DESIGNING ECONOMIC CULTURES

Cultivating socially and politically engaged design practices against procedures of precarisation

Bianca Elzenbaumer

DECLARATION

I hereby certify that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Bianca Elzenbaumer

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1   For a detailed account about the economic and other resources that supported this research, see appendix K.

ABSTRACT

This practice-based research sets out to investigate and intervene in the tense relationship between the production of socially and politically relevant design work and the socio-economic precariousness many designers experience. Starting from an engagement with the precarious working conditions of designers, their genealogy over the last 30+ years and the role precarisation plays in forming docile creative subjects, the research moves on to a wider critique of the political economy and its precarising value practices. Based on this analysis, it then considers the strategic possibilities of mobilising design practices around commonly produced, used and reproduced resources in order to undo procedures of precarisation.

The trajectory of this process of exploration is shaped by a series of practical experiments constructed around the inhabitation of micro-economies of support that allowed for a collective engagement with the issues and strategies researched. These inhabitations took as their starting point the resources my own design practice, Brave New Alps, was offered throughout the course of this research. Thus, they took the form of two shared residencies, one of three months in Warsaw (*My castle is your castle*) and a second of two months in Milan (*Cantiere per pratiche non-afferm-ative*), out of which a design collective emerged that still works together. It is the experience of living through these support structures that directs the engagement with theory in order to establish decisive elements to overcome blockages and loops in practice.

The core elements that emerged as helpful in moving this research forward were characterised by an engagement with how designers are trained to accept and reproduce the conditions that precarise them, with how this training inserts itself in the wider logic of a capitalist economy and, finally, with how noncapitalist values can serve as points of orientation for constructing de-precarising design practices. In considering these key points, the aim of this research is to provide a series of both conceptual and practical tools for designers that can be mobilised in the creation of economic cultures that defy precarisation within and beyond the field of the profession. However, the research is not primarily concerned with stabilising precarious design practices as they are, but rather with creating conditions in which it is possible for designers to imagine and actuate what they could become when not pressured by precariousness to conform to the needs of the market.

TIMELINE

OVERVIEW OF PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH ELEMENTS

Constructive Dismantling,
seminar series exploring DIY culture
in Poland, A-I-R Laboratory, CCA
Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw

Designing Economic Cultures
seminar series, Design
Department, Goldsmiths
College, London

Start of the research

| JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUN | JUL | AUG | SEP | OCT | NOV | DEC |

2011

My castle is your castle,
inhabitation of a collectivised residency,
A-I-R Laboratory, CCA Ujazdowski Castle,
Warsaw

Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative,
inhabitation of a collectivised residency,
Careof DOCVA, Milan

Conversations with socially and
politically engaged practitioners

10

Campus in Camps,
exploring the commons and practices of
commoning in Palestinian refugee camps,
Dheisheh, Bethlehem (Occupied
Palestinian Territories)

| JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUN | JUL | AUG | SEP | OCT | NOV | DEC |

2012

Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative,
collective work on *Designers' Inquiry*

Conversations with socially and
politically engaged practitioners

TIMELINE

OVERVIEW OF PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH ELEMENTS

(continued)

New Cross Commoners,
exploring the commons and
practices of commoning in London

Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative,
planning next steps to take with
Designers' Inquiry

| JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUN | JUL | AUG | SEP | OCT | NOV | DEC |

2013

Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative,
collective work on *Designers' Inquiry*
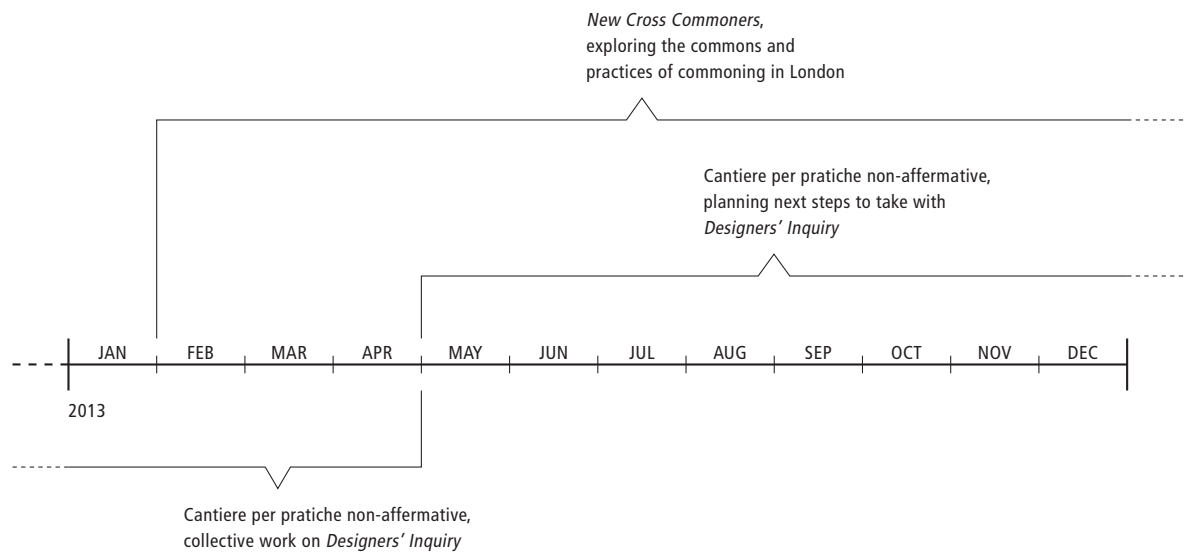
VISUAL ABSTRACT

FIGURE 1 The website accompanying the research, www.designingeconomiccultures.net

FIGURE 2 *My castle is your castle* – inhabitation of an economy of support, a collectivised artist residency at A-I-R Laboratory, Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA) Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw, April to July 2011

FIGURE 3 *Constructive dismantling* – a seminar series on DIY cultures in Poland before and after 1989, A-I-R Laboratory, CCA Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw, May to July 2011

