entertain, frown, struggle, laugh, to find a common trajectory. How many years and how many ways we have tried to put two and two together, and in different cities we have attempted to map out or assemble a picture of a predicament, the predicament we-many find our-them-selves in (con-dividing). What took place in 1989 and what was the nature of that recon-figuration, dissolution, recombination which followed.

1968 ----- 1979 ----- 1989 ----- 1999 ----- 2009

The questions we asked were as diverse as the means employed, people involved - examples included:

- Subjectivation (+/-)
- Food Cultivation - Production - Distribution - Security
- Universities - Culture - Creativity - Commodity
- Life-Knowledge subject to laws of War, Property, Profit, Speculation
- Monetary Policies - Financialization - Pyramid Schemes
- Fascism - Double Movements - Continental Dis/Re-integration
- Spatial Practices - Planning - (Uneven)Development Schemes - Exclusions
- Strategies of Domination - Capture - Control - Surveillance - Prisons
- Tactics of Resistance - Protest - Refusal - Disruption - Critique (+/-)
- Artistic Devices - Counter-Cartography - Détournement - Resonance
- Recombination: fractal, segments, connective, jigsaw, undifferentiated
- Recomposition: round bodies, flows, conjunctive, poetic, becoming other

What do we mean, when we say the word 'fascism,' how to understand the neo-conservative and militarist agendas in relation to the neoliberal one? What do we mean, when we use the word 'autonomy' - and how do we understand autonomy within a context of cooperation or collectivity?

We gingerly examined the emergence of new devices, tools of subjectiva-tion, instilling values, the constructivist aspect of the counter-revolution - the response to the cries for emancipation and social justice of the 60's - the use of economic crisis to consolidate power - the neo-liberal recombination in the mid 70's, Chile, New York City - each site an experiment - the steady sculpting of living force - instruments old and new - debts, permissions, allowances, injunctions, state violence - fashioning the flexible personality, within limits, scripted spaces - not just codes, but the overcoding of bodies, spaces, time.

We attempted to diversify and dilate our image of society, moving away from a micro-macro dichotomy, towards a more nuanced, scalar view, which could see the multiple levels at which a society or a world, is constructed, reproduces itself and refashions its own image, the scales at which reality -- what we understand as reality - takes shape. And in this sense, the scales at which one could act, find agency.

And if reality is a regime,
 _ if there are mechanisms in place to control appearances, to code them,
 attribute, apportion, manage the value placed upon them,
 ... then, where to construct

to imagine	ensembles
invent	assemblages
	machines (desiring?) which could

liberate desires ----> and is there a common project there?

|
 unconscious as productive
 rather than a stage / theatrical

If crisis is the dominant paradigm of governance today, and used freely by the most reactionary thinkers, how to relate to this word, and make sense of our own use of various concepts of crisis?
For example, the crisis of recomposition, the crisis of the left, the crisis of the fall of a historical subject, the crisis of ...

In the ever greater fractalized experience of life-work-play-fantasy-dream, all is separate and yet indistinguishable, merged in a haze ---> separating of human activity into fragments of ability, compatibility, availability. Within this haze, is there a possibility of a project of recomposition? A good subjectivation? An idea of class? A new protagonist of history?

And I recall the early reading discussions we organized at 16 Beaver considering various efforts at conceptualizing community, each of which attempted to redeem the common, while avoiding the inherent pitfalls of a community that would make its work the fulfillment of the community.

The	Imagined Unworked Inoperative Unavowable Terrible Coming	Community
-----	---	-----------

In these inquiries, we found all the fears and attempts at avoiding the totalizing / totalitarian results of the 20th century's "common" projects. How to maintain a relation to the call of the common (inherent in our being-with others in the world or our being-called x, or y, or z in language), while taking our lessons from historical errors? Is the idea of common project viable today or is the very notion to be abandoned?

Maybe already these notes appear too illegible to respond to - and - I am mixing up scales. Or maybe they are not questions, rather an outline of notes attempting to produce or instigate a next step.

A question I want to ask is one that has been central to our work together since the space started: How to put our activities and work directly in contact with our thoughts, political aspirations, doubts, positions today? And to do so, not in a mode which would be simply illustrative, but embodied and imbedded. What to do with our analysis of these last decades? Does one need to give it form to make it shareable with others and how? How does one live or practice this analysis (in common)? Do we need to place this analysis in the service of ideological struggle? Or are we with Deleuze and Guattari in their assertions that ideological struggles, only mask organizations of repressive power (unity of desire + economic infrastructure). And if their assessment is correct, how to combat these organizations of repressive power? Especially, when many people often earn their income by working for and sustaining these organizations. The university (the entire mechanisms of debt, collusion with industry, military, real estate development, the encroaching systematic embedding of neoliberal values within an educational framework) is only one of the more obvious cases that comes to mind. When to find our common lines of flight from such organizations? When to struggle to reterritorialize them?

I hope I'm not just re-staging old debates and if I am, how would we go about re-distributing these categories of thought, organization, and action to make them more useful for the struggles we are confronted with? I will stop here abruptly. I wanted this letter to be much shorter.

Thinking about our next steps,

Rene

Brooklyn, January 2010

Dear Rosa,

Indeed, who needs direct repression when one can convince the chicken to walk freely into the slaughterhouse?

I was happily surprised to get your letter this morning. The sun is shining and the snow has not yet melted. My train is heading to Philadelphia. This moment of return, your return, means a lot to me. I want to seize it or at least start writing before this moment passes.

I do not have your letter with me, but remember many of your questions: *Is the idea of communism still pertinent today, can it still be used as a tool of analysis and political practice? How does our predicament today look from the perspective of the communist idea? Is it possible that the main victim of this ongoing crisis will not be capitalism but the Left itself, insofar as its inability to offer a viable global alternative was again made visible to everyone?*

Indeed, after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and well into the 90s, it seemed that liberal democracy and Mr. Fukuyama's utopia had won out. Then abruptly, September 11 marked the end of the Clinton era and of that dream. It also marked a new era with walls emerging everywhere, Palestine and Israel, the European Union, the US-Mexico border, and moreover within the nation-states themselves.

This collapse of the liberal-democratic political utopia did not challenge nor change the economic utopia of global market capitalism. This had to happen later, with the 2008 financial meltdown. The second death or the end of the economic face of Mr. Fukuyama's dream.

Will this moment of meltdown be a sobering moment, then, the awakening from a dream?

Indeed this moment opens the field for ideological interpretation and a "discursive" ideological competition. It really depends how it gets occupied. Which story imposes itself in this empty field. Unfortunately, since 2008, this field has not been occupied by radical emancipatory politics. It has been occupied by further wars, increased poverty in the poor countries, racist populism and greater divisions between the rich and the poor in all societies.

Our era constantly proclaims itself to be post-ideological, yet this denial shows more than anything, that we are embedded in ideology. Ideology is a field of struggle, including the struggle for appropriating past traditions. From Martin Luther King, to Che Guevara to the Black Panthers to Ulrike Meinhof and the Red Army Faction group. We cannot let them fall in the ideological hands of the enemy, who will render them harmless, fashionable or meaningless. Fall in the sense of the "invisible" ideological battlefield.

The 60s revolts added to the standard anti-capitalist critique of socio-economic exploitation the dimension of cultural-critique: the alienation of everyday life, the commodification of consumption, the inauthentic mass society, sexual oppression, etc.

In the 70s, the establishment incorporated the 60s critique to render the real core of the revolt harmless. The demands for rights, were given, but in the guise of "permissions". One is allowed to do more without actually achieving any changes in the distribution of power. Divorce, abortion, gay marriage, and so on, are all permissions disguised as rights.

"I have a dream" yet no one knows what this dream was or is or can be. Maybe Paul knows it when he says: "There are no Greeks or Jews, no men or women ...," i.e. "There are only Christians and the enemies of Christianity!" Or, in our language today, one would say: there are only those who fight for emancipation and their reactionary opponents; the people and the enemies of the people.

The enemy of our enemy is not our friend, unless we share the same horizon towards the universalist emancipatory project based upon the axiom of equality. And in order to approach many of today's problems adequately (starvation, energy crisis, shortages in water supplies, etc.) it will be necessary to invent new forms of large-scale collective action; neither the usual forms of state intervention nor the local self-organization will be sufficient. If we do not manage to resolve these problems soon enough, a new form of world apartheid will emerge, separating the parts of the world enjoying food, energy and water, from "outside" chaotic parts, suffering scarcity, starvation and unending war.

To begin from the beginning over and over again. Everything should be re-thought, beginning from the zero point. This is what Alain calls "the communist hypothesis":

The communist hypothesis remains the right hypothesis, as I have said, and I do not see any other. If this hypothesis should have to be abandoned, then it is not worth doing anything in the order of collective action. Without the perspective of communism, without this Idea, nothing in the historical and political future is of such a kind as to interest the philosopher.

Meanwhile, one should maintain the precise reference to a set of social antagonisms which generate the need for communism: communism not as ideal, but as a movement which acts in the face of such antagonisms that exist in today's global capitalism. To cut the long story short, one could locate four such antagonisms: the threat of an *ecological catastrophe*; the ill-suited notion of *private property* in relation to so-called "intellectual property"; the *new techno-scientific developments* and its ethical implications; and the *new forms of apartheid*, walls and slums. While this last concerns the divide that separates the Included from the Excluded, the first three concern the "commons" or what Antonio and Michael call the shared substance of our social being: *the commons of culture* language and our means of communication but also other shared infrastructures of electricity and public transportations; *the commons of external nature* rain forests and natural habitat; and *the commons of internal nature* the new biotechnologies and so on.

While Marx describes the agent of history, the proletariat as the ones who have "nothing to lose but their chains", we are in danger of losing everything: the threat is that we may be reduced to abstract subjects devoid of all substantial content, dispossessed of our symbolic substance, genetically modified, vegetating in a Tarkovskian environment.

Our ethical and political challenge is to recognize ourselves as this new figure of the proletariat of "substanceless subjectivity" and act accordingly. A chance for radical emancipatory renewal.

Since early your comrade,

Vladimir

Brooklyn, January 2010

Dear Franco,

thank you for your well wishes for a good second decade. We wish the same to you. I haven't forgotten about you. None of us have.

My memories of our conversations have become part of the food that keeps me going, recollections of a shared experience that keep me tied to my political commitments amidst the difficulties of teaching and school, amidst many emotional and financial challenges. Your story of the professor who cannot die and must keep teaching returns to me often as I resent and submit to the relentless imperative to produce without ceasing in the academy and beyond. We all must keep on; but I go on sustained by recurring refrains and the promise of more thoughts, more exchanges, more activity.

The 16beaver store-house is chock-filled with material for shared reverie and contemplation. Lines of history, lines of flight: different communists, various communisms, some common thoughts, lots of thinking in a common space, even more thinking at a distance, and some measure of common sense.

10 years of discussions and meals preceded your arrival into our space, and there have been just six months of events since you returned to Bologna. 10 years have passed since the fall of the wall, since the visible emergence of the counter-globalization movement in Seattle and all the work that followed on towards Genoa, and then Afghanistan, the Iraq war and the economic crisis. We share these points on our timeline. We've each taken these turns seriously and we turn to Felix and Paolo (and Karl Polanyi) to help us make sense of the changes that preceded us, the currents that run under our feet. At 16beaver, we've taken to studying the transformations of capitalism and the organization of art and labor, of the category and experience of subjectivity and various institutional formations (the state, transnationals, the academy) under neoliberalism, and the shapes that resistance has taken, the shape of shared concern and activity, explorations of what ideas can and have done, how cultural production can intervene in the changing of how we think, feel, and look.

We've enjoyed the benefits of what somewhat regular encounters can do. Like Felix's ritournelles, we've thought again and again about the tension between what we try to do individually to eke out our existences-- and our shared endeavor, our attempts at social and political change, at aesthetic transformation.

The reading that inaugurated my experience at 16beaver was Karl Marx's description of the worker released from alienated labor--inhabiting a world where one could be a fisherman in the morning and a critic at night. I derived great pleasure from the thinking together that happened in the space of 16beaver, even as it was frustrating to speak across such different experiences and alliances.

I often return to that first reading from *The German Ideology* when I am prompted to write about 16beaver. In that passage, Marx and Engels define communism as a release from the imposition of divisions of labor. In contrast to atomization, specialization and fixity, the social situation of communism would enable a kind of fluidity of identity and tasks, of the relation between "who or what" we are and "what" we do. Like the ideal neo-liberal subject, we'd float between tasks we wanted to do. For you and your Italian comrades, the only release from this is a refusal of work, a refusal that could be truly communal, not individuated, but social, a choice for a shared form of development and life.

Thinking about the "flow" of conversation and endeavors at 16beaver, I am struck by the way in which our time together led to the manifestation of common interests.

As Marx wrote, the communal interest isn't abstract --- it's the product of a profound mutual interdependence. Usually this interdependence is hidden and threatening; born of scarcity, there is never enough for anyone. But as we go forward and try to work more (organize more, write more, do more projects based on the vocabulary, skills, and needs we have acquired and unearthed), it's clear that l6beaver has produced in me a need for and a sense of the social that isn't as impoverished as it is in other contexts. Released from pre-conceived uses and necessities, the "interest" that we've built in common is not "objective," not "above" us-- but rather a subjective power that is always shifting.

It isn't the "variety" that defines this endeavor, not multiplicity, nor is it merely a "release" from utility. Rather there is a real need that has been produced and answered through a precarious regularity, contingent on our abilities and resources. The fragile balance teeters between being just enough to keep us working and not nearly enough to be satisfying.

Discussion at l6beaver often feels unfinished. But my confidence in its continuity has grown. I trust the shared sense of when to pause. I know that the project of discussing our cultural, political and economic conditions is truly unending. It has proven impossible to exhaust or halt the thinking and working through that each event affords.

I believe that the desire for this practice of sharing, of communal interest, is common; the numbers of people who come through our space is proof enough. We have produced a site in which our desire begets more desire. But I wonder at the distance between our grasp and our reach. What are the effects of this practice, for individuals and the common-- both as a model and as a singular alternative?

There is no doubt that the work we've done together has resulted in the reduction of our individual estrangements. We've enjoyed the ground space, the time-space, the thought-space to imagine, but how far have we gotten in the sort of thinking that might help us to begin to build structures and organizations that might liberate larger swathes of folks?

Some of us have shouldered more responsibility than others, some of us have worried more and written less. I myself have often chopped my way through arguments, literally stirring onions while the debate raged on. But it seems clear that the experience of being able to reclaim our needs and abilities is essential to the task of making this kind of communism a possibility for a larger and larger number of people. The question of our relation to our physical space has become more tentative recently. We're not the only ones. With the pressures of the recession/depression, we don't have many boxes to move, but we have lots of chairs. We will need help planning a change. Perhaps it's time to play at a different kind of building?

In a world where everything is reified, abstracted from its site of production and the personal and social aspect of its meaning and value--the ephemeral quality of our time together is almost too precious. If it hadn't been repeated time and time again, in Lower Manhattan and Zagreb, here, there and everywhere, I'd be more despondent than I am. But I am certain we'll meet again. I desire to extend our collaboration and discussion; I still want us to make a film.

Why don't you come to Detroit for the US Social Forum in June? You won't have to give a talk; I promise not to ask you any questions.