FIGURE 4 *Public A-I-R* micro-festival – three days of activities around the theme of alternative economies, CCA Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw, 29-31 July 2011
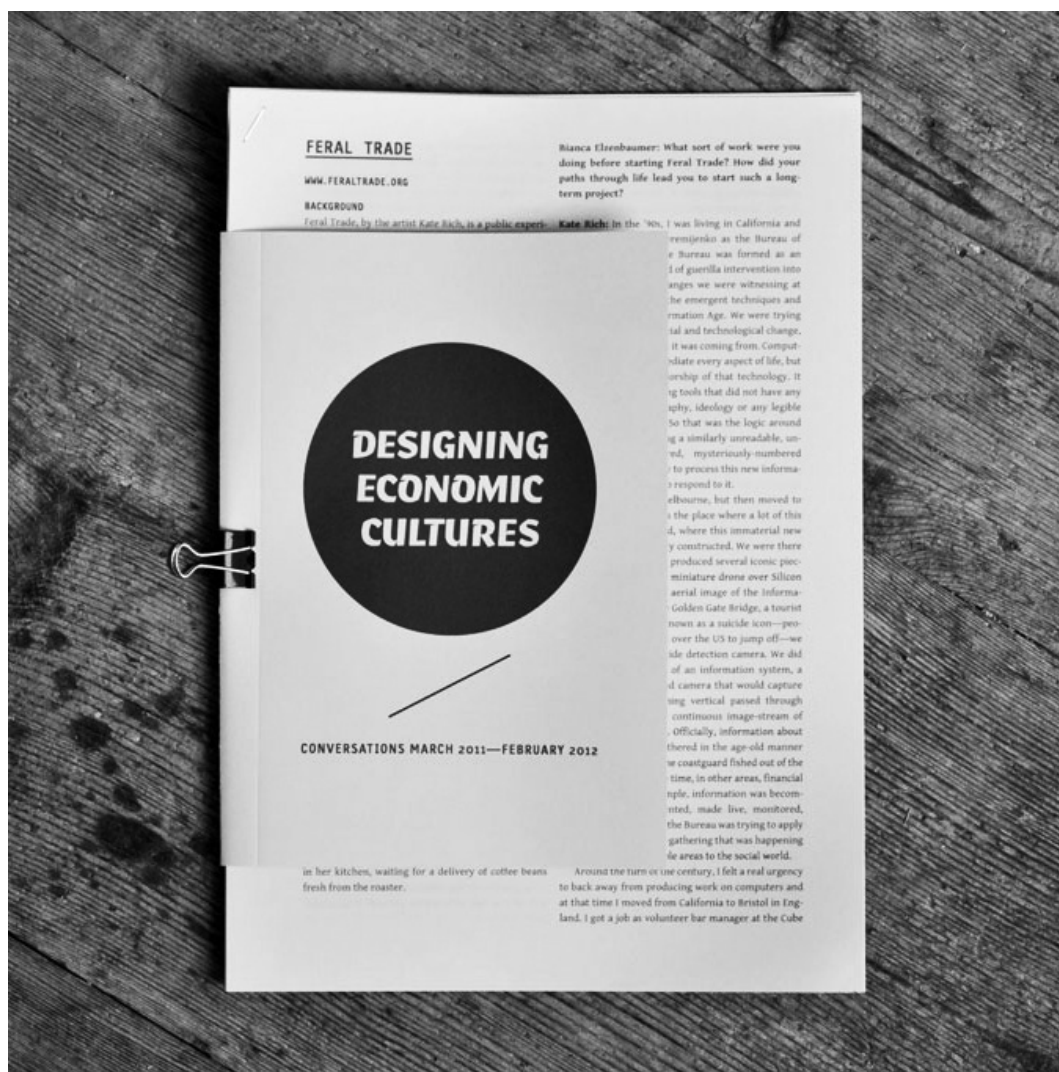
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INTRODUCTION

Many designers experience a tense relationship between their desire to produce work that questions given power relations and their need to produce work that sells so that they can make a living. Precarious working conditions – marked by insecure, contingent and flexible work – furthermore influence not only the kind of issues designers dedicate their skills and time to, but also the ways in which they approach them. In the assurance of a foreseeable career and life narrative, critical social engagement in design is often being sacrificed or diminished in order to cater to the needs of the market. My personal experience of a whole range of symptoms of precariousness, including highly insecure working arrangements, the constant need for maximum flexibility and its associated anxieties, has led me to question the long-term sustainability of critically-engaged design practices. However, I also observed designers experiencing similarly precarious conditions, who had chosen to comply with the needs of the market in an attempt to escape precariousness. From this situation, the question emerges of how, as designers, we can contribute to the creation of economic cultures that allow practitioners to pursue critically-engaged projects. How to create work settings and support structures that positively affect designers' abilities to address unconventional environmental, political and social issues? What values and standpoints to adopt in the creation of such enabling structures?

Starting from this initial observation and the resulting questions, through practice-based research, we will investigate how to get out of the current undesirable deadlock of choices that many designers are presented with. We will explore three main areas: firstly, we will examine how precariousness plays out in the lives of designers and its developments in this respect over the past 30+ years of neoliberal politics. By drawing on the work of Foucault, we will focus on how precariousness is entangled in the shaping of subjectivity and modes of practice of designers. Secondly, we will engage in an analysis of precarising procedures through a critique of the capitalist mode of production. Here we will consider how capitalist values shape the social practices according to which designers approach the use of time, the definition of innovation and the formation of social relations. Thirdly, we will explore a range of autonomist and feminist autonomist social practices that designers could draw on for the creation of de-precarising work settings and support structures.

In working through these three areas, drawing both on practice as well as on theory, we will build up a series of practical as well as conceptual tools that can

be deployed for re-routing the relation between critically engaged design practices and precariousness. By exploring how we are formed as creative subjects and how precarising values are ingrained in our lives, we will put together a tool-box of concepts, values and practices for precarious designers that has the potential to open up possibilities of thinking, feeling and intervening in the world that may be less apparent at the moment.[2] In the construction of such an operational tool-box of concepts, values and practices, the necessity for designers to engage in different economic becomings emerges particularly in relation to the desire to sustain long-term critical social engagement in design. Throughout this research it becomes apparent that a quest for the long-term sustainability of such practices requires the active political engagement of designers in terms of how they organise both their practices and their lives in order not to constantly reinforce and reproduce precarising procedures. Aiming to produce critically-engaged content whilst practicing in conventional ways underestimates the substantial potential designers have to contribute to social change not only through the content of their work, but also through their ways of doing and being.

To go further by reframing the issues around designers and precariousness in relation to designers' subjectivities, this thesis not only proposes ways of dealing with precarising procedures beyond the individual level, but also elaborates theoretical points of orientation that allow for a more strategic evaluation of how designers are – and can - contribute to social transformation more generally. Thus, the pratico-theoretical tool-box elaborated through this research can complement the teaching of design as well as already existing design practices, because the knowledges and strategies elaborated can be mobilised by multiple actors who want to strategically foster transformative design practices. An engagement with how power relations play out in precarising procedures, paired with a feminist and autonomist Marxist critique of the political economy and the social practices this critique fosters, can constitute a basis on which to imagine cultures that undo the dynamics of precarisation. By proposing noncapitalist points of orientation for designers, the

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2   This approach relates to the way Gilles Deleuze, in a conversation with Michel Foucault, defines theory as a tool-box that needs to function and be of use beyond itself: Michel Foucault, "Intellectuals and Power," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. Donald Fernand Bouchard (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), p.208. Furthermore, it relates to the way Brian Massumi enriches the idea of the tool-box by proposing to test the functionality of a concept through a series of questions: "The question is not: is it true? But: does it work? What new thoughts does it make possible to think? What new emotions does it make possible to feel? What new sensations and perceptions does it open in the body?" Brian Massumi, "Translator's Foreword: Pleasures of Philosophy," in *A Thousand Plateaus by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari* (London: Continuum Books, 2004), p.xv-xvi.

initial questions around precariousness are gradually shifted from an individual to a collective plane that allows for a strategic redefinition of contemporary design practices.