With gratitude and affection,

Paige

Providence, December 2009

Veiled Conversation Series, begun 2009

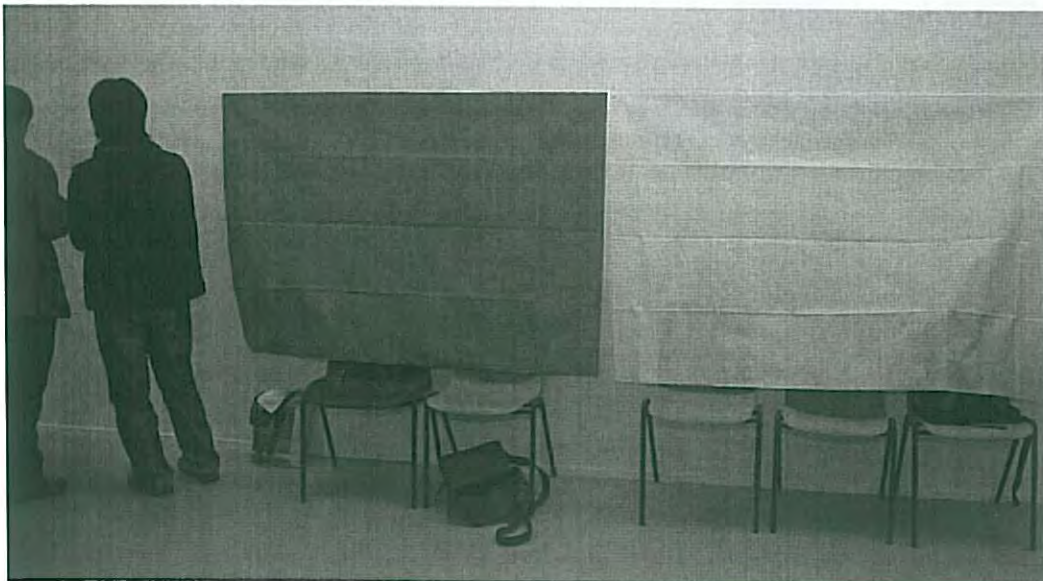
Tablecloths, chairs, and list of suggested topics for conversation.

Duration and other conditions adaptable to context or number of participants

Pedro Lasch (16 Beaver)

As a public respondent to the contributions of Michael Hardt and Gigi Roggero during *The Common and the Forms of the Commune* conference last year I pointed out that both talks ended at the place where artists and activists often like to start: the thinking and rethinking of the commons through its praxis and embodiments. In other words, I was proposing that we direct Hardt's ideas on property and Roggero's notions of labor toward a discussion of the tools and organizational modes of the common. The work I am presenting here is a specific proposal for collective experimentation. The method proposed is that of a standard workshop or conversation disrupted, however, with an unconventional device. The overarching idea is the political theory and practice of veiling. A few years ago I produced a related work for this same journal. Entitled *Media Defacements (Naturalization Series)* it focused on the closely related topics of masking and political agency, as well as technological and journalistic mediation. This time I am proposing the veil as a tool for the generation of the necessary conditions for specific political conversations that may happen anywhere, but must be immediate. We could bridge the two projects with the image of the mask or the 'common visage' worn by the multitude. In a March 7, 2006 review of *V for Vendetta* for the 'Village Voice' movie critic J. Hoberman wrote: "If *The Matrix* betrayed the Wachowskis' acquaintance with Jean Baudrillard, *V for Vendetta* suggests they've been perusing political philosopher Antonio Negri—both the old ultra-left Negri of *Domination and Sabotage* and the new Michael Hardt-collaborating Negri of *Empire and Multitude*." And that takes us to the first topics for veiled conversations opening this contribution.

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Veiled Conversation #9

Suggested Topics:

- a) In your neighborhood or life, what are the relationships between popular culture and the political consciousness of the multitude?**
- b) What are the merits of covert action in the production of the commons?**



Veiled Conversation #15

Suggested Topics:

- a) Talk about the apparent paradox between the individualism of liberal democracies and the premise of anonymity in democratic voting habits.**
- b) What are specific purposes and methods of sensory isolation as used in US prisons and detention centers?**



Veiled Conversation #34

Suggested Topics:

- a) Do you know any relevant social theories taking into account the importance of non-visual perception?
- b) What is the community of the veil? Can it be secular?



It's on us

Gift economy? Should we strive to together be an economy? Certainly we could make a functional one, but that was never the point. Should I measure my time and labor as gifts? Parse them out like rations to my friends and comrades? I take at the same time I give and once given it's not gone but still kicking and always simply what I feel I must do to create a truly inhabitable subjectivity. Maybe it's a time-and-space bank but that word "bank" even has its limits, a parking lot for I.O.U.s. What I ~~take~~ make is not a static thing but necessary to live.



It's up to you

Private security in shoppers' paradise. Blanks with weapons. Closest to my sympathy and furthest from my views. This is the dilemma: how do we create structures antagonistic to capital and the state and yet not completely separated from the present? Who is invited to join the prefigurative moment and who guards private property as the children of the ruling class dance to abolish it? It's a stupid dance to push back and try to link arms at the same time, but better to get tripped up now than keep punching timecards, ballots, air.



It's late again

The kid waits for Amtrak to arrive at an empty station. To say structure is to talk necessarily of scale. To say “movement” = we push ourselves somewhere. He parks his bike and says “transportation” = they will carry us. But the train is late and the ideas even later. His back-to-the-land parents don't want to talk infrastructure. The kid is pissed, “No more small-scale utopianism!” They scold, “Some day you'll understand what it feels like to be beat down and broken and find pleasure in simple things.” “That and the meth lab next door,” says the kid.



It still isn't

Enough with the easy answers and the finding hope buried within the cereal boxes of hopeless things. Entrepreneurialism is about building a brand that may or may not prove profitable in financializing a set of previously disorganized relationships. Self-organization is not for sale, but a membrane which can both produce and resist. Self organization is a (slow) virus—owned by no one and increasingly not optional—entrepreneurship is the real killer: the latest hype in the dressing up of a violent history. It never ends well.

A half-yes and a half-no

These days I've been doing dishes and washing clothes for our neighbors next door when their helper doesn't show up. They don't care much about keeping their underwear too clean. I see how dirty they are – I have to scrub hard to get them clean. And the same goes for the house they live in. Now, you see, our house is more than a hundred years old, yet our floor shines like new. That's how clean we keep our place. But their building is a new type of construction and everything is falling apart from everywhere. They don't repair it, not even from the outside, and let me tell you, they only want to buy more and more, and keep things pretty from the inside. I've learnt enough... what food they eat, where they shop, what they bring home, what kind of a world they live in, and I tell you... we're doing much better over here. Everything's okay with us. I'm fine with the way things are, I've seen enough. I do my work, and I don't seek anything new.

Things haven't changed. They're the same as usual. I too do the same work everyday. It's the same routine.

We are the same you know, just like others. Like copies of each other, but with a difference. Single, singular in nature, together, in this house.

The world is like this – it will talk if you are single, it will talk if you are not single, and it will also talk if you are with others... only you know what's worth enduring and what's worth doing.



Image: Medha Patkar protesting with Narmada Bachao Andolan activists, India and Zhang Huan's performance still 'To raise the water level in a fishpond' China, from series 'Ditto or the same as what has been said' 2009 - present, Jesal Kapadia.

So we meet again, as we have met for years at this same place, same time. We have exactly the same conversation. Who knows where we'll be tomorrow, since there's no contract, no promise; only a practice. Year after year.

Ah, yes, this space. This building might break down and we might have to vacate at some point. Or there will be a new building, a new space, but we don't know yet if that space will be for us.

It's a strange feeling, year after year, coming back to a different order. I've been thinking a lot about the way it is here, or used to be. How we grew up with so many people around us. Three and sometimes even four generations living together in the same household. Did you know that just fifty years ago about twenty-five people used to live here? In this very house that is kept so clean. Can you imagine all the work? But somehow it got done.

What's new? Look at you and look at me. We just never asked too many questions. We thought we could simply create more sharing by sharing.

Is there anything to share, when everything is common? Where does the gift begin?

In the passages. Where one drifts. And since one cannot do the work completely alone, we'll see each other again, drink chai, and shake our heads in a half-yes and a half-no.

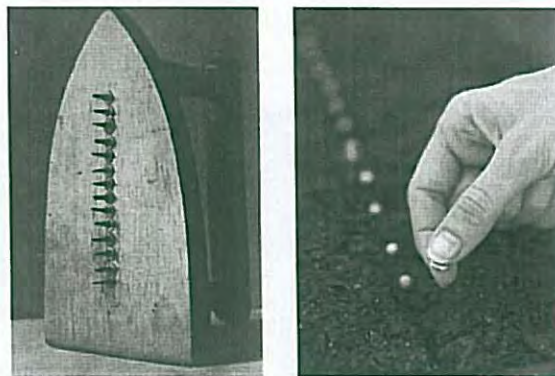


Image: *Man Ray's Gift, Paris and Seed sowing at Vandana Shiva's Navdanya Organic Seed Bank India*, from the series *'Ditto or the same as what has been said'* 2009 - present, Jesal Kapadia.

Considering the repression and corruption in our universities, the growing commercialization of the educational process, and the fact that today's students are alienated, demoralized, and depoliticized, a group of Petersburg university students, teachers, activists, researchers, and concerned citizens has initiated the creation of the Street University (SU).

The goal of the SU is revive the traditions of student self-governance and create an effective network of researchers, activists, and sympathetic citizens who are united by the desire to form an alternative field for the production and distribution of critical knowledge. The name Street University refers to a place that is by definition open, the only place where this kind of counter-knowledge can be invented. In this sense, the SU is the heir both to the experience of the ancients (Socrates, the Cynics, Aristotle) and to the experiments of modern times (the Situationists, the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, Joseph Beuys, the perestroika-era Leningrad Free University). In addition, the SU has set itself the goal of putting the public back into public space by conducting classes on the streets of our city and by furthering ties between the academic community and various social movements and initiatives.

The SU is a space for discussing current questions of social reality. Preference is given to such relevant themes as student movements; the international and Russian experience of alternative educational practices and counter-institutions; democratic artistic and research associations; civic resistance; the aesthetics and theory of avant-garde forms of creativity; and grassroots activism.

The SU presupposes that forms of self-expression are freely chosen. An SU class might take the form of an academic seminar or an artistic or social action (a lecture or paper followed by a discussion; an open discussion on a stated theme; a sociological survey; a performance; a collective manifestation; a field trip; a meeting with activists from other communities or social movements).

The SU sets itself two interrelated goals: the autonomy of the universities and the self-governance of students within the existing institutional structures, and the creation of an alternative network of counter-institutional practices. The SU opposes the practice of community, creative collaboration, and nonconformism to the individualistic values of careerism, professional success, and integration into the existing order. The SU is a space where self-education, daily practice, art and activism interact.

The SU is an open, continuously expanding network of Petersburg students, university teachers, researchers, activists, and concerned citizens. It is constructed on the principles of openness, self-organization, and self-governance, and it is not bound to any organization or institution. The SU includes a Coordinating Council (CC) whose main function is to organize and publicize the work of the SU.

The SU meets on Sundays at two o'clock on Solyanoi Pereulok, unless other arrangements are made. The composition of each subsequent meeting is determined through the exercise of direct democracy. Each person present at the meeting has the right to suggest the form and theme of a forthcoming meeting, talk or action, and s/he can cast one vote for or against other such proposals. This procedure is meant to encourage active participation in the work of the SU. The CC drafts the final program for the following meeting, posting this information on the university's website and distributing it to the university's mailing list no later than mid-week.

On February 8, 2008, the European University in Saint Petersburg (a graduate school) was closed for alleged violations of fire safety rules. Many university insiders and other observers, however, believed that more powerful political figures were behind this strange move. Aside from seeing the closure as part of a more general attack on "agents of western influence," they pointed to fact that the university had come under pressure for a European Union-funded elections monitoring research program that was based at the university (whose leadership had earlier decided to shut it down). Whatever the case, the university's professors, students, alumni, friends, and allies mounted a multi-pronged campaign to reopen the university. For their part, EU students organized a series of theatricalized public actions, including the laying of a memorial firehose at a monument to Mikhail Lomonosov, father of modern Russian scholarship, and a folk burlesque play. With their university still closed, their activism then took a natural turn: they decided to hold classes in the street.

The first Street University took place on Sunday, March 9, 2008, on Solyanoi Pereulok, a pedestrian street in central Petersburg. A crowd of nearly seventy listened to talks on student self-consciousness, student unions in the US, pre-Revolutionary student solidarity, Situationism and 1968, and how to dress when your university is closed and you find yourself out on the cold streets. The event brought together students, grad students and teachers from various Petersburg universities, community activists, artists, journalists, and just plain concerned citizens.

The second Street University took place on March 16. The SU's newly minted auditors listened to talks on the perception of students in Russian society, activism as amorality, and Badiou's concept of the event.

On March 21, the European University was suddenly reopened. This happy ending to the conflict didn't signal the end of the SU, however. Its organizers, lecturers, and auditors—a group that from the beginning included students, researchers, and activist not formally connected to the EU—decided that it should continue as an autonomous initiative. Reorganization in "peacetime" proved difficult. The SU's various factions drafted proposals for a declaration (including the one printed in this newspaper) and negotiated in person and via e-mail. This process ended with an enervating but revealing "constituent assembly," at the Petersburg offices of the Memorial Society, in early April.

The SU reopened its non-existent doors on April 13. Since then, it has held ten sessions, which have dealt with such issues as runaway urban development, activist interaction with the police,

art and democracy, and censorship. On May 11, the SU carried out its first street action, "Religion Is Stomatology," in support of the Russian State University for the Humanities. On June 1, the SU held its first evening session.

The SU continues its journey. The tuition is free. The term of study is unlimited.

Pavel Arseniev: As you remember, when we were drafting the Street University (SU) Declaration we emphasized two broad goals: the creation of a self-governance network within existing institutions of higher learning and the development of an alternative space for the production and distribution of critical knowledge, which would collaborate in one way or another with this network. To put it crudely, the SU sets itself the task of bringing up issues that are taboo in the traditional academic milieu, thus subjecting university programs themselves to revision. But the SU began to evolve in its own arbitrary direction, which didn't quite coincide with its declared aims. On the one hand, there were a series of successful attempts at the production of counter-institutional knowledge—our weekly Sunday classes and actions; on the other, we haven't managed to create a network of student councils. Certain SU participants invited new people, but even such an unusual event as a street debate didn't always have a surefire impact on students. This is where we run up against the very circumstance that compelled us to create the SU, which is described in our declaration: the depoliticization and demoralization of students. Given this fact how we can talk about self-governance cells within the universities themselves?

My thesis, however, is that instead of or even despite the task of creating a network of student unions (work that is as necessary as it is routine) the SU took on a completely unexpected form exemplified by direct actions. They haven't been numerous enough to allow us to speak of a "series," but the perspectives they revealed were interesting.

Alexander Skidan: The first wave of theatrical protest actions [in defense of the closed European University], the Declaration, and the conversations about the SU gave me the sense that the students themselves understood the necessity of creating self-governing cells, bodies for self-governance. I thought that the European University's struggle with the fire inspectors [and the more powerful authorities who backed them] would serve to detonate the politicization of the students in this direction, which I see as the strategically most important one. But the first constituent assembly proved that I had been mistaken: there was not only no unity among the students participating in the SU, but even a relative uniformity of motives and aspirations was missing. This is sad because the moment of solidarity—when students from other, "fortunate" universities supported EU students—seemed to me to be the long-awaited start of an awakening.

Artemy Magun: I would also say that a broad-based mobilization didn't taken place. But among the participants are people who, while they're of course students, are simultaneously and perhaps primarily members of such social fields as the Petersburg intelligentsia, the artistic bohemia, and so on. Thus, what happened was rather a mobilization of these circles insofar as we don't have a broad grassroots movement.

PA: I would insist on the fact that, however narrow the SU's mobilization was, it was a student mobilization. And we didn't know the other students before the SU arose.

AM: So let's define this social group. What happened was a mobilization of a narrow circle of active young people, some of whom are inclined to activism of an artistic nature, some of whom are marginal characters.

PA: In fact I noticed something else. The kids who weren't invited but who found out about the SU themselves and have been active participants are as a rule first-year students from the provinces. These students, who came here to study, have a sense that their own existence is flexible, whereas the local upperclassmen are integrated into the consensus—most often, this is the commercial consensus—and as a rule they're not faced by questions of identity. They're faced by questions of entertainment, the latest new gadget, etc. Their need for "finding something new"—which is still impossible to totally stifle in twentysomethings—is limited to a strictly consumerist framework and kitschy leisure time practices.