Research approach

The approach to generating this pratico-theoretical tool-box is influenced by the way my own collaborative design practice *Brave New Alps,* in which I have engaged since 2005 with my *compagno* Fabio Franz, works through issues by literally "inhabiting" them. This means that we enter or create the contexts we are working on and inhabit them on a daily basis for certain periods of time. When, for example, we decided to work on alternative pedagogical approaches to teaching during our MA, we set up a self-organised department that we ran together with about thirty fellow students over the period of seven weeks.[3] This method of inhabitation, that constitutes the major practical tool for this design research, was initially inspired by Irit Rogoff's reflection on how meaning is produced differently through the multiple relations that are generated when living through things. It is an approach to knowledge production rooted in feminist practice that implies entering an issue through a process of experience and experimentation, thus engaging in what Rogoff calls "embodied criticality."[4] What we find inspiring about this feminist approach is that it denies a reliance on unmoveable assumptions, that by wholly investing one's subjectivity, one removes the distance, which might allow for a safe and disembodied analysis and design proposal.

By adopting an embodied approach to the issues of this research, we aim to generate what feminist theorist Donna Haraway refers to as "situated knowledges," i.e. knowledges that are generated from an always specific standpoint and that do not distance the knowing subject from everybody else but instead engages in collective processes of knowledge production. In this sense, we understand situated knowledges as always embodied and thus complex as well as contradictory rather than (apparently) objective, disembodied and simplistic.[5] This feminist approach to knowledge production that goes back to a critique of a seemingly neutral knowledge

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3   The period of pre- and post-inhabitation extended over the whole academic year, see Bianca Elzenbaumer et al., eds., *Department 21* (London: Royal College of Art, 2010).

4   Irit Rogoff, "'Smuggling' - an Embodied Criticality," transversal, http://eipcp.net/dlfiles/rogoff-smuggling.

5   Donna Jeanne Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

produced from the male, white and Western standpoint, acknowledges, as Sandra Harding points out, that "knowledge is constructed through political desires, interests and values,"[6] and that these are too often about securing the exploitation, oppression or invisibility of others. Therefore, inhabiting this research with the desire to create situated knowledges is also an attempt to collectively address Foucault's question of "how not to be governed *like that*, by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such an objective in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them."[7] In being informed by such questions, this design research is also continually accompanied by the question of who the created knowledges are siding with, in what ways they are doing so and what kind of society they are instrumental in creating.

Adopting this feminist approach, then, means that our position gradually shifts and adjusts as we develop the tool-box with which to intervene in the processes of precarisation. It also means that by inhabiting this research, we are not only laying our design practice open to transformation, but also our subjectivities. Furthermore, we will reflect on and experiment with ways in which to synchronise the desire to create socially relevant design work with the design processes we adopt and the lives by which we sustain such production. In this sense, this research is not primarily about finding ways in which precarious designers can stabilise their existing working lives, but about creating economic cultures that make space for transformations, space to experiment with what a "meaningful" design practice can entail today.

By assuming that "the personal is political,"[8] we will move from analysing our and other designers' personal troubles with precariousness to an engagement with the wider economic and political procedures that generate these troubles. In this move from the concrete to the abstract, we will generate "relays" between practice and theory in order to both overcome blockages or loops in practice and to

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6   Sandra Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women's Lives* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1991), p.146.

7   In his 1978 lecture to the *Societé francaise de la philosophie,* Foucault proposes, "the art of not being governed quite so much" as a first definition of critique. Here he refers to governmentalisation as the subjugation of individuals through the arts of government as exercised, for example, by pedagogy, politics and economics. Michel Foucault, "What Is Critique?," in *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer and Lysa Hochroth (New York: Semiotext(e), 1997), p.44-47.

8   This slogan accompanied the work of feminist consciousness raising groups in the 1960s. See Carol Hanisch, "The Personal Is Political," http://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PersonalisPol.pdf.

evaluate and inform theory.[9] During this process, we will always return back – if at times in a zigzagging fashion – to the concrete in the various areas of our lives in order to transform them. In doing so, we are borrowing from a line of engagement within what is termed "militant research," i.e. a way of doing research that wants to collectively re-appropriate the capacity of "worlds-making," a kind of research that "questions, problematises and pushes the real through a series of concrete procedures"[10] and that, through its collective element, constantly questions the role of a leading expert figure, who apparently refashions the world on his own.

Therefore, the research not only introduces questions in "places where formerly there was a seeming consensus about what one did and how one went about it,"[11] as prefigured by Rogoff's embodied criticality, but will also propose other ways of doing and becoming that we can experiment with. In doing so, our focus is on collective becomings beyond precariousness, because there is no way we can immerse ourselves alone in our present in order to transform it. Being, however, aware that the complexities around processes of precariousness necessarily exceed our capacity to know them,[12] we attempt to make sense of them from the angle of precarious designers who perceive precariousness not so much as a monolith than as a series of procedures of precarisation in which it is possible to intervene.

Regarding the way the research unfolded, it was inscribed in an attempt to structure it in ways that allowed for the framing of questions and possible actions, both in relation to practice as well as theory, together with other practitioners. From the outset, there was a desire for the research to exist in and interact with the world throughout its evolution, rather than to place it in the world only once completed. Therefore, the research entailed two intense inhabitations during which, with my own practice Brave New Alps, I shared a working and living space over an extended period of time with other practitioners, working through the research questions by living them out. Moreover, the research was opened up to a larger public through a website that, as the research advanced, built up in content,

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9   Deleuze evokes the image of relays between theory and practice in order to pierce through the wall of theory. Foucault, "Intellectuals and Power," p.205-06.

10   Precarias a la Deriva cited by Team Colors Collective, "Workshop: What Is Militant Research?," http://teamcolors.wordpress.com/2009/06/08/workshop-what-is-militant-research/. For a genealogy of militant research, see: Marta Malo de Molina, "Common Notions," transversal, http://eipcp.net/transversal/0406/malo/en and http://eipcp.net/transversal/0707/malo/en.

11   Irit Rogoff, "What Is a Theorist?," http://www.kein.org/node/62.

12   John Law, *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research* (Oxon: Routledge, 2004), p.6.

served – and continues to serve – as a tool for other designers who might be asking similar questions.[13] On this website, the research activities that were open to the public are documented, such as the series of seminars I organised at Goldsmiths revolving around my initial research questions. This allowed me to open questions up for conversation with other designers, as well as to enter into conversation with practitioners who had already investigated different aspects of these questions in their work. These moments of opening up the research for debate, were important, as through them, it became evident how little many design students knew about the world of work (especially if they have never been out of education), how there is a tendency to idealise future working lives and how very often conversation among designers is lacking conceptual points of orientation that could help make sense of the precarising dynamics within the creative industries.[14] The knowledges created through these seminars, and through other moments when the research was presented publicly within the context of design,[15] were important triggers for introducing theoretical elements into this thesis which might support designers in more clearly identifying precarising procedures which are too often taken as the norm that cannot be challenged.

The following further moments throughout this research were points at which Fabio and I intensely engaged with others in thinking through the questions and tentative answers we were formulating, which I will expand later: in 2011, a series of seminars looking specifically into DIY practices of providing for one's needs at Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw; in 2012, the production of a fanzine on the common and the commons within Campus in Camps, an experimental university programme within the Palestinian refugee camp of Dheisheh; since February 2013, the exploration of commons and practices of commoning within the framework of the London-based group New Cross Commoners.