AS: To summarize, we could say that for most participants the SU was a space of conviviality, for realizing their need to communicate, rather than an instrument for effecting certain changes within their own universities. This posture unites both European University students, who all gradually vanished, and the young people who sprang up later. The heterodoxy of the experience of struggle vis-à-vis their everyday lives as students was definitely attractive in a formal sense—meeting and giving talks on the street, this festival of disobedience—whereas the content undergirding this form, which we attempted to crystallize, proved to be unacceptable for many. And this, I'm afraid, threatens to become the rule. The element of superficial attractiveness, which is neither good nor bad in itself, has to be instrumentalized somehow. It has to be directed toward the solution of concrete problems.

PA: Yes, I should also remind you that when prudent liberal voices questioned why we had to hold our lovely meetings on the street (it's always more comfy inside, you can drink tea and nibble crackers; and the dean doesn't get the jitters) and we were accused of "street formalism," that we didn't sufficiently appreciate the "content" of the meetings (conversation and talks), I replied that we shouldn't confuse the content with the form, but make it the function of the SU to create autonomous cells for self-governance.

AM: But the creation of student unions is a large-scale social undertaking, and I'm not sure that the SU is up to it. To make this happen we would need to bind the SU more closely to the actual educational process in the universities. It's curious that what motivated the withdrawal of many students was, it would seem, the leftist-activist ideological tendency they detected (whether rightly or not) in many of the SU's organizers and auditors. That means that for many active and bold people issues like unionization, which would seem to be purely practical, are bound up with a certain ideological content. After all, they're taught that trade unions are a brake on economic development or, at best, that they're a form of tedious bureaucratic collectivism.

PA: I have a hypothesis that the SU's unexpectedly emergent activist function might serve to catalyze student activism by demonstrating the very possibility of deciding to act or, at very least, reacting to concrete problems, be they stipends, expulsions, evictions, etc. I imagine that in the future the interests of students wouldn't be limited to these problems, that sooner or later the question of defining the curriculum would arise. This motif, which emerged in the work of the OD Group [at the Moscow State University sociology department]—defining the contours of the educational process and actively involving students in research from the first year on—should be adopted by the SU. Many of my friends have a clear sense that they're being taught the wrong things or, in any case, they're not learning what they'd like to learn or what the name of their university promised. Even art schools with the most artsy-sounding department names teach office management.

AM: Is this a realistic agenda under the current conditions of macromanagement? Isn't it rather a daydream and a symptom of nostalgia—for 1968, of course—that has simultaneously generated a more than original practice for negotiating the city, which is invaluable from the viewpoint of cultural history? Even given the fact that the SU's themes and actions are constructed around a leftist nucleus, and this policy is effected in a quite decisive way. So decisive, in fact, that many are scared away from such a wonderful undertaking as debates between young people on the street.

AS: It's not even a matter of demonic liberalism, but of a monstrous allergy to any thematization of protest, solidarity actions, social change, not to mention neo-Marxism. Moreover, it was news to me that it wasn't the seventies generation of civil rights activists—crudely speaking, the Soviet intelligentsia—that suffers from this allergic reaction, but the younger generation. People's minds are dominated by this inertial mistrust of everything connected with the Soviet experience of collectivity, with the ideologization of groups and movements. If we take a more or less objective view of things, we'll notice that all the talks and actions that happened at the SU were so mild that the Situationists would simply have laughed at us, but our liberals see us as ultra-leftist radicals. This is a structural problem: 95% of our educated class consists of folks who mentally reject any leftist thematization or rhetoric.

PA: But does this mean that, given these structural conditions, we should adopt a more moderate stance in order to give the educated majority the chance to somehow relate to us? Or, rather, should we take our bearings from those figures of history and speech before whom we wouldn't be ashamed, as you put it? I see the SU more as a subject that acts not only in the interests of the studentry, but more generally responds to all the most relevant social and local problems.

AS: Here I also see a two-edged sword, the danger of another extreme. Protest energy doesn't return to the universities in order to create independent student councils, but is instead directed into the streets for the sake of topical political happenings. Which is terrific in itself, but it fundamentally re-orientates the SU away from problematizing institutionalized academic space and towards rapid-fire actions, which in the long term don't appear as promising and large-scale as a really effective independent student union. We collide head on with the impossibility of creating the latter and that is why we're sent spinning toward the former option. One doesn't exclude the other, as it were, but strategically speaking it is important to slowly (albeit not so flashily) seek solidarity in academic space, with the end in mind of shaking it up and reinventing it, of educating a generation of students who would begin to change something themselves.

PA: Perhaps, then, it's worth giving hard thought to creating several subfunctions for the SU, which in any case are emerging: activism, education, and unionization.

AS: This really is long-term work of an educational nature: introducing into the student milieu the texts, practices, and disciplines that tell us about institutional critique, about alternative traditions of knowledge production, about methods of resistance. On the other hand, this education has to be coupled with the understanding that the academic milieu is hegemonized by a particular ideology that produces a deficit of alternative knowledge. It is within this composition that something will crystallize that comes from the students themselves and isn't limited to pinpoint gestures of protest.

PA: It seems to me, however, that, given the current state of demobilization, direct actions can create a field of attraction, a field that demonstrates the very possibility of collectivity and protest. This energy can then be converted into cells of self-governance and self-education, although right now this sounds completely utopian.

AS: In the long range, however, a self-governance network will also be more effective by virtue of its relative invulnerability. Whereas with direct actions there is the danger that one or two people will be arrested, everyone will get scared, and the whole thing will come to an end, a networked educational-activist structure, if it is generated, can survive a larger number of superficial blows. Speaking hypothetically, if someone leaves Petersburg, graduates, gets expelled or loses interest (anything could happen), the structure still exists all the same. That is, the battalion shouldn't notice the loss of one fighter.

Therefore, it might make sense right now to emphasize the more conservative, "quiet" form of seminars since they are better able to absorb the shocks during the current period of reaction. These seminars would give students the chance to meet and engage single-mindedly in self-education, all the while leading them to the realization that another kind of knowledge is possible, consolidation is possible, other forms of impacting the educational process are possible. We need to engage in a kind of subversive enlightenment, while holding fast to the strategic perspective of collective action, because the contradictions will in any case only become more intense with time.

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Nora Sternfeld
**Unglamorous
Tasks: What
Can Education
Learn from its
Political
Traditions?**

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In the inaugural issue of *e-flux journal*, Irit Rogoff, under the deliberately ironic title “Turning,” calls attention to the recent “educational turn in curating,” thereby marking important shifts in the understanding of both practices: curating is no longer understood as the mere mounting of exhibitions; education is no longer understood as the transmission of existing values and acquisitions.¹ Thus we are dealing with a turn in two arenas, the curatorial and the educational.

By saying this I want to emphasize that the important move in Rogoff’s text does not consist in simply connecting the two, curating and educating – which would be a rather traditional enterprise, as the modern museum since the French Revolution has always seen itself as an educational institution. Traditionally, in addition to collecting, preserving, and researching, the tasks of representing and mediating were understood precisely as educational tasks of the museum. Moreover, the educational aspect of the museum – we owe these ideas to the reflexive turn of the New Museology – has first and foremost been a technique of power, aimed at absorbing and internalizing bourgeois values.² But I understand Rogoff’s point to be a different one. For her, education is not about handing down existing national and bourgeois values, as Tony Bennett would have it, nor about the mere reproduction of knowledge, but about exploring the possibilities of an alternative production of knowledge that resists, supplements, thwarts, undercuts, or challenges traditional forms of knowledge.

In this text I want to examine the traditional tasks of education as well as the possibility of thinking about the educational as something that overcomes the function of *reproducing* knowledge and becomes something else – something unpredictable and open to the possibility of a knowledge production that, in tones strident or subtle, would work to challenge the apparatus of value-coding. Our challenge is to imagine a form of education that would demand learners take a political stand, but without anticipating what that stand should be and thus effecting closure (in other words, always leaving an open space for other possibilities). Such an undertaking may provide, as we will see in this brief argument, further insight into our educational and curatorial practices, which are often quite tedious and not always glamorous.

**1. THE DIALECTIC OF TAKING SIDES –
RETHINKING THE TRADITIONS OF
POLITICAL EDUCATION**

Politicization

In order to arrive at such a deconstructive

concept of education I would like to begin with the histories of its politicization within twentieth-century modernity. In fact, the movement to politicize pedagogy started in the 1930s, when artists of the Left started to appropriate educational techniques and turn them towards progressive tasks within their practice. Follow me to a theater in the Berlin of the Weimar Republic and a scene of Bertolt Brecht's play *The Mother*. Onstage is a teacher in the middle of his own bourgeois living room, standing before a blackboard.³ A group of workers sits around a table, challenging the teacher in a debate about learning:

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TEACHER (*before a blackboard*): All right, you want to learn to read. I cannot understand why you need it, in your situation; you are also rather old. But I will try, just as a favor for Mrs. Vlassova. Have you all something to write with? All right then, I will now write three easy words here: "Branch, nest, fish." I repeat: "Branch, nest, fish." (*He writes.*)

THE MOTHER (*who sits at the table with three others*): Must it really be "Branch, nest, fish"? Because we are old people we

have to learn the words we need quickly!

TEACHER (*smiles*): I beg your pardon; but the reason you may have for learning to read is a matter of total indifference.

THE MOTHER: Why should it be? Tell me, for instance, how do you write the word "Worker"? That will be of interest to our Pavel Sostakovich.

SOSTAKOVICH: Who needs to know how to write "Branch"?

THE MOTHER: He is a metal worker.

TEACHER: But you will need the letters in the word.

WORKER: But the letters in the words "Class Struggle" are needed too!

TEACHER: Possibly; but we must begin with the simplest things and not at once with the hardest! "Branch" is simple.

SOSTAKOVICH: "Class Struggle" is much more simple.⁴



The Mother, Bertolt Brecht after Maxim Gorki, Scene 6, Berliner Ensemble im Deutschen Theater, Berlin 1951. Photo: Abraham Pisarek.

At the end of the scene the blackboard shows the words: "WORKERS. CLASS STRUGGLE. EXPLOITATION." In this way, the learning workers in Brecht's play have taught the teacher class struggle, while he has taught them to read.

The Mother had its premiere on January 15, 1932 – the thirteenth anniversary of the death of Rosa Luxemburg – in the Komödienhaus am Schiffbauerdamm in Berlin. The scene addresses an elementary change in the understanding of education via its politicization. This change can be said to consist of the following four points:

Firstly, the understanding of learning as an end in itself is profoundly questioned. Brecht goes so far as to stage a situation in which the workers are completely hostile towards the rhetoric of the apparently self-serving form of education proclaimed by the teacher. They ask why should it be irrelevant, if education speaks about fish and nests or about class struggle? And even further: if the subject is irrelevant, then why not actually speak about class struggle? These questions show the limits of the disinterestedness that would characterize the logic of pedagogic examples. The workers in Brecht's play accordingly do not fall into the trap of the rhetoric of "disinterestedness" employed to exempt education from the value structure and interests of the bourgeoisie. They insist on an *interested* education – an education that addresses them as subjects.

Secondly, the scene of Brecht's described above stages a situation of learning that Jacques Rancière would describe as the "method of *stultification*." The teacher thinks that he knows exactly which examples are easy enough for a step-by-step acquisition of knowledge. In his book *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Rancière shows that common teaching methods reproduce an authoritarian distance between teachers and students that consists not only in the difference of knowledge but in the teacher's power to define distance.⁵ He can lengthen or shorten this distance by introducing structures of power into the order of *explanation*. This tactic produces students whose knowledge always remains inferior to the teacher's, and reproduces the relations of superiority and inferiority that Rancière calls "the method of *stultification*." In his book – as an example of how this logic can be undermined – he presents the historical case of Joseph Jacotot, a French teacher in the early nineteenth century, exiled to Belgium during the period of Restoration in France, who developed an unconventional method of teaching. When, as a Professor in Leuven, he had to teach French without being able to speak Dutch, he decided to use his own ignorance as a teaching method.

Without any explanation, he made his students read a text along with its translation, setting up the two languages in a relationship to one another that was not directly explicatory, and removing himself from the center of the equation as the one who transmits knowledge. To his surprise, this worked very well. Rancière is interested in this idea of an emancipatory education based not on the teacher's knowledge, but on his deliberate ignorance and on the establishment of some notion of equality at the center of the educational process.

The workers in Brecht's scene are breaking the teacher's power to define; they are refusing the one-way logic of the educational relation. But in contrast to Rancière's ignorant schoolmaster, in Brecht's play the relation of the method of *stultification* is not subverted by a brave teacher, but thwarted by the workers themselves, who start to pool their learning. They know better than the teacher which steps are necessary for literacy.

Thirdly, Brecht inverts the relation of activity and passivity. The students are at least as actively involved as the teacher in defining the now mutual process of learning – what takes place is learning by teaching and teaching by learning. Brecht worked in the early 1930s in the context of his epic theater and his "learning plays" on techniques for inverting the classical assignments of activity and passivity, in both pedagogical and dramatic questions. He worked out some "epic" strategies in order to challenge theater in its educational capacity.

Fourthly, the aforementioned site of debate between the teacher and the students over teaching methods illustrates the conflict between depoliticized and politicized methods of education. The social dimension and power relations hidden in the seemingly disinterested space of bourgeois education come to light – conflict and dissent become the engine of learning. The scene ends with the famous song "Praise of Learning," sung on stage by the revolutionary workers:

Study from bottom up,
for you who will take the leadership,
it is not too late!
Study the ABC; it is not enough.
but study it! Do not become discouraged,
begin! You must know everything!
You must prepare to take command, now!

Study, man in exile!
Study, man in the prison!
Study, wife in your kitchen!
Study, old-age pensioner!
You must prepare to take command now!
Locate yourself a school, homeless folk!

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Go search some knowledge, you who
freeze!
You who starve, reach for a book:
it will be a weapon.
You must prepare to take command now.
Don't be afraid to question, comrades!

Never believe on faith.
see for yourself!
What you yourself don't learn
you don't know.
Question the reckoning
you yourself must pay it
Set down your finger on each small item.
asking:
where do you get this?
You must prepare to take command now!⁶

In the Germany of the Weimar Republic both the intersection of education and society and efforts to overcome the distinction between an active production of knowledge and its passive reception were central to debates about the possibilities for a critical, revolutionary pedagogy. In 1929, the Marxist theorist and communist politician Edwin Hoernle published *Basic Questions about Proletarian Education*, a handbook for a revolutionary pedagogy.⁷ The book proclaims the unity of politics, economy, and education, and offers a way of understanding education as an important step towards the transformation of society according to another, more just model. Hoernle proclaims that education remains a technique of power and

part of the operations of hegemony as long as the marginalized are not fighting against it and organize, as part of an emergent new society, a new form of education. Walter Benjamin contributed a preface to the book, "A Communist Pedagogy," in which he writes:

Education is a function of class struggle, but it is not only this. In terms of the communist creed, it represents the throughgoing exploitation of the social environment in the service of revolutionary goals. Since this environment is a matter not just of struggle but also of work, education is also a revolutionary education for work. Offering up a program for this, the book is at its best. ... Only if man experiences changes of milieu in all their variety, and can mobilize his energies in the service of the working class again and again and in every new context, will he be capable of that universal readiness for action which the Communist program opposes to what Lenin called "the most repulsive feature of the old bourgeois society": its separation of theory and practice.⁸

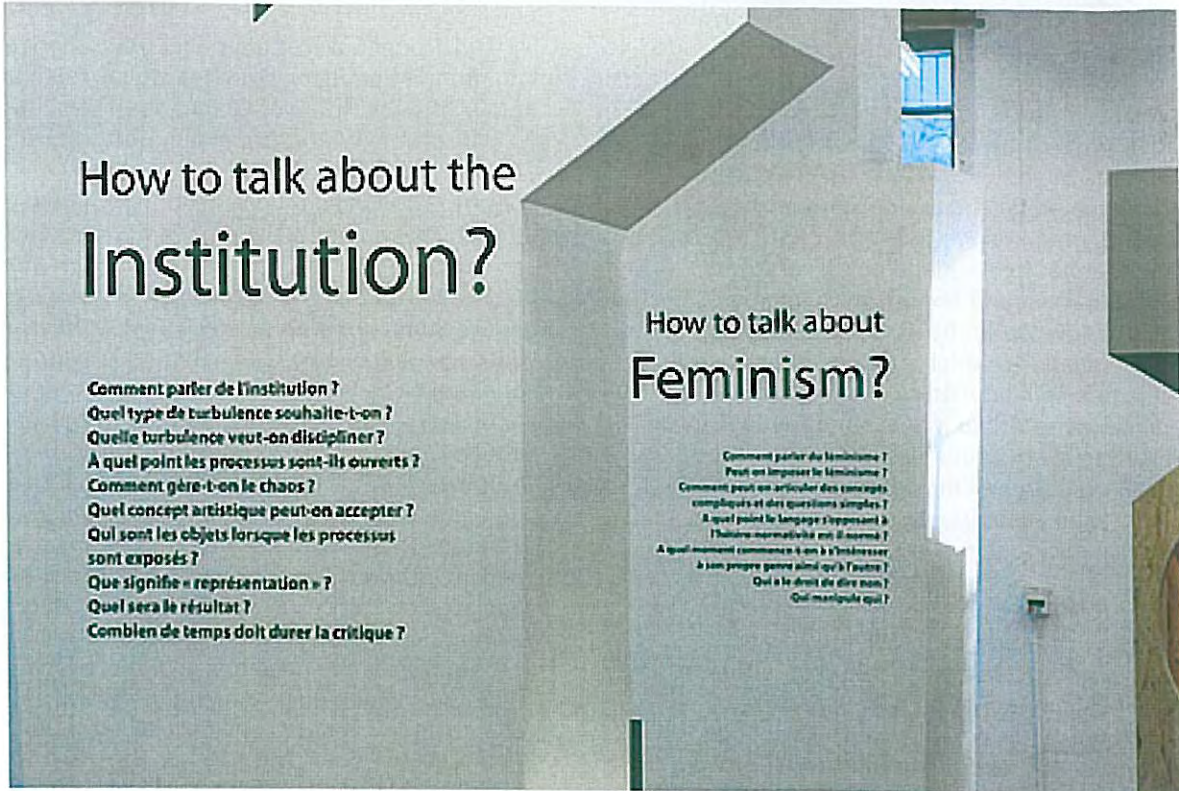
The Complexity of Taking a Stand

Over the past twenty years critical pedagogy theorists including Peter McLaren, Henry A. Giroux, Ira Shor, and bell hooks have frequently referred to these debates of the early 1930s –

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photo: trafo.K.



trafo.K & Gabu Heindl, "Wild Translation." photo: trafo.K.



especially to Brecht and to Antonio Gramsci – and actualized the historical model for a current politicization of education for contemporary neoliberal, postcolonial, and globalized migration societies. Another thinker on education who has been very important for their approach has been the Brazilian teacher, liberation theologian and education theorist Paulo Freire.

As a teacher fighting against illiteracy in Brazil, as a Marxist and liberation theologian, Paulo Freire developed the idea of a “pedagogy of the oppressed,” in which a struggle for justice and equality within education is of central importance. He refers to a fundamental decision with regard to every educational project, of the need to take a stand, to introduce a set of beliefs and, rather than assuming their disinterested neutrality, consciously take them through the process of education. He locates this process as “tactically inside and strategically outside” the system.⁹ So, according to Freire, there is no neutral education, it is always political, either in the sense of a consolidation of the existing circumstances or with respect to their change. Peter Mayo, writing about Gramsci and Freire, sums up this idea in form of a simple question: “On which side are we on, when we educate and teach, when we act?” – a question that always needs to be asked, but not necessarily answered.¹⁰

This apparently self-evident question of “taking sides,” declaring which side we are on, certainly raises a number of further questions: How do we know that we are on the side of the oppressed? Are we always? Do we always want to be? Who are we when we are in the process of taking sides? Who is nevertheless excluded in this process? And the most classic question: How can we radically change the circumstances from the inside?

Thus, the very process of taking a stand and opting for one side grows more complicated. But in order to become complicated, the decision has to be taken in the first place. Only then do the contradictions that beset such a step (which to some extent already haunted Freire) become fully evident and thus active and productive. Because even when we have no foresight of what an education could be on a fundamental level and in the very middle of “the system,” it is this very contradiction that could effect an opening to agency, a possible space for action. If we don’t see power relations as unidimensional blocks, but as battlefields, then the place for learning and teaching can become an “embattled terrain.” Education could then become a practice in which the sayable, thinkable, and doable could be negotiated, and, to quote Peter Mayo, “the dominant forms of thinking and acting can be

challenged in the wide and amorphous areas of civil society.”¹¹

Throughout this historical trajectory, from communist pedagogy, the theatrical “teaching play,” the liberation of youth and their political organization (Walter Benjamin, Bertolt Brecht, and Antonio Gramsci), by way of self-organization in schools and liberation pedagogy (Paulo Freire, but also Célestin Freinet), to critical, radical, and antiracist education (Henry A. Giroux, Ira Shor, and bell hooks), critical educational approaches have been concerned with working in a collective perspective to challenge the hegemonic canon. In this process, knowledge has been considered a weapon and education a form of organization and self-empowerment. Currently, these perspectives are being reread and subject to much criticism. Whereas Paulo Freire could still assume it was possible to work tactically within the institution and strategically outside it (with the goal of eliminating it), today, within globalized neoliberalism, we have to ask ourselves what that could mean under conditions in which we can no longer assume any form of “outside.”

A Decided “Perhaps”

Some of the first principles of emancipatory educational thought, including its fundamental belief in the notion of “autonomous subjects” and “emancipation from immaturity,” have been challenged by poststructuralist theory, according to which such concepts are as empty as the idea of being fully on the “good side” in the context of a debate or a struggle. Against this background, current educational theorists are trying to integrate poststructuralist concepts such as “event” and “experience” into the processes of education. With this, the “impossible” becomes as important and as active a category as the “possible,” providing their discourse with a reflective edge lifting it beyond the pragmatic and functionalist implementation of an idea or a program. And there is always something unforeseeable in education, which cannot be planned: perhaps this is the reason why Sigmund Freud called education (together with politics and psychoanalysis) “an impossible task.” It becomes especially impossible where education is poised to engage with social change, to consciously effect transformation in the direction of social change. Such a perspective encourages acceptance of a massive loss of control and of the risk of failure. For Jacques Derrida, the impossible is the condition of possibility of the possible. In the context of education this could suggest that there is a dimension of agency in its very uncontrollability. Because when there is only space for the necessary, change is impossible. Thus Derrida

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integrates the “perhaps” in his philosophical discourse:

I will not say that this thought of the impossible possible, this other thinking of the possible is a thinking of necessity but rather, as I have also tried to demonstrate elsewhere, a thinking of the “perhaps” that Nietzsche speaks of and that philosophy has always tried to subjugate. There is no future and no relation to the coming of the event without experience of the “perhaps.”¹²

The necessity of a taking a stance politically and the attendant impossibility of knowing whether we are intellectually on the right side has a way of producing a mode of impossibility that challenges education with a qualifying “perhaps,” a temporal suspension that we have to assume, not as something arbitrary but as a constitutive component of the very act of making a decision.

What consequences might such a concept as the “decided perhaps” hold for education? Derrida himself puts it this way: “For if this impossible that I’m talking about were to arrive perhaps one day, I leave you to imagine the consequences. Take your time but be quick about it because you do not know what awaits you.”¹³

Who is Turning?

Having gained a limited sense of the historicity of our question, let us now move into the present and turn towards current developments in the curatorial field. Still, the question remains the same: how can one conceive educational processes that take a position and address questions of agency while neither knowing nor wanting to pretend to know what is right and what the consequences of one’s actions may be? Within the critical segment of the educational world, this question led to the articulation of many other questions such as: What is the critical potential and what are the complications and traps of educational practices that remain within existing power relationships? How can one negotiate from “inside” institutions with respect to changing them or changing one’s own position or that of society? And what role can failure, an inevitable component, play in this?

Questions such as these have been raised in recent years from the perspective of a critical educational practice by numerous self-organized groups, as well as by teachers and mediators at various meetings, schools, universities, and exhibition institutions. Not infrequently, they took positions against the hegemonic “truths” of the field in question, organized themselves as best they could, and were sometimes more

combative, more experimental, more reformist – and in almost all cases, quite marginalized.

In the thematic outline for a conference entitled “Cultures of the Curatorial,” recently held in Leipzig, Beatrice von Bismarck describes “the curatorial” as “a cultural practice which goes decisively beyond the making of exhibitions,” which has “a genuine method of generating, mediating, and reflecting experience and knowledge.”¹⁴ This shift from organizing exhibitions at the level of visible staging to the production of knowledge connects two areas that have traditionally been closely related in the history of the museum, but are nevertheless rather far apart in terms of their symbolic capital and attention to discourse: the curatorial and the educational.

Thus “the curatorial” relies to a certain extent on the logic of mere representation and gets involved in processes that it produces itself: so it is no longer about exhibitions as sites for setting up valuable objects and representing objective values, but rather as spaces for curatorial action in which unusual encounters and discourses become possible, in which the unplannable seems more important than, say, precise plans for exhibition and display.

How did it come to this? From the 1990s onward, there was a “reflexive turn” in exhibition theory, in which all the conditions of exhibiting and representing and the associated types of institutional logics have come under scrutiny. Following these more or less thorough self-critiques and analyses of the conditions of production, in recent years an advanced segment of the field has increasingly been raising the question of curatorial agency. Even as they presumed there to be no external standpoint for criticism, they nevertheless asked the question, “What is to be done?” The question underwent a variety of deconstructive turns, some involving transitions from curatorial work to education.

Looking at these shifts from the perspective of education, the point of intersection with the curatorial can be described somewhat differently: here, the encounter with a discourse from the advanced segment of the theory-heavy field of the art world is at once productive and surprising, capable of empowering educational discourse or throwing it off guard.

Thus, if we examine the conditions of the overlap with the educational that suddenly emerged in curatorial discourse, it becomes clear that the “educational turn in curating” functions as a turn exclusively for curators. It instrumentalizes “education” as a series of protocols, bypassing its complex internal struggles with notions of possibility and transformation.

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Much of what has been taking place for a long time beyond an intellectual public for art – in the barely visible shadows of what comes to our attention (and in which education is taken to be a purely specialized arena) – now certainly needs to be discussed and processed in differentiated ways. Suddenly, these areas seem to be of interest to the field as a whole – a discourse that has been marginalized for years is now associated with the themes of conferences and publications, with artistic, political, activist, and theoretical approaches, drawing international attention. However, questions remain: Who ultimately profits from this discussion? And does the largely feminized segment of mediators and educators, as well as the knowledge from schools, exhibition institutions, youth groups, and so on, really belong to it? And are these elements in turn provided with symbolic capital?

Let's consider the unequal distribution of symbolic capital among curators and mediators in the art world. It can be described using a classical set of analyses from feminism: the powerful social differentiation between production and reproduction – in this case of knowledge. Thus the point here, once again, is to connect the question “Who is speaking?” with that of authorized authorship – “Who has the power to define?” – and to ask how the powerful distinction between the production and reproduction of knowledge can be radically broken down.

Now it appears that the concept of “the curatorial” may be leaving these problems far behind, since, after all, it understands education as simply part of the curatorial production of knowledge. On the one hand, this connection represents an achievement, to the extent that the binary logics of representation and reception (between showing and viewing) and of production and reproduction of knowledge (between curating and mediating what is on view) are overcome. Nevertheless, it seems important to consider – in addition to the question of whom it benefits – what potential omissions can perhaps result from such a conflation of the educational and the curatorial. With the help of a few concepts, I would like to shed light on a rehabilitation of the various logics education itself employs – perhaps, in part, to make the contribution of the educational productive for the curatorial as well.

2. THE UNGLAMOROUS IN EDUCATION

In 1989, the volume *Remaking History* was published as part of the Dia Art Foundation's series “Discussions in Contemporary Culture.” It discussed the question of how to address the canon in the field of art and exhibitions. In her

now famous essay “Who Claims Alterity?” Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak refers back to the attribution of the “other speaker” and the “native informant” and rejects the Western need for another representation of the Other. She particularly warns against narrating the refusal of rights in a way that covers up counter-narratives and counter-representations. She mistrusts the power of institutions of representation and instead proposes working on an unglamorous pedagogy of the seminar room:

In a sense our task is to make people ready to listen, and that is not determined by argument. Indirect and maddeningly slow, forever running the risk of demagoguery and coercion mingled with the credulous vanity and class interest of teacher and student, it is still only institutionalized education in the human sciences that is a long-term and collective method for making people want to listen. As far as I can see, remaking (the discipline of) history has its only chance on this unglamorous and often tedious register. Therefore I propose the persistent establishment and re-establishment, the repeated consolidating in undoing, of a strategy of education and classroom pedagogy. . . . Such a strategy must speak from within the emancipatory master narratives even while taking a distance from them.¹⁵

Spivak consciously abandons both the field of representation and rapid changes in the speaker's position to instead make her way over the slow terrain of educational processes, where one should work on what can be heard, on changing what can be said, seen, and done. This seems to me to be an opportunity to address the canon without immediately closing the resulting openings, precisely because it is neither heroic nor glamorous.

Starting from Spivak's discussions, I would like to address here the educational aspects that are part of the experiences and practices of mediation work. I will do so using examples from the actual practice of trafo.K, an office for cultural mediation and education in Vienna, where Renate Höllwart, Elke Smodics, and I have for the past ten years worked on collaborative projects at the intersection between education and the production of knowledge.¹⁶

It is the “unglamorous,” which I position as a counter to the trend towards the fashionable and representative in the curatorial, that the following approaches share.

The Tedious

Schooling and education take place daily.

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Usually, they are not so interesting. In our projects, we repeatedly ask the question "Is that so?" in an effort to trigger a process of unlearning the things we take for granted, as well as those that our audience does. In the process, we create contexts and ask questions of ourselves, of the institutions in which and with which we work, and of society. Sometimes these questions do not seem very rebellious. Sometimes they provoke our audience, sometimes the institutions. They are not very spectacular, they do not always lead to images that can be shown, and often they are not sexy and need time to develop. We cannot even be sure of whether they really have a lasting effect. And yet it is precisely this tedious aspect of the educational that seems to reach the place of everyday life, where battles over understanding and hegemony take place just as much as they do in the spectacular.

The Disagreeable

In educational projects that cross social fields, for example, we respond to circumstances and create spaces in which many things that we would rather not hear about are discussed. Far from creating spaces for disagreement, in Jacques Rancière's sense (as politics of dissent that are challenging the logics of power), we intend them primarily as spaces of non-unity, of the heterogeneity of views, positions, and approaches. It is a place where forms of taste, opinions, and worldviews that transgress an individual's habitual boundaries can encounter one another. Here people often say things that seem totally impossible to us. For example, we encounter racism, anti-Semitism, and sexism that are not legitimized by the attitudes of polite bourgeois society and that seem to scare us far more than long-standing racist, sexist, and anti-Semitic structures, which have become part of our habitual way of seeing ourselves. How can we deal with this? How can one reveal the structures of racism, heteronormativity, and social distinction within which these things can be said and, conversely, within which they seem unacceptable? We try to create a space in which it is possible to come to terms with these things together. There are several traps and types of failure we encounter. I will mention only two in the form of a paradox:

1. We sometimes use our bourgeois, authoritative right to speak from a position of power in order to prevent this sort of thing from legitimately becoming present in the room.

2. We sometimes allow something we deplore to stand in the room in order to prevent it from undermining the discussion we have managed to achieve, thereby performing a paradox inherent within educational practice.



photo: trafo.K.

This can be illustrated by the example of a wall of posters we developed with apprentices in a public space in front of the exhibition "Gastarbajteri" (Immigrant Labor) at the Wien Museum in 2004. Our discourse concerns the questions of the apprentices. Creating a common space for the un-learning of powerful foregone conclusions sometimes worked well, and sometimes not so well – we realized that the apprentices often did not agree with our position. We tried to discuss it in some moments and we silenced it in others. The work in the public space that we did together was a result of this process: on one hand it refers to an art discourse in the public space featuring critical reflections on Austrian racism and media; on the other hand it is a testimonial of the simultaneous, successful negotiations with our interlocutors in the group and a failure to arrive at an acceptable "position"; and the process as a whole runs the risk of a certain instrumentalization of these young people.