This opening up and collectivising of the research prompted not only new paths for investigation, but through the people, discussions and shared experiences, constituted new desires for action. The various – and at times interrelated – collectivities that emerged from the research process have also become the very structures that made it possible to imagine strategies and tactics against precarisation, which

13   www.designingeconomiccultures.net

14   See appendix A for the topics and invited speakers of each seminar.

15   See appendix I for a timeline of these moments of public engagement.

from an individualised position would not have been apparent. Moreover, this collective engagement allowed a rethinking of what design practices can become today if they want to critically engage with existing power relations.[16]

Backdrop of this research

Since the writing of the proposal for this practice-based research in the summer 2010, we have lived through a tightening of austerity measures in many European countries. These measures imposed by politicians, the European Central Bank and international rating agencies, should consolidate national budgets that have been wrecked by bailing out the banks as well as through years of systemic overspending and under-taxation of corporations and the wealthy. In their desperate attempts to save national economies, politicians have begun to engage in savage cuts to welfare and culture: health services have been cut and privatised; pensions and benefits are being cut, while taxes are placed on goods of daily use so that they hit the majority of workers rather than the particularly wealthy; education has been made prohibitively expensive in places like the UK; research – especially in the humanities – has been made unfeasible in places like Italy. Meanwhile, asking for social justice and a critical engagement with the unfolding global processes has become marked as too leftist and not a priority on the nationalist, self-protective agendas of many. These developments, which are affecting us all, but perhaps even more so the strong protests against them such as the 15M in Spain or Occupy in the US and the UK, have undoubtedly contributed to shaping and, at times, radicalising this research. These developments constantly fuelled the desire to go to the root of precariousness and to look for theoretical, as well as practical, proposals that are rooted in a radical critique of the political economy. Moreover, they have prompted me to consider precariousness not as a given and static state of things, but rather as a process of precarisation that can be accelerated, slowed down, directed and resisted.[17]

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16 To complicate the fact that the need – as well as desire – for more collective work emerged ever more strongly throughout this research, my own and my common practice with Fabio is put in a tricky position, since for this research to be validated as a PhD it requires independent, individual work. So this is a curious and at times unfortunate, as well as tense, position to be in, especially in regards to writing up this thesis, as this activity remained most solidly individualised due to the fact that my precarious fellow practitioners have little time to sit down in order to craft texts collectively.

17 This approach is also reflected in how Isabell Lorey describes precariousness as an ongoing process of becoming precarious governing people by the means of insecurity. See Isabell Lorey, "Governmentality and Self-Precarization," transversal, http://eipcp.net/transversal/1106/lorey/en/print ; Isabell Lorey, "Governmental Precarization," transversal, http://eipcp.net/transversal/0811/lorey/en.

Given the situated approach I bring to this practice-based research, a note on my own background in relation to precariousness and social engagement – both in terms of upbringing and design practice – seems due in order to clarify the direction of the research. I have grown up as the only child of a single mother, who, after her separation from my father, was stranded with a bank loan that, at times, took on extremely high interests rates due to the recession of the 1980s. Thus, my upbringing in a small village in the Italian Alps was marked by the constant threat of having our house and small local café repossessed by the bank. This situation meant that my mother was constantly working in order to repay the loan, whilst my father was mostly absent exploring the opportunities opened up to him by having left his job in the factory and subsequently dedicating himself to being a ski teacher within the newly emerging tourist industry. Thus, for most of my childhood, I saw my mother struggling with debt, the consequences of overwork and the task of taking care of me. This did mean that I was free to spend my time outside of kindergarten and school to roam the village with other local children or on my own. Moreover, it meant not only that my grandmother and one of my aunts would often take care of me, but that I would also spend a lot of time at my mother's local café interacting with a diverse group of locals of all ages and, in this sense, that more generally I experienced a childhood being "taken care of" by the local community.

More recently, my position with regards to precariousness and social issues has been marked by my collaborative practice Brave New Alps in which I engage with my *compagno* Fabio Franz. We began working together during our BA in 2005, feeling that together we could make of design what we had both wanted it to be. Prior to collaborating, we disliked the goals towards which we were urged to apply our lateral thinking and creative skills. However, having begun working together, we realised that we could in fact use these skills to work on a combination of social, political and environmental issues, through both self-initiated and commissioned projects. Furthermore, since our undergraduate course, we have integrated our practice in a series of experiences that have significantly shaped our thinking: for example, a year of social service with drug addicts during which we realised the extent to which public services are more interested in removing addicts from an otherwise smoothly-running society rather than supporting them in changing their situation. Subsequently, I completed an MA in Mediation and International Peacekeeping that introduced approaches to non-violent communication and that took us several times as Brave New Alps to Palestine, where we explored what our design skills could

bring to shifting the grounds of discussion around the conflict there. Equipped with these kinds of experiences and experimentation, we both went on to do MAs in design during which we would often hear comments about the impossibility of making a living were we to continue to hold on to our "idealist" approach – a position we did not want to accept unchallenged. The combination of these personal experiences, more complex than presented here in an abbreviated form, are, I believe, significant as to how my analysis, attention and desires move through this research.

Outline of thesis structure

The structure of this thesis is an attempt to interweave practice and theory, whilst allowing them both space to unfold. Thus we work our way through the research questions by moving back and forth between practice and theory, seeing how, with each instance of pratico-theoretical engagement, the possibilities of re-routing procedures of precarisation are adjusted, shifted and multiplied. Prompted by blockages in design practice, we will thus engage with theory in the desire to construct not only an adequate but an operative, theoretical horizon, one that supports the construction of openings where none could previously have been imagined. This constructed theoretical horizon is then explored through practice, which almost inevitably demands a return to theory in order to rework, increase and fine tune the theoretical points of orientation in order to relate them more closely to the necessities and complexities of practice.

Regarding terminology, it is important to note that I decided not to use the term "precarity" – an English neologism from the Italian *precarietà* – because it is already very much tied to specific movements and protests against precariousness that began to unfold in Mediterranean European countries from 2000 onwards.[18] I recognise these movements not only as inspiration for this research, but as extremely important in having brought precarity into public debate. However, I consider the term "precariousness" as more useful for my argument, being less tied to a specific,

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18   To cite only a few collectives that are part of this movement: in France, Les intermittents du spectacle emerged in 2002. In Italy, the Chainworkers have been active since 1999; in 2001, they began the MayDay Parade, a day dedicated to raising the issue of precarity within public space and in 2004, the group created San Precario, the patron saint of the precarious, in 2005 they started the anti-fashion label, Serpica Naro.

For an account of precarity struggles, see, for example María Isabel Casas-Cortés, "Social Movements as Sites of Knowldege Production: Precarious Work, the Fate of Care and Activist Research in a Globalizing Spain" (University of North Carolina, 2009), p.321-418. Marcello Tarì and Ilaria Vanni, "On the Life and Deeds of San Precario, Patron Saint of Precarious Workers and Lives," http://journal.fibreculture.org/issue5/vanni_tari_print.html.; Brave New Alps, "Conversations: Zoe Romano," http://www.designingeconomiccultures.net/zoe-romano/. Brave New Alps, "Conversations: Image-Shift," http://www.designingeconomiccultures.net/image-shift/.

recent historic period and location, instead read as denoting a condition that accompanies the capitalist mode of production since its initial developments.[19] Thus, in using this term, I want to explicitly tie my argumentation more widely to the working and living conditions generated by a capitalist economy. This also means that in the following exploration of how designers can contribute to alternative economic cultures, the focus is not only on how to de-precarise designers as they currently exist, but will circle around the desire to substantially challenge and reinvent the way designers work and live – to consider how to employ creativity not to sustain a competitive market economy but rather to invent other ways of living and relating to on another.

Part 1 – Precarisation of designers as a modulating procedure
In Part 1, it is the experience of precariousness among designers that prompts the engagement in sociological research in order to help make sense of the messy precarious working conditions designers experience, but seldom speak about in systemic terms. Here, we will draw primarily on the work of feminist sociologists Angela McRobbie and Rosalind Gill, alongside a bottom-up inquiry that I produced together with the Italian design collective Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative (Construction site for non-affirmative practice) between 2012 and 2013. Following these sociological accounts, we will trace how the precariousness designers experience today has developed since the shift from Fordist to post-Fordist production. This contextualisation of present conditions, which draws, amongst others, on an analysis of management literature produced by sociologists Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, is useful to avoid fostering a victimisation of precarious designers that fails to see the bigger economic picture.

From this outline of empirical and historical circumstances around precariousness, we will move on to reflect on the first peer-to-peer support structure set up by Brave New Alps in order to inhabit the possibilities and blockages related to attempts of undoing procedures of precarisation through the sharing of

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19   Here, I am also following Rosalind Gill and Andy Pratt's suggestion that precariousness denotes "all forms of insecure, contingent, flexible work – from illegalised, casualised and temporary employment, to homeworking, piecework and freelancing. In turn, precarity signifies both the multiplication of precarious, unstable, insecure forms of living and, simultaneously, new forms of political struggle and solidarity that reach beyond the traditional models of the political party or trade union." See Rosalind Gill and Andy Pratt, "In the Social Factory?," *Theory, Culture & Society* 25, no. 7-8 (2008): p.3. In doing so, I make a more specific use of the term than Judith Butler, who, in her reflections on the violent political developments after the attacks to the Twin Towers in 2001, denotes "precarious life" as being exposed to a consideration of what life is grievable and therefore liveable: Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), p.30.

material resources. This inhabitation, entitled *My castle is your castle*, took place during a five-month stay in Warsaw at the *Artist-In-Residence Laboratory* of the Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle. It consisted in the "collectivisation" of the residency's resources by sharing them with six other practitioners over a period of three months. Moreover, we decided to use a portion of our production budget to organise a series of public seminars to explore how Polish DIY culture dealt with economic constraints before and after the fall of the socialist regime in 1989. The experience of this first inhabitation and the engagement with activist DIY culture, brought to the fore the extent to which, as designers and practitioners in adjacent fields, we are intrinsically "coded" to take precariousness as the norm. Through reflection on the inhabitation, it becomes distinctly apparent that our unquestioned ways of working and living are often closely tied into precarising procedures.

To reflect on these (self-)precarising behaviours we return to theory to better understand how these behaviours are generated and, thus, how they might be overcome. We draw on Foucault's notion of governmentality in relation to discipline and techniques of the self, alongside Deleuze's notion of control societies. Thinking with Foucault and Deleuze helps clarify the crucial role design education, as well as the discourse around what constitutes an appropriate design practice, play in (re)producing processes of precarisation through the production of docile, creative subjects.

By moving back and forth between practice and theory, in this first part of the thesis we will assemble a series of tools that help define the main procedures of precarisation, their symptoms, as well as their recent historical development. Moreover, we venture to develop tools to detect the blockages within ourselves that we need to overcome if wanting to design precariousness out of our lives.

Intermezzo[20] – Capitalist value production, designers and precarisation
In the Intermezzo, we look at how processes of precarisation are related to capitalist modes of production. Here, we analyse the extent to which precarisation is a crucial element in the maximisation of profits within this specific economic system. To trace how and why practices around precariousness are embedded in the capitalist economy, we first draw on the work of Karl Marx to explore the basic principles that capital accumulation relies on and how they play out in practice. In doing so,

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20   This part is titled Intermezzo because it stands as a purely reflective excursus between Part 1 and Part 2, which are both constructed around the two major inhabitations undertaken within the framework of this research.

we untangle the core principles of, among others, the processes of exchange and of the production of surplus value that take place within capitalism. Furthermore, we engage with how productive labour is defined by capital and how this definition is instrumental in generating a precarious class of workers. Once we have assembled a series of theoretical tools that allows for a strategic analysis of the precarising processes unfolding in a capitalist economy, we use them to trace the social practices they foster and how they play out in the working lives of designers.

In this second step, when we move from the abstract to the concrete, we take up Massimo De Angelis' suggestion that the values we take for granted (or that we aspire to) are also the ones that influence our everyday practices within capitalism.[21] We adopt this as an understanding of capitalist principles in order to analyse how everyday practices of time, innovation and competition unfold within the field of design. Here we focus, for example, on absurd practices of free labour and the discourse that accompanies them, on the often problematic and actually precarising approaches to social innovation and entrepreneurship, and finally, on how competition as a mode of social relation fragments designers and produces constraints rather than "freedom."

Through the analysis of the Intermezzo, we build up a series of analytical tools that allow us to see an economic culture as collectively established and maintained through everyday practices. These tools serve not only for analysis, however, but can also be deployed for the strategic modulation of concrete practices in order to undo and/or exit precarising procedures. In this function, these tools are crucial in approaching Part 2 of this thesis.

Part 2 – Designing commons against precarisation
In Part 2, we explore a series of socio-economic values and practices of counter-conduct that designers could adopt to re-route their practices, and their lives, away from precarising procedures. Deploying the conceptual tools developed in Part 1 and the Intermezzo, we here draw on autonomist and feminist Marxist writings in order to consider how designers could change their practices with regards to content, processes, social relations, and self-perception. We begin by drawing on the work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, since in their writings they have extensively engaged with the possibilities of counter-conduct within cognitive work. Through

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21   Massimo De Angelis, *The Beginning of History: Value Struggles and Global Capital* (London: Pluto Press, 2007).

this, we engage with the concept of "biopolitical production" as the potential creation of social practices by subjects that refuse to comply with imposed discipline and control.[22] We also consider the concept of "the common" as an element that allows us to break out of individualised imaginaries. Furthermore, we explore the autonomist proposal of the "refusal of work," albeit through the feminist inflection given to it by Kathi Weeks, understood not as an end to all activities, but by a proliferation of activities that experiment with different social relations and modes of production.

Having thought through these autonomist approaches, we move to an analysis of the core inhabitation and experimentation of this research, the *Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative*. We trace the unfolding of the two-month collectivised residency in Milan at Careof DOVCA, a non-profit space for contemporary artistic research, which I organised with Brave New Alps in September and October 2011. Here, we see how the experience in Warsaw and the initial engagement with autonomist writings prompted the setting up of a space that would allow for more strategic sharing, reflecting and researching of methods to undo procedures of precarisation. Having outlined how the co-residency unfolded in this instance, we trace how from it the Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative emerged as a collective of designers who have since continued to work and research together. In engaging with how the activities the collective – of which I am part – have since developed, we focus on the bottom-up investigation of the socio-economic conditions of designers in Italy, *Designers' Inquiry*, that the collective produced between February 2012 and April 2013. Reflecting on the Cantiere is then a way to analyse one of the many forms a collective engagement with processes of precarisation can take among designers.