The Compromised

Both working with people who do not necessarily share our opinion and working with socially relevant themes often put us on uncertain ground. The important thing here seems to be to constantly come to terms with our own outside involvements. By doing so, our approaches, the research that results from collaborating with different parties, and their questions, constantly raise new questions. The tedious work consists in tolerating the fact that shared critical processes can never be brought to a conclusion.

The "Versteinerte Feindschaften" (Petrified Enmities) youth project organized by trafo.K (Renate Höllwart, Charlotte Martinz-Turek, and Claudia Ehgartner) together with the artists Alexander Jöchel and Hermann Lohninger and students from the Handelsakademie Lambach (Lambach Business Academy), as part of the 2003 Festival der Regionen (Festival of Regions), took a war memorial in Lambach, in Upper

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Austria, as the point of departure for grappling with the history of the place, its Nazi past, and current debates on coming to terms with the past and constructions of history. The project took as its theme hidden and open enmities and how they are inscribed in public spaces. The young participants developed, in cooperation with the artists, interventions in public space that offered alternative perspectives to official history.

A great deal of discussion took place over the course of the project, throughout which the young participants began to ask more questions, and in turn became increasingly critical. Nevertheless, some of their questions remained problematic. Some things they took away with them: in information sheets on the history of Nazi crimes, they reproduced the language by which a post-Nazi society preserves itself, in which its narratives of the death marches emphasized the Jewish capos rather than the Nazi criminals. We tried to reflect on these aspects of the project, and realized that regardless of the actual outcomes, it was the very ability to take part in such uncomfortable discussions – that is, through the process rather than the result – that underpinned the project.

To the extent that educational projects are always located in social circumstances, they are also determined by them. The goal is to create distance, attack the canon, the dominant school of thought, or history, but it can never succeed completely – these elements cannot be replaced, but they can be engaged with. This feeling is sometimes uncomfortably palpable. In a certain sense, the educational has a lot to do with being prepared to allow oneself to engage with the impossibility of remaining “clean” in the process of doing so (as if one was ever clean to begin with).

The Unsound

trafo.K was invited to do a site-specific education project at the Centre d'Art Contemporain, Genève. Together with the curators – the Swiss mediation collective microsillons – we decided to work with a group of thirty thirteen-year-old schoolchildren from the German school in Geneva. The opening was in November 2009; the exhibition was extended and will continue to run until February 14, 2010. Whereas we represented an approach that was both open and conceptual, and wanted to treat the students as education experts in order to develop possible forms of action based on their perspectives, the students themselves preferred to tinker and build. We tried, as best we could, to bring the exhibition and its critical questions concerning education into our discussion. On the basis of our collaboration, the children

developed various models based on exhibition works and themes. The results were neither very reflexive nor very conceptual. But they did suggest some imprecise and wild forms for addressing critical themes of the exhibition in sometimes open, sometimes uncritical ways. The pupils reacted to the artworks in the exhibition by rebuilding their ideas in their own way, and we called this a form of “wild translation.”

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photo: trafo.K.

When the project came to an end, we were left with a number of questions about the institution, about our position, and about the topics we discussed. So we decided to make the contradictions and our questions a crucial part of the project. We then reacted to the reaction of the pupils by asking questions as educators and mediators about the artworks and about the work of the pupils.

The Beside-the-Point and the Unpresentable

Projects are not always as focused and critical as we would like them to be. To some extent, they are open processes and the unexpected results they produce can be productive. These results are not always presentable and are sometimes embarrassing, often beside the point. Sometimes, however, just such results can lead to very interesting considerations, questions concerning foregone conclusions, reformulations, and spaces for action. Sometimes there is no result at all.

In choosing these examples, I have deliberately emphasized those small, tedious, unpresentable, and strenuous aspects of the educational, with which all mediators and educators are familiar, but which rarely find their way into their discussions and theory. They are probably not what people have in mind when they allude to the great collective possibilities of curatorial knowledge production. Just to be clear: these are not the goal, but just one part of

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educational processes. They should likewise not be understood as strategies – they are better described methodologically or politically. They are reflections, tactics, and forms of dealing with conditions and contingencies.

I could indeed formulate a joint goal for educational and curatorial work: that it challenge the apparatus of value-coding with an eye to changing what can be seen, said, and done. How and when this can succeed is determined as much by the rules and exclusions specific to a field, by its traditions and rifts, as much as by contingencies and forms for dealing with them – and as they are not necessarily the same in both the educational and curatorial fields, it was my intention to discuss several of these approaches and tactics here. My interest is in the slow and tedious qualities, the traps and failures, the moments when nothing important occurs, not even for the production of knowledge. At this point, one could paraphrase Derrida: only if it is possible for nothing productive to occur can something productive occur. Perhaps the recent curatorial discourses that have begun to emphasize the productivity of knowledge can learn from the quiet, laborious, unrepresentable processes of the educational.

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Translated from the German by Steven Lindberg

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1
Irit Rogoff, "Turning," *e-flux journal*, no. 0 (November 2008), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/18>.

2
In this context see for example the work of Tony Bennett, Peter Vergo, or Douglas Crimp.

3
Photographs of the stage design of the Berliner Ensemble im Deutschen Theater in 1951 and the Komödienhaus am Schiffbauerdamm in 1932 can be found in Michael Schwaiger, *Bertolt Brecht und Erwin Piscator: Experimentelles Theater im Berlin der Zwanzigerjahre* (Vienna: Christian Brandstätter, 2004), 111.

4
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5
Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, (Stanford University Press, 2008.)

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Brecht, *The Mother*, 79.

7
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8
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9
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Mayo, *Politische Bildung*.

11
Mayo, *Politische Bildung*, 22.

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Jacques Derrida, "The Future of the Profession or the Unconditional University," in *Deconstructing Derrida*, ed. Peter Pericles Trifonas and Michael A. Peters (London: Macmillan, 2005), 22.

13
Ibid., 24.

14
See <http://www.kdk-leipzig.de/veranstaltungen.html?file=a/pdf/Conference%20Cultures%20of%20the%20Curatorial.pdf>

15
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Who Claims Alterity?" in *Remaking History*, Discussions

in *Contemporary Culture* 4, ed. Barbara Kruger and Phil Mariani (Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1989), 200.

16
See trafo.K's Web site at <http://www.trafo-k.at>.

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I came across the Art Workers Coalition (AWC) 1969 Open Hearing documents by chance. They consisted of a stack of photocopies of handwritten and typewritten statements about the position of artists in society, particularly in relation to events of the time such as the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movement.

There were some very frank critiques of the artist's dependence on market and state patronage, and the role of both in the military-industrial complex (such as museum trustees connected with corporations that were directly or indirectly involved in the Vietnam War). The AWC arose out of meetings among artists in New York, and was catalyzed when George Takis tried to remove a sculpture from the Museum of Modern Art because he had no control over the conditions in which it was shown. The Art Workers Coalition presented the director of MOMA with a list of thirteen demands, one of them being an open hearing on museum reform. They were refused, so they instead held the meeting at the School of Visual Arts (where the statements were read). The AWC also existed at a time when avant-garde art practices such as Minimalism and Conceptual Art (with a few exceptions) were just beginning to engage with specific political issues (as against the formalist modernist credo against propaganda) out of a sense that making art about art was to fiddle while Rome burned. It was a very interesting historical juncture: where the social transformation of the late 60s coincided with a radical questioning of the autonomy of the art object, the artist, and the discipline of art. The Open Hearing statements reflected the tensions and contradictions of the era: rejections of a mainstream art world that served the wealthy and powerful were made alongside calls for better representation for women and minorities within it (including a wing of the Museum of Modern Art named after Martin Luther King). The demands ranged from reformism (exhibition fees and resale rights) to calls for "total revolution." Contradictions also existed around the figure of the artist, who was seen by some as a solipsistic and rather arrogant figure, and by others as oppressed and in need of liberation. It was because of these tensions and contradictions that the AWC did not last long (it ended after several years). However, it functioned as the catalyst for many different organizations, some of which still exist today. I was drawn to the AWC Open Hearing documents because of the frankness and idealism of their language. As most of the statements were handwritten and typewritten, all the edits and corrections were visible. This gave them a certain emphatic quality; while some of the statements seemed naïve and still others were offensive (sexist or homophobic), I was struck by how less cautious they seemed: there was no hedging or endless qualifiers of the "it's all so complex" variety. I also saw the AWC as an experiment with the forms and methods of organizing that did not take the familiar forms of an exhibition, art space or festival. The Open Hearing statements raise the question of the difficulty and necessity of organizing artists—a relevant if not an urgent question. It is a truism that there is a great degree of exploitation in the art world. The economic sociologist Pierre-Michel Menger has written about the "exceptional economy" of the arts (Menger: 1999 and 2005) whereby a few artists are very successful while the majority struggle. The informality of many relationships in the art world (through which opportunities often arise) and the assumption that everyone shares the same ethos means that to disclose exploitation is to betray trust, as well as the assumption of the inherently progressive nature of the field. One arts

administrator I interviewed for another research project told me that she once circulated e-mails about joining a union; she received a deluge of angry responses, many along the lines of "this is a great work environment, why are you complaining?"

Many of these contradictions around organizing artists, I would argue, center on the question of artistic autonomy. From this perspective, organizing is too much work: too many meetings, too much bureaucracy, and, above all, too much time spent away from one's own work. Political organizing is associated with aesthetic dogmatism, either around form/medium (that artists should stop making saleable objects) or content (that all artists should make explicitly political work). This dogmatism was present in some of the Open Hearing documents. I am not arguing for these conventions as timeless universals—the history of the avant-garde is full of attempts to challenge them. However, it is important to ask why they have persisted for so long and whose interests they serve. For example, in my experience art education is still in many ways based on the essentially individual nature of creativity and the exemplary figure of the artist. The market appetite for young artists and the consequent pressure on art education to produce the next big star entrenches these conventions. The history of collectivism is also largely unknown, especially within art history courses. It is largely written off as a series of aberrations and failed experiments. Another question I would like to raise is whose interests are served by our incredible resourcefulness and adaptability. While I am not claiming that only artists are resourceful or that conditions for all artists are the same, I also acknowledge that one of the skills many of us learn is to create work and organize events with little to no budget. On one hand this allows us to make do and continue to be active in difficult circumstances. From a certain perspective, this can function as an anti-consumerist stance, as it involves the trade-off of money for time. On the other hand, questions have to be asked about the sustainability of the lives many of us lead—how possible this is for those with children or other family responsibilities, and also how much this depends on the welfare state, for those of us lucky enough to be living in one, and how this is mediated by questions of race, gender, class, and immigration status. Another related issue is the prevalence of free labor in culture: the unpaid internships, the self-organized art spaces and magazines run on volunteer time. I have been involved in many self-organized initiatives that could not function without unpaid work. But what happens when this becomes a larger structural condition—when major institutions or even profit-making enterprises assume that everyone must be unpaid or underpaid, because there is just such an overwhelming interest or enthusiasm to be involved in culture? Interestingly, Menger, Hans Abbing, and others use language connoting excess: there is an "oversupply" of aspiring artists and arts administrators for available positions; this oversupply is seen to be the result of mass arts education. So we need to ask whose interests are served by our unpaid work. Another, perhaps unavoidable factor in the difficulty of organizing artists has been the dominance of celebrity culture in the art world and society in general (exemplified by the huge prices paid for the works of Damien Hirst and others). I see this as an entrenchment of capitalist social relations in art: career success becomes the primary goal, meaning that the kind of self-organizing that the AWC were involved in is a pointless exercise, as it is much more efficient to leave the conditions of one's practice (where one shows work and under what conditions) to gallerists, curators or other arts managers. All these contradictions around money, time, free labor, autonomy, and security existing in the art field have also become evident through changes in society over the past forty years. Andrew Ross illustrates this phenomenon, in *No Collar: The Humane Workplace and Its Hidden Costs*, through the story of a wildcat strike

at a car factory in the US by a group of young factory workers who were involved in the hippie counterculture. They protested the quality of work, a demand not traditionally recognized by trade unions, which historically focused on wage gains and full-time employment (Ross: 2006, 5). In *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello term this phenomenon "the artistic critique" – the demand for meaningful work and a more authentic life. They argue that this was a missed opportunity for unions and one of the factors that led to their current impasse (where they have a difficult time recruiting younger members, particularly those in atypical work situations and those working in the service industry). Instead, according to the authors, this demand was taken on by management, particularly through the new management rhetoric of the nineties. The trade-off of freedom for security or meaningful work for a living wage has become a form of workplace discipline. Ross describes how the business world took on the conditions associated with artisanal-scale production: small scale, flexible hours, casual work environments, and the merging of the roles of employer and employee. My position is that artists need some form of collective organization more than ever, and because trade unions missed a historical opportunity does not mean all is lost. This does not mean that they must be "modernized" in the neoliberal sense, but that they must become more imaginative – an imaginativeness of organizational structure and practice that can be learned from experiments such as the AWC. For artists, it means asking the kind of hard questions asked by the AWC, which still have not gone away.

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Why Would You Give Up Art in Postwar Eastern Europe (and How Would We Know)? – Adding New Blind Spots to the *East Art Map*

As I know little about the arts in the eastern part of Europe, my contribution to this symposium, and the subsequent publication, won't be of any help in completing the *East Art Map* – rather the opposite. For those who have entrusted themselves with the task of drawing this map, I wish to raise what might be considered a methodological and, at the same time, political question in that ongoing process, namely, what would it mean for the mapping, or remapping, of the history of art in Eastern Europe, if one were to postulate the possible existence of a recurrent protagonist in that field, one who must necessarily, if unintentionally, be excluded from the mapping process solely for the reason that he cannot be seen, since the quality of being excluded is his only defining feature.

If this sounds peculiar, let me first introduce you to the Western version of just such a protagonist. And then let us consider whether we might find him mirrored in the East.

For some time now, my work has been circling the question: What if, as an artist, you decide to give up your artistic practice, disappear from the art scene, and leave the field of art altogether? Does this simply mean you have given up, that you have failed? Or would you merely be switching to a new line of work, changing your job? Or could there be, potentially, more to it than this? Could leaving art be, perhaps, a gesture of critique and (artistic) sovereignty?

It will, indeed, come as no surprise if we say that today there are far more former artists in the Western world, than there are practicing artists. Given the large number of artists who graduate from our academies and the very few who eventually succeed in a professional career, the »ex-artist« is a very common phenomenon in our social environment – mind you, without being a particularly seductive subject for art critics or art historians.

But then there is something different: What if you choose to stop your practice, *even though you are successful*, even though making a career is *not* a problem, even though you have a stable position in the field? If you intentionally give up this position, without being forced to do so by any external condition like economic pressures or political repression, then knowing *why* and knowing *how* you do this, becomes a challenging topic for reflexive considerations concerning the art field.

So let's proceed.

In fact, there are a number of cases of artists in the West deliberately dropping out of the game. Especially if you look at certain historical periods when the art field was transforming itself, becoming politicized, with artistic roles changing and evolving, there is a good chance you will discover certain actors in the field who took their curiosity, their skepticism, or their critique to the point where it led them to drastic conclusions, one of which was the option of going so far into their critical stance, tremendous ambition, or awareness of art's limited social or political impact, that they did not come back to art. The late sixties and early seventies of the past century were such a moment in history. Two significant artists of the period can help us in our investigation of this phenomenon of »dropping out«.

Charlotte Posenenske was a German artist engaged in a social understanding of artistic practice. Her body of work, characterized by participatory features and made up of objects intended to include and engage the spectator, sought to open minimalism up to an interactive notion of sculptural space. But despite having the beginnings of a successful career, in May 1968, Posenenske published a statement in *Art International* magazine, in which she declared: »It is painful for me to face the fact that art cannot contribute to the solution of urgent social

problems.«¹ Of course, this limitation of art included her own art as well. In the autumn of the same year, her artistic practice came to an end. Posenenske continued her research and intellectual engagement by studying and then practicing sociology.²

A second example is the American artist Lee Lozano. During the 1960s, Lozano was an active painter in New York, evolving from an expressive style to an abstract minimalist vocabulary. In 1968, while developing her last and strongly programmatic series of paintings, the *Wave Series*, she started to write her so-called *Language Pieces*, which, in retrospect, established her as a representative of early New York conceptualism. In these language pieces, Lozano sets herself very precise instructions about including specific procedures in her daily routine. These instructions revolve around a critical reflection of the diverse conditions of her role, her existence as an artist. Economic, institutional, sexual, and psychological concerns become the subject of the language pieces and thus of Lozano's daily actions. Cumulatively, these actions represent a performative scenario of withdrawal.

Let us consider two examples. The *WITHDRAWAL PIECE*, dated 8 February 1969, states:

»Pull out of a show at Dick Bellamy's to avoid hanging with work that brings you down.«³

(Bellamy was Lozano's gallerist at that time.) Consequently, she withdrew one of her paintings from a group show. More programmatic is the *GENERAL STRIKE PIECE*, also from February 1969:

»Gradually but determinedly avoid being present at official or public »uptown« functions or gatherings related to the »art world« in order to pursue investigation of total personal and public revolution.«⁴

But why does she pull herself out of the game like this?

In a statement published in April 1969, she writes: »For me there can be no art revolution that is separate from a science revolution, a political revolution, an education revolution, a drug revolution, a sex revolution or a personal revolution.«⁵ Her private notes indicate that, very much like Posenenske, Lozano was disheartened by the realization that such a revolution was not happening and probably never would happen. For her, withdrawal from the art world represented an extreme form of criticizing its conditions, one that was both public and private; she was frustrated by its inability to engage in life and transform life. This was, as we know, a common feeling in Western avant-garde movements at the time.

Lozano's conclusion was the *DROP OUT PIECE*, which is *and is not a* »piece.« It is simply the fact that in 1972, Lee Lozano closed her studio, broke off connections with friends and colleagues (all, it seems, except Dan Graham), and left New York. Over the next thirty years she never revived any artistic practice, had very little contact with art people, and right up to her death in the late 1990s, was almost forgotten. (As a side note, a stock of Lozano's paintings from the 1960s managed to survive somewhere in the vicinity of New York, and just a few years ago, some of her language pieces began circulating in the art world again. After a few initial revival exhibitions, in the summer of 2004, the PS1 Contemporary Art Center in New York dedicated a small retrospective show to her, and a few months later the art dealers Hauser & Wirth Zurich London, took over the Estate of Lee Lozano.⁶ From this perspective, we might have to say that Lozano's attempted dropping-out has been reversed.)

What is important here is that these two cases introduce us to the actual existence of the figure I call the *Kunstausstieger* – the »art dropout« – who deliberately drops out from art by actively leaving the art field.

¹ Charlotte Posenenske, »Statement«, *Art International* 12, no. 5 (May 1968).

² For example, she co-authored, with Burkhard Brunn, a study on work evaluation, *Vorgabezeit und Arbeitswert: Interessenkritik an der Methodenkonstruktion; Leistungsgradschätzen, Systeme vorbestimmter Zeiten, analytische Arbeitsbewertung* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus-Verlag, 1979).

³ Lee Lozano, *Withdrawal Piece*, 8 February 1969, The Estate of Lee Lozano and Hauser & Wirth Zurich London.

⁴ Lee Lozano, *General Strike Piece*, 8 February 1969, The Estate of Lee Lozano and Hauser & Wirth Zurich London.

⁵ Lee Lozano, »Statement for Open Public Hearing, Art Workers Coalition« (10 April 1969), in *Open Hearing* (New York: Art Workers Coalition, 1969).

⁶ Beginning in 1992, Barry Rosen and Jaap van Liere, based in New York, sought to revive Lozano's work by representing her and supporting research activity about her work. They managed the Estate of Lee Lozano after her death in 1999 until Hauser & Wirth took over the management in 2004.

But this means: it is a practice. Lozano withdrew, step by step, from the art field's economic, institutional, social, and psychological parameters, as well as its urban settings, which determined her role, her articulation, and her physical and mental existence as an artist. As it happens, this process was articulated and documented in the language pieces, as these were part of and, at the same time, the trace of the dropping-out process.

But dropping out, as I describe it here, is not only a *practice* in the art field – that is to say, an *artistic practice*, albeit of a very particular sort – it is also a statement, an artistic articulation. Lozano and Posenenske exclude themselves from the field of artistic practice *and discourse*, and both state publicly why they are doing so. In the way Lozano directly links her artistic articulation to her pragmatic actions, we can even consider her dropping out as a *performative* action: she pulls out by saying that this is what she is doing and by doing what she says she is doing. Both Lozano and Posenenske leave no doubt about their motivation and both position their statement as a political one, as a critique.

So now taking all of this together, can we go so far as to say that the *Kunstausstieg*, the dropping out of art, is, or can be, a critical practice in the cultural field? I tend to think so. I propose viewing it as a critical practice that takes the art field and related conditions as both its subject matter and field of action. But wouldn't this mean we are here dealing with a radicalized form of institutional critique? Let me leave this as an open question.

In the mid-nineteenth century, at the beginning of the twentieth century, at the end of the 1960s, and in the mid-1990s, there seems to be a cultural-political pull that creates a dynamic in which dropping out of art seems to occur with greater frequency than at other times. Without going into too much depth here, I would propose the hypothesis that there exists an invisible and unwritten history of the phenomenon of dropping out of art – *eine Geschichte des Kunstausstiegers*⁷.

In modern times and until recently, this history necessarily remained unwritten. Modern art and its avant-garde discourse were based on a system of distinctions in which the Outside, or the Other, provided the necessary opposite for constructing the identity of art and the artist. From the constitutive logic of modern art, its outside could only be conceived either as something for it to appropriate – which is what the avant-garde movements did – or as its negativity, in other words, a dialectical relationship. Crossing the border to the outside represented the utopian vanishing point for the avant-garde process, but it was impossible to imagine the artist actually arriving there – this was equivalent to his disappearance. Modernity had no terms, no concepts, for such a very pragmatic exercise external to its logic and institutionalized operations.

So it seems, in fact, that critics and, in particular, art historians were simply unable to view dropping out as anything other than a sign of the failed career of a person who once produced art and – to put it in practical terms – as a halt in the production of actual artworks for them to write about. So until very recently, there was simply nothing written about the withdrawal from art of people like Posenenske and Lozano. And since you cannot collect *DROP OUT PIECES* or put them in a show or rank them alongside other artistic creations, they simply do not exist on the map of our Western history of modern art or on any postwar *West Art Map*.

It is only today, in our postmodern and poststructuralist setting with new shifts in interest and a transdisciplinary regard that includes sociological curiosity, that we may potentially discover dropping out as a practice in the social space, as a performative action, as a specific case of artistic articulation – in fact, as something that has for quite some time been accompanying the development of art and its social conditions as an unseen, unnoticed and unnoted opposition.

* * *

What if now we try to project the image I have drawn from the Western art dropout, the *Kunstausstieger*, onto the postwar situation in Eastern Europe?

Taking the clichéd image of a regimented socialist culture, it seems to me that the political context changes the entire scenario, making it far more delicate and complex. To exclude oneself from a field of cultural practice, to renounce the role of artist, to resign one's position in the field, to switch one's field – this all seems dramatically

⁷ The background for my contribution to the *East Art Map* symposium is a book I am currently writing, entitled *The Principles of the Theory and History of Dropping Out of Art / Grundlagen zur Theorie und Geschichte des Kunstausstiegers*.

different here. Even to describe the phenomenon would be somehow difficult. I think we would first have to divide the artistic field into official and unofficial parts. If, for instance, you had a position in the officially recognized art world – which would mean a privileged position with, usually, specific political implications – I really do not see how you could withdraw from it. But if you did do so, it would mean either to appear (or disappear) in the unofficial art scene or to pull out of the game altogether. There was also a third way to drop out of the official art scene (which of course may not have applied to all the different postwar periods and systems) – namely, the way into prison.

But what if you had a position in the unofficial art world? Wasn't it here that potentially oppositional practices, critical social and intellectual energies, were often formed and articulated, and wouldn't leaving this scene demonstrate a lack of solidarity or even possibly put the remaining network at risk? In such informal structures, leaving would also mean that, once you had pulled yourself out of the game, your previous work would probably disappear, since there was no art market or institutional system to keep it alive, as was the case with Posenenske and Lozano. And finally, why would you want to leave? For many in the Eastern art world, wasn't this space one of the very few alternatives to the regulated and regimented public space with its cultural ideologies and stereotypes? I have no case studies with which to answer any of these questions on an empirical level, but perhaps you do.

The concept of the *Kunstausstieg* I am proposing involves the more or less free decision of a subject who prefers to cease his or her artistic activity rather than continue it. There is a certain degree of sovereignty in such a decision, which is partly a product of the liberal character of the Western societies and their notion of the arts as autonomous. How much sense does it really make to extend this concept of the *Kunstausstieg* to a historical situation in which, for most of the time and in most places, such autonomy was not given? As we know, for authoritarian regimes and their little brothers, the socialist democracies, the opposite of the dropping-out scenario was something far more significant. For not only were there all those artists who did not willingly remove themselves from the game but were *actively excluded* from it by the system or society itself – with the gulag being the extreme version of such exclusion – but there was also the everyday routine of small troubles, social pressures, and a whole range of possible official and unofficial restrictions.

If, finally, we take into consideration such a silhouette of repression, we might reach an unexpected conclusion, namely, *the history of art might very well include also those who escaped such difficulty before it could arise by excluding themselves from even the option of an artistic identity and practice before someone else had the chance to exclude them*. It does not seem too absurd here to contemplate a negative: a good part of the composition of the art field is the result of all those who never entered it. For the West, we can always say, well, maybe art is too boring, too intellectual, or not intellectual enough, so there will always be some people who would rather be a doctor or a stockbroker. There is an ironic logic here: the people who are in the art field represent that part of the population who did not refuse to join this field.

But we cannot really say that this is true also for the East and its past.

By telling the story of Lozano and Posenenske, we make their dropping out visible as a gesture, a practice, and an art-political statement that for some time has been one of the blind spots on which art historians base their profession. If you attempt to remap the history of art in the European part of the post-socialist world, it is important not only to include those who were pulled out of that history and its making in real time by the official authorities, but also to think of a way to include those who pulled themselves out of this history before they even had the chance to play a role in it. Their self-exclusion is not something marginal, for doesn't it in itself embody a form of cultural and political repression? In my understanding, we should, at least, avoid the reproduction of silence and exclusion and seek instead a way to encircle, measure, and entitle the blind spots that the *East Art Map* will *necessarily produce*.

Let me add a final observation that seems relevant for the post-socialist period.

With the dismantlement of the political and cultural logic that had predominated in the Eastern European societies, and with the shift in orientation toward the West and its art system, art market, the biennial circus, and so on, the whole scenario changed extremely fast. The discussion around Moscow conceptualism and NOMA is a good example of this. The unofficial art field, which, with its inherent processes and codifications contributed to

the production of an identity, a sense of resistance and freedom, now lost its frame, its political meaning, and its social significance. As we might be able to see more clearly today, there exists an entire generation of artists who, somewhere between the late eighties and mid-nineties, seem to have gotten stuck or lost between the past and the future.

My point is: might not the *East Art Map* need also a little legend to indicate those who deliberately brought their own artistic activity to a close shortly after the evaporation of the political conditions that had been responsible for its coming into being in the first place? I probably do not have to repeat that, of course, these protagonists left the stage without ever entering the archive of cultural memory.

When art once again becomes useful

David Riff

1. When we ask “what is the use of art?” today, it immediately sounds like an admission of ontological guilt. Aesthetic enjoyment, still the use of art *par excellence*, is nowhere to be found, at least not in its messianic form. Art is generalized into production and now works on a much more modest scale; sometimes it makes people think, sometimes it makes them smile, sometimes it makes them ask the right questions, and that’s all we should aim for, right? Wrong. Because it gets much worse.

Since the early 20th century, it has been clear that the commodity *really* is in the process of subsuming everyday life, and this was generally understood as a challenge to the use of art from two different sides. On the one hand, you had the radical leveling of all art through the commodity form. Money, the great matchmaker, is indifferent to art’s many uses. In the mute world of commodities, where all human labor is equal, the singularity of aesthetic experience makes no particular difference; all artworks mirror one another. This is why it becomes possible to use a Rembrandt as an ironing board. Art is something you bump into while you’re thinking about money. That produced the strange non-objectivity or emptiness at the very heart of all the things we perversely love. Art becomes a foreign entity that leaves us—its producers—non-objective, bereft of the very skin on our backs. All we can do is mime this non-objectivity, reproducing an aura of wry disengagement and haughty uselessness. On the other hand, the rationalization of industrial production—be it in order to reestablish and heighten revenue in an age of imperial crisis or to modernize and lethally disambiguate unevenly developed mixed economies—created an economic and social demand for new experimental uses of mimetic and aesthetic functions that art traditionally limited to the studio and the salon. Art was to generalize aesthetic enjoyment, making itself truly useful in all fields, and redefining the very terms of use in the process.

The point was not to turn a Rembrandt into an ironing board, but to create an ironing board that could be just as aesthetically meaningful as a Rembrandt, thus redefining ironing as an aesthetic activity, freeing it from the drudgery of reproduction, and unleashing the productive force of the universalized creativity of human species-being. That would be a factographic creativity: it would tell its own story as a concrete reality, reconstituting a new objectivity with plenty of room for contradiction.

But the messianism of this idea backfired; it became an accomplice to the cataclysmic implementation of Fordism, and created the sites of its post-Fordist reload. And by now, it is fetishized as the peculiar (and often highly contradictory) “consciousness” or “spirit” of the avant-garde, as far from us as the art of ancient Greece. There is another problem. Actually, contemporary art has not killed but heightened all the avant-garde’s contradictions. Art is more useful than ever, *though not to us*.

The culture industry produces unprecedented amounts of fast-moving ideological commodities, in part by co-opting armies of critical-minded, quasi-politicized amateurs, and introducing them to an endless workday of the professional audience. Audiences flood biennials to gain new subjectivity-sensuality-responsibility (these are the key services we provide) that they then reproduce on a lower level. This is the new Proletkult, but one biopolitically advantageous to the elite. It re-subsumes any political resistance and forges a new experimental ethic or spirit for white-collar workers.

Strangely enough, aesthetic enjoyment—as I said, the use of art *par excellence*—is key to this “creative” neo-Stakhanovite identity because it insists that there is, in the endless workday, still a space for contemplation and that this contemplation is somehow productive (perhaps precisely because it is the last bastion of political being). This space for contemplation within the endless workday is then frozen, taken out of use, and marked up as an object for the elite, to be recycled as a glamorous backdrop for the VIP lounge. And that is contemporary art, always a small catastrophe. This hopefully still makes us ask: what is going on here? How did it come to this? How can we fight against this negativity? Which useful definition of art could we design? Must we abandon the idea of aesthetic enjoyment once and for all, or must we, on the contrary reclaim it?

2.

One way to resist the idea of art's uselessness is to understand that WE are all productivists, factographers, muralists, biographers of things, and worker-correspondents. We are living in an age of the total internalization of the production line, its domestication in the home-office, where we work day and night without stopping. And that does not just mean that we are working with instruments captured from communists in a bourgeois factory (that is always the case), but that we have at our disposal a toolbox that we can reclaim with a minimum of effort.

Take, for example, the theory of the "comrade thing," any art student's ideal companion. The theory of the comrade thing, as articulated in the period immediately following laboratory Constructivism, projected a subject-object whose use is not self-cannibalism (as Marx describes consumption under the regime of private property in his early texts), but mutual use, non-alienated utility that produces only one thing, namely truth. Today's comrade-thing, at least potentially, is the personal computer, a multifunctional object that goes well beyond anything the boldest communist futurists ever imagined (including Khlebnikov's "world radio").