Following the questions raised by this inhabitation and our subsequent collective becoming, we explore a series of feminist Marxist concepts that move closer towards the messiness, complexity and material constraints that emerge when wanting to undo the everyday experiences of precariousness. Through the work of, in particular, Silvia Federici, Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Massimo De Angelis, we explore the potential the practice of commoning has to re-route design practice as a mode of addressing our needs and desires collectively without being tied to the precarising mechanisms of the market. In this exploration of the potential of commoning, we further tie into reflections on the work of reproduction and practices

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22   Hardt and Negri elaborate on biopolitical production in all three volumes of their trilogy, *Empire*, *Multitude* and *Commonwealth*. See for example, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009), p.151-52.

of care as important elements in the (re)creation of human beings by responding to their needs and desires rather than to the needs of the economy for docile workers. This exploration will be relayed through collective practice-based engagements with concrete practices of commoning taking place in both the Palestinian refugee camp of Dheisheh (Occupied Palestinian Territories) and the London neighbourhood of New Cross. This series of relay processes finally leads to a proposal of how time, innovation and social relations could be appropriated along the value practices of the commons, towards creating ways of life that are de-precarising both for designers as well as those designed for.

PART 1

Precarisation of designers as a modulating procedure

1. INTRODUCTION TO PART 1

Design students are producing an astonishing amount of work that is driven by social, environmental and political concerns. What is even more astonishing is how few of these concerns remain once they start working in the 'real' world. The social, environmental and political engagement undertaken by design students very often fades away after graduation, or at the latest around the age of 35,[23] when they have become exhausted by precarious working conditions characterised by lack of material welfare, stability and security. Indeed, working as a 'regular' design practitioner is already difficult within the creative industries and although taking a critical position towards serving the needs of the market seems plausible to many, it is also perceived as a tough stance to take within the current economic system. And so it is widely accepted that designers, at some point, will necessarily need to make a choice between financial stability and meaningful work. Not wanting to take this dynamic as a given, how can we create and cultivate economic cultures that allow for the continued development of socially and politically engaged design practices?

To begin to explore this tricky yet pressing question, in Part 1 of this thesis, by drawing on sociological accounts as well as an inquiry I co-produced throughout this research,[24] I will trace the diffuse precarious working and living conditions designers find themselves embedded in and will look at how these contribute to encouraging designers to give up on their social, environmental and political concerns. By taking this almost bird's-eye view on the situation of designers, it becomes possible to comprehend the problems and difficulties of single designers as systemic and not simply tied to individuals.

To proceed with the mapping of the current precariousness of designers, I will consider how today's conditions have gradually developed over the last forty years with the shift from Fordist to post-Fordist production. In doing so, I will outline how current conditions and perspectives of the future have changed for contemporary designers in comparison to older generations, I will also define precarious

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23   Both in a conversation with Adrian de la Court, teaching at the Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship (ICCE) at Goldsmiths College, London, and in an interview with Henning Krause, president of the German association of graphic designers (BDG), it was mentioned that designers of any kind are dropping out of the profession between the ages of 35 to 40 because of the insecure working conditions.

24   See chapter 13 for an account of how this inquiry has been produced. See appendix B for an original copy of the report or download it from Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative, "Designers' Inquiry: An Inquiry on the Socio-Economic Condition of Designers in Italy," http://www.pratichenonaffermative.net/inquiry/en/. (subsequently abbreviated as Cantiere, *Inquiry*)

designers in relation to other precarious workers to underline the political relevance of engaging with this issue.

After this initial mapping, I will recount and reflect on the first practical experiment, *My castle is your castle,* through which – with my collaborative practice Brave New Alps – I attempted to live through possible critical engagements with precariousness early on in this research. This experiment was set up as an inhabitation in spring/summer 2011 at the Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw and consisted in the collectivisation of an artist residency. In analysing this first physical inhabitation of my research questions, I will primarily draw on reflections triggered by engagement with Polish activist groups which took place during the same period.

Prompted by the experience of *My castle is your castle*, I will analyse the extent to which designers are not only disciplined into, but they themselves constantly conform to, a mode of working and living that perpetuates, accelerates and exacerbates precariousness. In this analysis, I will particularly draw on the work around governmentality, discipline and control produced by Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, as well as its contemporary declinations through Gerald Raunig. By tracing procedures of (self-)precarisation both within the creative industries and within design education, I will, however, also consider the potential for resistance inherent to this situation once designers begin to see it not as an exclusively personal issue, but as a systemic feature of our current economic culture.

2. ELEMENTS OF PRECARIOUSNESS

Being passionate about one's work, jumping from one commissioned project to the next, accepting new commissions even when overworked, keeping several commissions going at the same time, accepting work even when underpaid, establishing bulimic work patterns, having work taking over life, doing without sick pay, paid vacations and unemployment compensation, having no or only minimal social protection, while just about making it to the end of the month: this is what working as a designer today involves for many between the ages of 25 to 45, irrespective of the type of projects undertaken.[25]

To struggle with a combination of these conditions, which imply that work has taken over life by being unable to plan for a more economically certain future, is what characterises the experience of many designers – whether they define themselves as precarious or not. With the tendency among designers to either work freelance or to become a small business owner in the long-term,[26] it is impressive to see that sociological accounts of the field report that freelancers and small business owners tend to work, on average, an impressive 65 hours per week, rarely taking holidays.[27] However, this tendency goes hand-in-hand with designers experiencing profound anxieties about making ends meet, both in the short run ("will I be able to pay my rent?") and in the long run ("will I ever be able to retire?") as well as in regards of all the things that come in between ("I better not get seriously ill", "having kids is not an option", "I'll never afford my own place to live").

Today, few designers are not touched by the symptoms of poor pay, unpredictability and long term insecurity that come with precariousness, and those who are not directly are at least very often threatened by them as a daunting prospect always on the horizon. Whilst some designers might be better-off at the points when their work sells, this does not change the fact that within the creative industries

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25   For detailed sociological accounts of designers' working conditions, see for instance, Angela McRobbie, "From Holloway to Hollywood: Happiness at Work in the New Cultural Economy?," in *Cultural Economy: Cultural Analysis and Commercial Life*, ed. Paul Du Gay and Micheal Pryke (London: Sage, 2002)., Rosalind Gill, "Cool, Creative and Egalitarian? : Exploring Gender in Project-Based New Media Work in Europe," *Information, Communication & Society* 5, no. 1 (2002). See also, "Variant, Issue 41, Spring 2011," http://www.variant.org.uk/issue41.html.

26   In a conversation with Henning Krause, president of the German association of communication designers BDG, he mentioned that in Germany at the age of 40, designers generally need to set up an independent small business even when they have been more or less precariously employed, since agencies and studios prefer to employ recent graduates who have fresh ideas and more energy.