It is not techno-messianism to realize that the computer is a gateway to any number of texts, textures, and forms, reproductions that we must enjoy in search of their lost original, and not just a production site in the post-Fordist panopticum. Our comrade-thing allows us to have phone sex with lovers even if they are very far away. It allows us to reproduce endlessly, and, when we are done, to consume lo-fi copies of Hollywood movies and sitcoms. The world of Google, Skype, and Wikipedia is not just a tool, but actually allows us to inhale massive doses of culture, providing unprecedented levels of access to classics that were previously guarded jealously as part of the ruling class's victory parade.

The paradox is that the elite is busy with contemporary art, for which it reclaims a status of auratic singularity, a secular cult status fixed to one place and one time. Even for professionals, access to this generalized, never-changing "new" is always limited. But the classics are just out there online, requiring a minimum effort to be found and cracked. This extends far beyond the avant-garde, and includes the entire history of art, including the disputed legacy of realism. Usually, the availability of this legacy represents that possibility of contemplation and genuine aesthetic enjoyment in the midst of the endless workday. It expresses the idea that Rembrandt need not be an ironing board, but can simply be Rembrandt, even in the age of digital reproduction.

But there is nothing contemplative about teaching ourselves how to look at such paintings; we inevitably use the optics of the reciprocal readymade to brush history against the grain. It is here that we discover an "aesthetic of resistance" beyond contemplation; we see that all art tells not only the heroic story of money and power, but always also contains an unconscious communism, a self-identity of the senses, an emancipative experience that carries down through its conflicted folds.

We see this weak messianism as a material force because we realize that mimesis, even in a state of slavery, cannot help but tell the truth about itself and the contradictions of its time, and that this helpless urge to tell the truth can be brought to consciousness. It is this coming to consciousness that seems so politically important today; the object of our critique comes back into focus, and the political mimesis of criticality—otherwise generalized, blurred, and romantic— moves from the abstract to the concrete. This is the moment when art once again becomes useful, no longer just a mimetic resonator, but as a medium for truth in its sensual form.

DISCLAIMER: THIS GUIDE IS INTENDED FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY. OCCUPY AT YOUR OWN RISK.



OCCUPATION

a do-it-yourself guide

PREFACE: WHY OCCUPY?

We in the US have been too timid for too long. We are afraid of the cops. We are afraid of losing our jobs or getting expelled from school. No one wants to take risks; no one wants anyone else to take risks. Protests are boring, poorly attended and ineffective. Peaceful marches or rallies reduce us to passive observers of what is supposed to be our own activity. We are told to express our anger and frustration by shouting or chanting, but otherwise, we are asked to exercise restraint.

At the UCSC walkout on Sept 24, protestors chanted and carried signs, but they crossed the street only when the 'walk' sign was lit. They would march across the street, push the button to cross at the next intersection and wait patiently for the light to change. The striking union, UPTA, had a picket line but did not actively prevent people from crossing that line. They knew that *most unions at the UC have contracts which explicitly force their members to cross the picket lines of other unions*. In Berkeley, at the general assembly held on the same day, protestors were asked: "what do you want to do next?" But they were never asked the obvious question—"what do you want to do right now?"

Why not decide on an immediate course of action and do it? Organizers complain they are losing members with each successive meeting; they seem to believe that meeting is an end in itself!

This wall of passivity can only be dismantled through action. But equally, we have to avoid the temptation of becoming "activists". On Sept 17, activists interrupted a meeting of the UC Board of Regents. They shouted at Mark Yudof, refused to quiet down and were arrested by cops. These sacrificial actions are disruptive—but only momentarily. They depend on the media to publicize their grievances, but, to gain this attention, activists must provoke the administration into an embarrassing confrontation. Administrators are not so stupid. They know how to neutralize these actions: they simply avoid confrontation. After the protestors were dragged from the room, Yudof said, "the students ought to be angry about the fee increases. I'm angry about it, too."

These are the problems we face: not only the cuts—not only the crisis which caused the cuts—but the ineffectiveness of our means of fighting them. We need to build a movement, but we find that we cannot. People will only join a movement

if it has the potential to change something, but a movement will only change something if people join it. So everyone does what is in their own best interests: they ignore the protestors and get on with their lives. Better to try to find a new job than waste time failing to get your old one back. The problem is not a lack of consciousness. People evaluate their situation and act accordingly.

It is the activists who fail to understand.

Everything is set up in advance to ensure that nothing actually changes. We are given a menu of options for managing the crisis and another for fighting the cuts. We do the hard work of organizing. We attend interminable meetings and plan largely symbolic actions. These things change nothing. The problem is simple: no decision making body has the power to give us what we want—and especially during a crisis, when the very existence of capitalism is at stake. The deans and chancellors making the cuts are subordinate to the UC president. The UC president is subordinate to the Board of Regents. The Board of Regents gets its money from the legislature. And the hands of the legislature are tied by the the California constitution, which requires a two-thirds majority to raise taxes.

We must reject all options on offer and demonstrate that without negotiations it is *still possible to act*. This is why we do not make demands. All demands assume the existence of a power capable of conceding them. We know this power does not exist. Why go through the motions of negotiation when we know we will not win anything but paltry concessions? Better to reveal the nature of the situation: there is no power to which we can appeal except that which we have found in one another.

That is also why we reject the logic of representation. No representative, no matter how charismatic, can achieve anything of consequence, except to deprive us of our own agency. Having representatives reduces us, once again, to passive onlookers upon our own activity. We have to take matters into our own hands. A huge demonstration is not a means to better bargaining; it is nothing if it is not an end in itself. A huge demonstration becomes an end in itself only when people at the demonstration start to act on their own: when they reject the leaders

who, acting on their own interests, tell people to be "reasonable" to wait for the right moment.

We do not want to wait any longer. We cannot afford to wait any longer.

This pamphlet is a guide to immediate action. It explains how to occupy buildings, with particular attention to universities. That is not because we believe students at the university have a special role to play, or because occupations are the only tactic with which we agree. It is simply because we *are* at the university, we *have* occupied a building here and we begin with what we know.

Occupations are a common tactic used at universities and other workplaces around the world. In 1999, students occupied the National Autonomous University of Mexico, the largest university in Latin America, to ensure that university education would remain free. In 2006, students occupied universities throughout France to repeal the CPE amendment, which would have made it easier for bosses to fire young workers. In 2008, workers occupied the Republic Windows and Doors factory in Chicago, winning concessions from Bank of America. In 2009, workers occupied the Ssangyong car factory in South Korea, holding it for two months and fighting a pitched battle against the police. These are only a few examples of what came before we occupied the Graduate Student Commons at UCSC in September.

We have been criticized for having acted as clandestine "adventurists", for ignoring the democratic process. We have seen the results of that process far too many times. It is never the case that, after people see the failures of letter-writing campaigns or teach-ins, they decide to try something else. They are disheartened that their hard work has come to nothing, and they return to their normal lives. When the next crisis occurs, new people get involved and democratically decide to make the same mistakes.

We have lived through too many cycles of failure and seek to try something else.

We wager that when people see what we are doing, they too will get involved. So far, that has proven true. Once enough people are involved, we will no longer have to act in a clandestine fashion. We will openly decide what to do next. Will we march immediately to the administra-

tive building and occupy it indefinitely, without demands? Maybe we march from building to building with bullhorns, calling students and workers out into the street? Perhaps we will march to the base of campus and set up barricades, blocking entrances to the university.

In any case, we know that our movement will only grow in and through action. We do not have to wait: *we can act now and act later*. If in the past, it has taken longer to organize these sorts of actions, that is either because people started too big, or because they were up against stronger foes than the bumbling administration of a California public university. In fact, the reason it took so long to organize this action was simply that many were afraid. We respect these fears even if we encourage everyone to push their boundaries. Others will join the movement, not when their consciousness is raised to the appropriate level, but when they decide that participation is worth the associated risks. Some people feel they have nothing to lose and get involved immediately. Others have so much to lose that they will only get involved at the last possible moment. We trust one another to know what to do.

Those we meet—who are neither hostile to change as such nor self-described "leaders" offended by action taken without their permission—have not criticized us for acting too soon but for occupying such an insignificant building. To these we reply: you are not alone in your desire for escalation. Find us. When we have more numbers, we will take more and more buildings: until the campus is ours.

Of course, the goal is not to shut down campus as an end in itself. Once we demonstrate our collective power to dissolve the university, we will decide together what to do next. By then, others will have taken action at other workplaces, and we will be able to decide with them. We know only this: that when we get the chance to strike, we will take it without hesitation. We will take whatever measures are necessary both to destroy this world as quickly as possible and to create, here and now, the world we want.

A WORLD WITHOUT WAGES,
WITHOUT BOSSES, WITHOUT
BORDERS, WITHOUT STATES

GENERAL THEORY OF OCCUPATIONS

Plan ahead.

- Whether we occupy as a small group of clandestine adventurers or at the head of a large and unruly crowd, it is good idea to plan ahead.
- Scope out the building. What sorts of doors will we have to lock down? What sorts of furniture are available for building barricades?
- Check as well for any useful materials outside or around the building. Are there escape routes? Are there rocks to throw at cops?

Draw a large crowd to the occupation.

- A large crowd, especially of 'ordinary, everyday people', is our first line of defense against a police attack.
- If there is a confrontation with the police, a large crowd will probably form anyway to gawk at the spectacle.
- But our best chance of holding the space is to get that crowd as close to the building as possible before the police arrive.
- That way, if the police build barricades, the crowd will be between us and the cops, rather than outside police lines.
- If that crowd is full of 'ordinary, everyday people', the cops will be less likely to use extreme force to remove us from the building.
- Draw a crowd by calling a meeting of some kind: to discuss the crisis or just to dance; or announce the occupation at some other group's meeting.
- Either (1) announce to the assembled crowd that an occupation is occurring and rush them over to the building as quickly as possible.
- Or (2) give a rousing speech, convince the crowd that we all have to occupy a building immediately and then do it.

Get control over a door.

- When we scope out a building, we want to get a sense of how we can open up the space to other people once the occupation is under way.
- Choose a door, an accessible window, or some other method of getting people into and out of the space.
- When outside barricades are built, make sure people know not to barricade this one entrance too heavily.
- For this entrance, set up a lock that can be opened and closed easily, so when the time is right, we can let more people into the space.

Open the space to other people.

- People often want to debate who they should let in to the space, but it is best to let in everyone (reserving the right to turn away sketchy people).
- The risks of diluting the group or letting sketchy people in are minimal compared to what we gain by making the occupation open to everyone.
- Opening the occupation reduces the risks taken by the original occupiers. It's

also the point of occupying—to build a movement through action.

If there is a continual police presence, having a crowd inside police barricades allows people to move in and out of the building via the crowd.

Transform the space.

When we occupy spaces, we never use them as they were 'intended' to be used: libraries are not for studying.

We take over spaces to transform their uses: we organize to occupy more spaces and build a social movement, but we also have fun.

Throw a sick as fuck dance party!

Do not make occupations into arrest actions.

Occupations are tactics within a broader struggle. There is no reason to get arrested just to prove a point. When all else fails, run away!

RECONNAISSANCE

Choosing a building:

- Fewest doors that need to be secured.
- Heavy furniture for making barricades.
- Central location with a lot of foot traffic.
- Contact with the outside world (balcony, windows).

Who owns the building?

- Exploit ambiguities in ownership.

Some occupations are more disruptive than others.

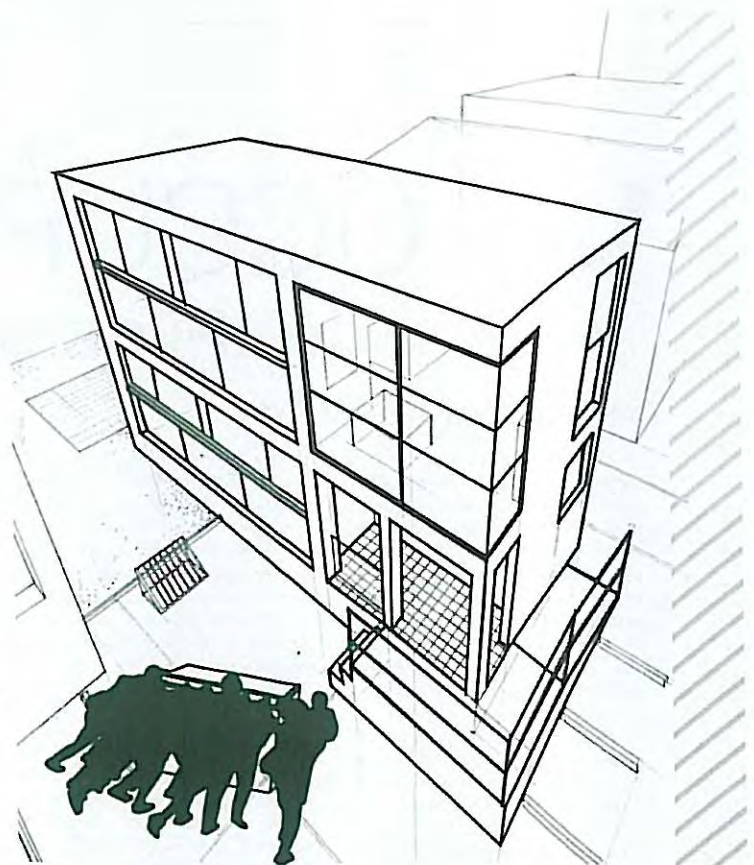
- At a university, occupying an administrative building would be more disruptive than occupying a student space.
- But for the same reason, administrative buildings are harder to hold. They're better left until we have a large social movement.
- Do not be afraid to take space from our purported representatives: unions, student government, etc.

When doing reconnaissance, be discreet but thorough:

- How many doors are there that have to be secured?
- Look for hidden doors and fire escapes.
- What do the doors look like, and how are they opened (handles)?
- We can secure doors using structural supports (poles, pipes). Are there any available?
- What furniture is available for building barricades?
- Can we secure a door in such a way that we can open it, either to let people in or to make an escape?
- If possible, take pictures or at least, take notes. It is always harder to remember the details than you think!

We may be in there for a while:

- Is there a bathroom, access to running water?



- Is there any way to get supplies in and out without opening a door?

Often it is possible to secure a floor or even a room, leaving the rest of the building intact.

SECURING DOORS

Doors open either towards the inside or the outside.

- Doors opening into the occupied space are the easiest to secure because we can barricade them closed.
- Unfortunately, doors in newer buildings tend to open out, so we have to secure the door independently of the barricade.

Different doors have different types of handles and are thus secured in different ways. Here are some examples.

• Door with handles:

Tie one end of a cable lock around the door handle. Tie the other end to a structure support, or even to another door handle. If no structural supports are available, use a piece of furniture or a large block of wood—anything larger than the door frame.

• Doors with bars:

If there is a space between the bar and the door, tie one end of a cable lock around the bar and the other end to a support.

If there is no space, secure a C-clamp to the bar. Loop the cable lock through the space created by the clamp.

• Swinging push doors:

Almost impossible to secure without damaging the doors. Unless they open into the occupied space, avoid them.

BE CREATIVE!

Make sure the doors are secured as tightly as possible:

- If the door opens even an inch, then the lock can be cut.

- Use carabiners to tie locks to one another.
- Carabiners also make it easy to open doors without disassembling the locking mechanism.

BUILDING BARRICADES

Whenever possible, build barricades both inside and outside the doors.

For the inside:

- Use as much heavy furniture as possible.
- Distribute the furniture evenly among the doors.
- Nothing too complicated or precarious.
- Do not excessively barricade the door we want to control.
- Do not stack up furniture that can be easily pushed aside, once doors are breached.
- We need to be able to apply pressure to keep the barricade in place (ie by pushing on it).

For the outside:

- Have a large crowd surround the building and especially against the doors.
- If police building barricades, we want the crowd inside the barricades.
- A separate, outside team should roll in and build outside barricades and then disperse.
- Use dumpsters, trees, wood pallets, chain-link fences, garbage cans filled with rocks.
- Make sure the outside team knows which door we want to control, so they do not barricade it too heavily.

OUTSIDE SUPPORT: LEGAL TEAM

Before the event takes place, contact a lawyer:

- Some lawyers are willing to provide free legal support. Most lawyers will want to meet with the occupiers before the action takes place.
- If at a university, find a lawyer who has some experience with university courts.

Have people fill out a legal release form and provide medical information beforehand, in case of arrest.

Have a legal support team:

- Have someone outside to note or record any abuse by police officers.
- Have someone at a landline to contact for jail support. Occupiers should write this number on their body.

We should have our IDs and change for the phone, but little else as it will be taken in the event of arrest

Know your rights:

- Do NOT say anything to police except your name, that you do not consent to any searches and that you will not speak until your lawyer is present.
- Resisting arrest raises the stakes. If a police officer stops you, ask if you are being detained. If you are not being detained, walk away.
- In California, concealing your identity while committing a crime raises the charge to a felony. If the mask has something written on it, it may be protected by the 1st amendment.

OUTSIDE SUPPORT: MEDICAL TEAM

Have assigned medics both inside and outside:

- Medics should know about the needs of specific individuals involved in the action beforehand (medications, allergies).

- They should have a medical aid kit. Bring with you:
Water, latex gloves, duct tape, band-aids, gauze and tape, hydrogen peroxide, neosporin, aspirin, benadryl, emergenC.

Wear or bring with you:

- Comfortable clothing, running shoes, long-sleeves, eye protection, clothes to change into.

Do NOT wear:

- Contact lenses, oil-based make-up, things which can be easily grabbed. Do not use tampons if you may end up in jail.

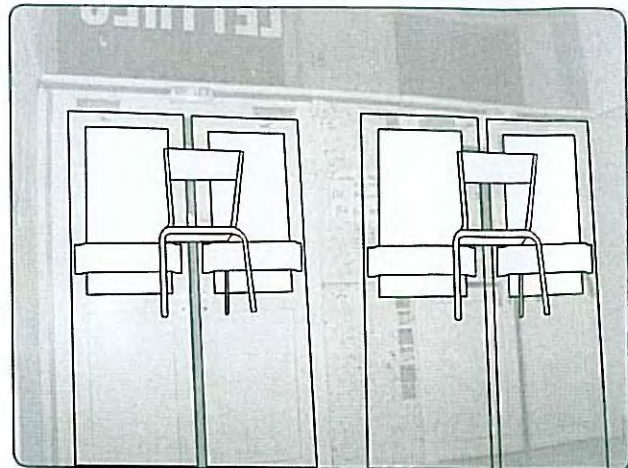
For pepper-spray: clean out eyes with a mixture of milk of magnesia and water.

For tear-gas: cover mouth with a cloth soaked in vinegar or water; use eye-protection.

OUTSIDE SUPPORT: MEDIA TEAM

This is not a symbolic action, but it is still important to have a media team. Have one or more people designated as media contacts, on the outside of the occupation:

- Remember to emphasize the media people as delegates, not representatives of those involved.
- Send articles to different news outlets; alternative media such as Indybay allows for self-publication of events.



Set up an email address and website associated with the occupation: make this information easily available.

- Do not use the email addresses of anyone involved in the action.

No particular individuals inside the occupation should become too visible, lest they be branded as leaders.

No one on the inside should give televised interviews, or any more information about themselves than is necessary.

Press Releases:

- Have an initial statement prepared before the occupation is announced.
- Pour out your feelings, but make sure you provide a reasoned explanation for what you are doing.
- Do not have an official line. Do not prevent people from expressing themselves in their own way.
- Have people on hand to make and distribute flyers keeping people informed about what you are doing.
- It is hard to do in the middle of it all, but write as much as possible about what you are doing. Keep a diary of daily twists and turns for posterity.

OTHER THINGS TO ORGANIZE:

Collect phone numbers to set up an emergency mass text-message in case of a police raid.

- Bringing supplies into the occupation:
- It is possible that you will be removed in the first few hours. Do not overpack.
- Bring some food, a lot of water, and medical supplies, but not much else.
- Pack extra locks and cables in case you need them.
- Bring a safe computer, in case police confiscate your supplies.

If you are successful, people can bring you extra supplies:

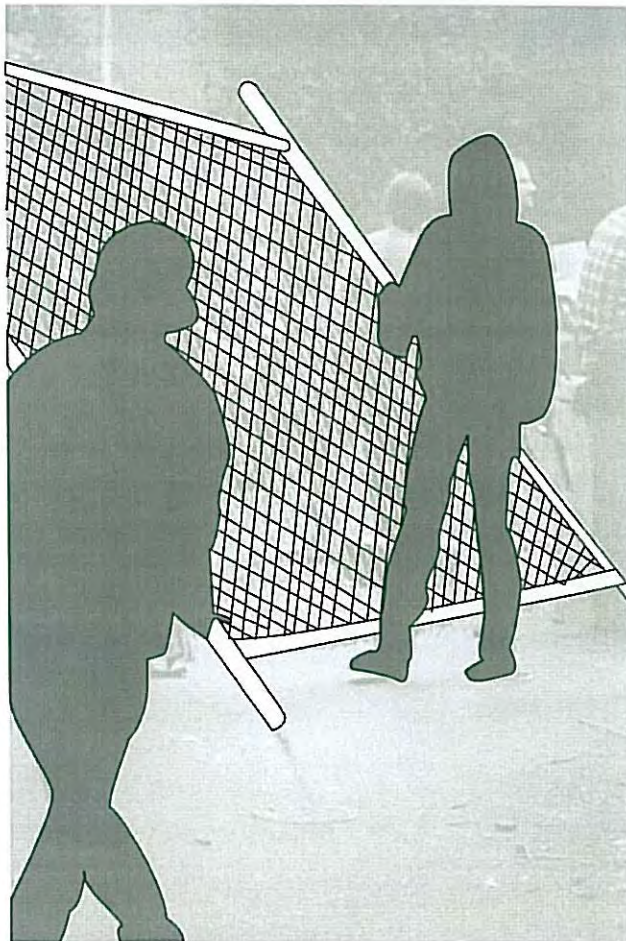
- Food, cigarettes, blankets, etc.

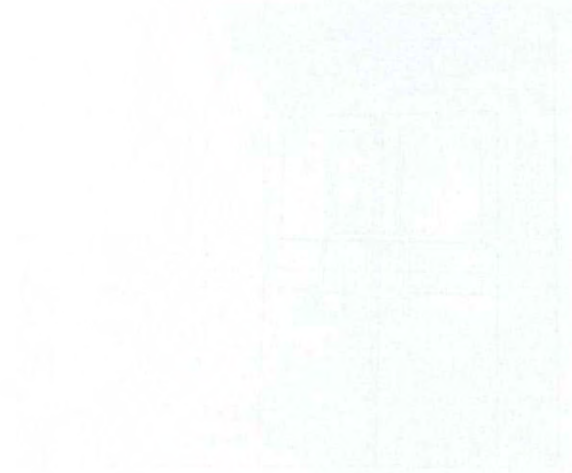
Share everything. Inside the occupation, there is no private property.

Break down barriers between people.

If possible, take pictures of building before you leave, for legal reasons.

No one on the inside should give televised interviews, or any more information about themselves than is necessary.





The following information is provided for your reference. The data is organized into a table with columns for various categories and rows for individual entries. The text is extremely faint and difficult to read, but appears to be a structured list or report.

This section contains several paragraphs of text, likely providing context or details related to the data presented in the table above. The text is very light and mostly illegible.

Additional information or notes are provided in this section. The text is sparse and difficult to discern.

The final section of the page contains concluding remarks or a summary of the information presented. The text is too faint to be accurately transcribed.

This section may contain further details or a signature block, though the content is illegible.

GLOSSARY

Aufhebung: [wikipedia] Aufheben is a German word with several seemingly contradictory meanings, including "to lift up," "to abolish," or "to sublimate." The term has also been defined as "abolish," "preserve," and "transcend." In philosophy, *aufheben* is used by Hegel to explain what happens when a thesis and antithesis interact, particularly via the term "sublate."
British Libertarian Marxist journal *Aufheben* takes its name from this concept.

Biocapital: [from Species of Biocapital - Stefan Helmreich]

"What is biocapital? Scholarship in the social and cultural study of biology has suggested that in the age of biotechnology, when the substances and promises of biological materials, particularly stem cells and genomes, are increasingly inserted into projects of product-making and profit-seeking, we are witnessing the rise of a novel kind of capital: biocapital. The term, paging back to Marx, fixes attention on the dynamics of labour and commoditization that characterize the making and marketing of such entities as industrial and pharmaceutical bioproducts. It gives a fresh name to a phenomenon that Edward Yoxen, writing at the dawn of the biotech revolution... described as 'not simply a way of using living things that can be traced back to the Neolithic origins of fermentation and agriculture', but 'a technology controlled by capital, . . . a specific mode of the appropriation of living nature—literally capitalizing life' (1981, p. 112). Biocapital also extends Foucault's concept of biopolitics, that practice of governance that brought 'life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations' (Foucault, 1978, p. 143). "

Cognitive Capitalism: [from p2pfoundatio.net]

This interpretation stresses that we are in a third phase of capitalism, where the accumulation is centered on immaterial assets. It follows the earlier phases of mercantile and industrial capitalism. Cognitive capitalism theorists believe that it is centered around the accumulation of immaterial assets, especially related to the information core of products, which are protected through Intellectual Property Rights, i.e. legal means such as patents. These patents, as they are used by brands, in sectors such as pharma, agribusiness and software (Microsoft), then allow for the creation of a surplus value resulting from monopolistic rents. The contradiction of cognitive capitalism is that the products themselves are generally cheap to produce, so they have to be kept in a state of artificial scarcity through IP protection. Cognitive capitalism is associated with the process of a private appropriation of the Information Commons.

Commons: [wikipedia] The commons is terminology referring to resources that are collectively owned or shared between or among populations. These resources are said to be "held in common" and can include everything from natural resources and land to software. In some areas the process by which the commons were transformed into private property was termed enclosure.

Commonification: [R. Kerosene – The Economy has left the Building] War on commodification, the move from commodity to common. The process of transforming that which has been privatised, commodified or enclosed into commons.

Cool Hunter: [wikipedia] Coolhunting is a term coined in the early 1990s referring to a new breed of marketing professionals, called coolhunters. It is their job to make observations and predictions in changes of new or existing cultural trends. The word derives from the aesthetic of "cool".

Dis-identification: [Jacques Ranciere; <http://kafila.org/2009/02/12/interview-with-jacques-ranciere/>]

“When workers are only struggling, then they are supposed to be in their world and in their place. Workers were supposed to work and be dissatisfied with their wages, their working conditions and possibly still work again, struggle again and again. But when workers attempt to write verses and try to become writers, philosophers, it means a displacement from their identity as workers. The important thing is this displacement or dis-identification.”

Distorted Commons: [reply on turbulence.org.uk] First, he appears to use the term ‘distorted commons’ in two senses: one, a commons that is subjugated to a capitalist project (I would simply call this a capitalist commons); and two, a commons that is based on some form of social injustice, which seems to mean (from his example of enforced loss of livelihoods) a commons in which the majority oppresses the minority (I would call this an illiberal commons). I think it is important not to confuse these two senses. My second point is related to the first one. Because Massimo does not distinguish the second sense of distorted commons from the first one, he identifies only the problem of social injustice arising from capitalism and misses the problem of social injustice arising from illiberal forms of communism (or common-ism). I find that this kind of engineered absence or sleight of hand is quite common (!) in left-wing publications, though difficult to spot.
Peter Somerville

Eschatological: [Oxford dictionary] The part of theology concerned with death, judgement, and the final destiny of the soul and of humankind.

Financialization: [wikipedia] Financialization is a term that describes an economic system or process that attempts to reduce all value that is exchanged (whether tangible, intangible, future or present promises, etc.) either into a financial instrument or a derivative of a financial instrument. The original intent of financialization is to be able to reduce any work-product or service to an exchangeable financial instrument.

Human Capital: [wikipedia] refers to the stock of competences, knowledge and personality attributes embodied in the ability to perform labor so as to produce economic value. It is the attributes gained by a worker through education and experience.

Hyper-Exploitation: One example is student midwives in the UK who, while on a 3-year course, start delivering babies after their first year, working long unpaid hours in hospitals, helping produce the humans from whose labour all future profits will be derived. In order to do this they pay around around 4 or 5 thousand euros per year. (Ed.)

Iterative: [thefreedictionary.com] Characterized by or involving repetition, recurrence, reiteration, or repetitiousness.

Knowledge Commons: [wikipedia] The knowledge commons encompass immaterial and collectively owned goods in the information age. Normatively loaded, it promotes free share of knowledge. As the modern commons' resource is information, the tragedy of the commons no longer has any effect—naturally, information does not depreciate when being shared with others.

Living Labour: [Governance, State and Living Labour – Stefano Harney]

“By living labour Marx meant to capture the separation between labour and its past appropriations, especially dead labour. What interested Marx was that although these past appropriations -- the means of production and use of nature -- were the product of social labour, what he called in *The Grundrisse* that 'social brain with its 'powerful effectiveness,' they appeared as separated from living labour, ruling living labour, and living labour seemed to be commanded by capital and to live for it alone. Nonetheless Marx noted that capital constantly and progressively tried to free itself from living labour, to do without it. But as much as it appeared to succeed, technology, science, and capital itself needed living labour to

give it life, and its act of separation, Marx felt, could well 'blow the foundations sky high' (Marx, 1974). The idea of a labour that is both constituent of society and disowned by that society is the idea of living labour."

Living Knowledge: [Knowledge conflicts, self-education and common production - Rete per l'Autoformazione]

"The third similar trend is the rise of a new student figure. As the graduate students struggles show clearly, in cognitive capitalism – where knowledge is a direct means of production – the graduate student is no longer an apprentice member of the workforce in training, but a fully (precarious) worker in the so-called 'knowledge factory'. In this regard, we note also that this expression is undoubtedly effective as rhetorical figure, to allude to the centrality of knowledge production in contemporary class formation, and the disciplining of forms of *living knowledge*. At the same time, any use of this term knowledge factory has also to analyze the impossibility of the imposition of the tayloristic scientific organization of labor in the current formation. In this impossibility there emerges the potential autonomy of living labor/knowledge, embodied in the new hybrid figure of the student/precarious researcher and teacher, permanently moving between lifelong learning and the labor market."

Meritocracy: [The Pedagogy of Human Capital – Stewart Martin] Perhaps the core educational ideology through which the contradictions of capitalism and democracy are recoded as the successes and (more usually) 'failures' of disciplined individualism: 'life long learning' extends 'meritocracy' to the whole of your life.

Operaio: [Operaismo - François Matheron]

"The Italian theoretical and political movement, *Operaismo* was fundamentally active during the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. In an epoch when the crisis of the workers movement was dominated by excessively "ideological" debates, Operaismo was essentially characterised by the proposition of a "return to the working class"

Potentia: [Greek *dunamis*] expresses a potential or capacity, a non-realized possibility for which there is still an ability or disposition.

Primitive Accumulation: When Western capital sucks Third World labour power, whose costs of reproduction it did not pay for, into the world division of labour, whether in Indonesia or in Los Angeles, that's primitive accumulation. When capital loots the natural environment and does not pay the replacement costs for that damage, that's primitive accumulation. When capital runs capital plant and infrastructure into the ground (the story of much of the US and the UK economies since the 1960's) that's primitive accumulation. When capital pays workers non-reproductive wages, (wages too low to produce a new generation of workers) that's primitive accumulation too. (Loren Goldner, Fictitious Capital for Beginners, <http://home.earthlink.net/~lrgoldner/imperialism.html>)

Prosumer: [The Power of Living Knowledge – Gigi Roggero]

"Should customers of the telephone company 3 need online assistance, they will be surprised by what they find on the dedicated area of its website. Those that respond to them are not in fact technicians paid by the company, but rather – through a free forum – other customers. For the best responses 3 rewards the contributors with modest prizes. Above all, the firm draws up monthly charts in which those that contribute to the forum can see their own value and merit recognised. If, however, posts are made that insinuate doubt about 3's use of unpaid work, within a few minutes the message gets deleted from the forum."

Undulation: [thefreedictionary.com] A regular rising and falling or movement to alternating sides; movement in waves.