27   Rosalind Gill, "Technobohemians or the New Cybertariat? New Media Work in Amsterdam a Decade after the Web," in *Notebooks* (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2007), p.8.

people are always only as good as their last project.[28] Should that chain of "performance" break – due to exhaustion, illness, family life, a too critical turn in one's practice or for any other reason – most designers risk slipping into the daily struggles of the highly educated yet precarious creative crowd.[29]

Predictable unpredictability and poor pay

When considering the whole professional field of design, the unpredictability many designers perceive as their individual weakness, turns out to be systemic. It is the norm to not know how long a contract will last, or when the next freelance job will come along, or even exactly how much work a commission will require.[30] This unpredictability implies, for many, striving to stay employable or commissionable for the next job by taking on more work than one can handle, doing unpaid overtime, taking on underpaid work or accepting projects without too many critical questions.

The effects of handling the unpredictably of work individually – since always in "healthy" competition with everyone else – leads many designers to subject themselves to bulimic work and chaotic sleeping patterns, unhealthy eating habits and to the abuse of legal and illegal substances to keep themselves productive and, thus, competitive in the market. These behaviours, as located on the backdrop of unpredictability, result in high levels of stress and anxiety, which in turn result in strained bodies, exhaustion, burn-out, premature heart attacks and strokes as well as mental and emotional disorders and depression.[31] However, in terms of how the field of design is currently structured, such exhaustion through a total dedication to design work becomes either an issue not to be mentioned in public so as to admit weakness for which only you are to blame or otherwise a matter to be spoken of with pride to testify one's commitment to the field.[32]

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28   Helen Blair, "You're Only as Good as Your Last Job: The Labour Process and Labour Market in the British Film Industry," *Work, Employment and Society* 15(1)(2001).

29   Alexandra Manske and Norman Ludwig, "Bildung Als Statusgarant? Über Die Lose Verbindung Zwischen Qualifikation Und Status Bei Hochqualifizierten," *Vorgänge* 2010, no. 03 (2010): p.96.

30   Gill, "Technobohemians."

31   Andy C. Pratt, "New Media, the New Economy and New Spaces," *Geoforum* 31, no. 4 (2000); Gill, "Technobohemians," p.9; Guillaume Paoli, "Demotivational Training," transversal, http://eipcp.net/transversal/0704/paoli/en/print ; Cantiere, *Inquiry*, p.21-27

32   This is an observation made throughout eight years of design education and work – which in my case, as well as for many others, overlap timewise. There are numerous "hero stories" of people collapsing, having a breakdown, working with fever and so on.

However, most often, there is little chance that such total dedication will lead to
the affluence one might desire to gain from it. As a study by the German profession-
al association for communication design (BDG) shows,[33] designers tend to remain
in the national lower to mid-income brackets throughout all their working lives,
because higher-paid positions within the creative industries are systematically
occupied by economists, lawyers and publishers.[34] In numerical terms, this means
that even experienced designers in Germany will rarely earn more than €40,000 a
year, which corresponds to the entry-level salary of an engineering management
graduate (*Wirtschaftsingenieur*), and as many as 20 per cent of designers will earn
an income that hovers around the statistically established poverty line of €925
per month. This fact is even more alarming when considering that the BDG study
focused on employed designers only and did not consider the precariously-placed
freelancers that are, for instance, trying to earn a living in a city such as Berlin.

Lack of security ahead

Beyond the unpredictability of work and generalised low income, designers also
face insecurity in the long-term: most designers are not part of any pension scheme,
have no insurance against the inability-to-work and do not have support for paren-
tal leave.[35] Thus being a precarious worker also means that the responsibility and
measures for periods in life where one cannot work are to be solely borne by the
individual. This might represent less of a problem for the few who made it into the
"upper" income range or for those knowing that if all else fails they can count on
their family's wealth. But for those designers whose earnings are below the mini-
mum income level or just enough to make a decent living and who cannot count on
any other support, this situation (especially when female) becomes a poverty risk
when having children, becoming unable to work or in old age.[36] The struggle with
this lack of security in the long-term currently forces many to participate in the
individualised competition to succeed above others for as long as they can, without

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33   BDG, "Gehaltsreport-2010," (Berlin: Berufsverband der Deutschen Kommunikationsdesigner, 2011). The results
of the study in Germany are also emerging among designers working in Italy. See: Cantiere, *Inquiry*, p.8-13

34   For a more detailed analysis of the BDG-study, see Manske and Ludwig, "Bildung Als Statusgarant?."

35   Cantiere, *Inquiry*, p.32

36   For gender inequality in the creative industries see: Gill, "Technobohemians." Cantiere, *Inquiry*, p.25-27

any viable alternative options.[37]

Given this lack of security and the strategies it currently prompts at a personal level, it becomes questionable if discourses, such as that of urban studies theorist Richard Florida, who suggests creatives would prefer to live in highly stimulating "creative cities" and defer "time-consuming obligations"[38] like parenting, are in reality a genuine creative tendency. Might we not also read them as the only potential behaviour that designers are today presented with if wanting to make a living? Discourses like Florida's, that are not only dear to policy makers but often also to designers themselves, have no place for workers with ordinary, bodily needs: human creativity is assumed to be a "virtually limitless resource"[39] that is fuelled by intrinsic rather then extrinsic rewards, i.e. a resource whose activation makes workers happy no matter how much they are paid. By not taking into account the deleterious effects of precarious working conditions such discourses strategically assume that workers such as designers need nothing more than creative inputs in order to be nurtured and, thus, not only does this entangle designers in flawed visions of themselves, but also frees policy makers from their responsibility to intervene against precarising elements, such as the structural lack of long term security.

In this sense, considering the various structural elements that contribute to the precarisation of designers, including poor pay, unpredictability and lack of long term security, it becomes clear that precariousness functions in direct relation to power within the current economic system which not only dictates, but also subtly influences, designers' decisions as to what issues they ought to dedicate their time and skills to. However, when considering the ways in which the process of precarisation that designers are struggling with has changed and accelerated even only in the three years of this research (during which time the economic crisis that exploded in 2008 began to bite ever harder), it becomes important to investigate how and why the current economic culture has developed in recent history.

37   Ibid; Jörn Morisse and Rasmus Engler, *Wovon Lebst Du Eigentlich? Vom Überleben in Prekären Zeiten* (München: Piper Verlag, 2007); BDG, "Gehaltsreport-2010." The extent to which creatives are exposed to these social insecurities clearly varies between European countries as some nations have state provisions in place for securing social benefits for creatives, such as the 'Künstlersozialkasse' (KSK – artist's social insurance) in Germany. For more details on the KSK, see http://www.kuenstlersozialkasse.de/ and Manske and Ludwig, "Bildung Als Statusgarant?."

38   Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), p.14.

39   Ibid., p.xiv.

3. PRECARIOUSNESS AS A POST-FORDIST SYMPTOM?

In an outline of recent historical developments, the precarious working conditions known by designers today can be seen as embedded in the changes brought about by a shift from Fordist to post-Fordist production in the global North/West.[40] This shift occurred because the further growth of profits based on a Fordist regime of production were stalled both by the inherent contradictions within the system as well as by the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s that rebelled against the forms of work and life that this form of production entailed.[41] Thus, in the 1970s, a shift in the system of production and the organisation of work began: assembly-line production carried out by relatively well-paid workers in the global North/West was further automated and transferred to countries in the global South/East with cheaper labour power, longer working hours and fewer taxes and regulations. In the meantime, production in the global North/West shifted towards information- and service-based industries. Thus, work in the global North/West began to be organised in a manner that emphasised self-management and the investment of the self in work, largely doing away with the top down, strictly hierarchical and often de-personalising organisation of work that was prevalent in Fordism.[42] This shift was, however, further accompanied by the erosion of previously granted job security and social security measures, which in turn precarised workers.

Historically, this precarisation of the labour force through a shift from Fordism to post-Fordism can be read as a disciplining response of capital and the state to the anti-capitalist social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, which pressured the state and employers with demands for less alienating work, social justice and cultural liberation by occupying factories, taking over universities and blocking the streets.[43] While these movements rebelled against most disciplining social conventions and

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40   For an overview on post-Fordism, see for example: Ash Amin, "Post-Fordism: Models, Fantasies and Phantoms of Transition," in *Post-Fordism: A Reader*, ed. Ash Amin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1995). For an overview of Fordism, see David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1990), p.125-40.

41   For a theorisation of the variety of factors involved in this transition, see Harvey, *Postmodernity*, p.173-88.

42   For a detailed analysis of the shift in management techniques from Fordism to post-Fordism, see Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Verso, 2005).

43   See for example: Kristin Ross, "Forms and Practices," in *May '68 and Its Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2002). "1962-1973: Worker and Student Struggles in Italy," http://libcom.org/history/1962-1973-worker-student-struggles-italy. Big Flame Women's Commission, "Fighting for Feminism: The 'Women Question' in an Italian Revolutionary Group," http://libcom.org/library/fighting-feminism-womens-question-italian-revolutionary-group-0.

were often reinforcing each other's demands, the labour movement specifically rebelled against what Richard Sennett calls the "iron cage" of work.[44] A cage, which, on the one hand, had given workers a clear, foreseeable structure for their "career" and life narrative, but that, on the other hand had structured people's lives in such a strict, monotonous and exhausting way that it was not desirable.[45]

The struggles in those years took on an intensity that would block a country's economy for weeks. The strength of the workers was impressive compared to today, possibly because they could still base their power as a collective body on concessions gained through previous struggles that had, for example, achieved the shortening of the working day, higher levels of safety on the workplace and broad welfare benefits.[46] In fact, social philosopher André Gorz argues that the massive protests of the 1960s could have led to a liberation of work and to the emergence of a different society as well as economy, but the strategy adopted by those in power, besides violently crushing the movements,[47] was to bring the "rebellious working classes into line by abolishing 'work', while continuing to make 'work' the basis of social belonging and rights, and the obligatory path to self-esteem and the esteem of others."[48] In short, through the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism, people's working arrangements were made precarious, both structurally as well as in their self-perception, by taking away the very thing that was still required for making a living and for gaining social recognition.

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44   Richard Sennett, *The Culture of the New Capitalism* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2007), p.31.

45   For a picture of that "iron cage" see, for example: Elio Petri, "La Classe Operaia Va in Paradiso (the Working Class Goes to Paradise)," (1971). For a picture of how the industrial working processes are still present today in their monotony, see the following video art work: Ali Kazma, *Jean Factory,* 2008. See also contemporary amateur footage shot in Asian factories, like: "Worker Has Super Fast Hands,"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=NZK5kkcJypg#!

46   The strength of the working class in the global North/West in the 1950s and 1960s, which not only saw it gaining rights and improvements in its living standards outside work, cannot only been read as a result of the cohesiveness of industrial workers and students. It must also be seen in connection with factors like the continued exploitation of colonial populations, the unpaid reproductive labour performed by women, the access to cheap oil, and the massive need to rebuild large parts of Europe after WWII. The *People's History* in Manchester (UK) as well as the *Working Class Movement Library* in Salford (UK) are tracing the history of workers' struggles in the UK since the advent of the industrial revolution with rich historic material – albeit with a weak elaboration of the role of women and colonial populations in these struggles.

47   See for example the fact that in 1979 the Italian state crushed the *autonomia* movement by imprisoning 1500 militant workers and theorists. For an account, see Sylvère Lotringer and Christian Marazzi, eds., *Autonomia: Post-Political Politics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Semiotext(e), 2007).

48   André Gorz, *Reclaiming Work: Beyond the Wage-Based Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), p.4.

Neoliberal politics

The precarisation of workers was, from the end of the 1970s onwards, heavily supported by neoliberal politics, and politicians such as Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. Neoliberal politics would, on the one hand, commodify everything (hence also the rise of the service industry) and, on the other hand, would discipline labourers by making work flexible and cheap by breaking its collective power through harsh legislation.[49] This neoliberal move to discipline workers was justified by the argument that if lower production costs could not be established through workers' flexibility, corporations would transfer production and investment to 'cheaper' countries and finance capital would move with them, which would have disastrous consequences for the countries of the global North/West.

So while workers' protests were crushed,[50] the hard-fought welfare provisions, which in the global North/West guaranteed free education and health care, as well as social housing and pensions, began to be dismantled.[51] This was because neoliberal politics, based on deregulation and privatisation, withdrew state involvement from many areas of social provision.[52] Marxist geographer David Harvey, in his analysis of this neoliberal process, points out how the withdrawal of the welfare state proved (and still proves) deleterious to workers' freedom and well-being because it dismantled the social safety net that protected the rebellious workers from impoverishment and the kind of precariousness that today functions as a mechanism of control for human activity.[53]

Transformation of design

In relation to the field of design, we see that the shift in production was accompanied in the field of culture by what is often described as a shift from modernism to

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49   For the emergence of precariousness through neoliberalism, see, for example: Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011). p.6; David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

50   Decisive defeats of the workers' struggles have been, for example, the layoff of more than 14,000 workers at the FIAT plant in Italy in 1979 through the computerisation of production; or the breakdown of the miners' strike in the UK in 1984, which had wanted to prevent the closing down of 20 mines and the layoff of 20,000 workers.

51   It needs to be noted that although the welfare state had many benefits, it still had many drawbacks: for example that the work women perform in the home was not granted the same rights as the work of men in the factories.

52   Harvey, *Neoliberalism*, p.3.

53   Ibid., p.76.

postmodernism.[54] Whilst the numbers of industrial workers in the global North/
West were sharply declining, the design profession saw an exponential growth
in the 1980s. According to design historian Guy Julier, this growth was not due to
design for manufacture but to design for the service sector and was marked by a
convergence between design and other commercial practices such as advertising,
management consultancy and public relations.[55] Julier points to three neoliber-
al phenomena which contributed to this increase, particularly in communication
design: the need for the growing amount of mergers to be re-branded, the need for
privatised state industries and services to be positioned in a competitive market,
and the massively growing finance sector that opened up a design market for corpo-
rate finance literature.[56]

Furthermore, at the beginning of the 1980s, Margaret Thatcher, the conserva-
tive prime minister of the UK, endorsed the design profession for its considerable
profit potential and advised designers to "be more aggressive in selling themselves
to industry as wealth creators."[57] This governmental position was then taken up by
the country's Design Council, which in 1983 launched the slogan 'Design for Prof-
it', firmly re-inscribing the telos of the design profession in the market economy.[58]
However, Julier reminds us that the boom of design in the 1980s was partly broken
by the recession at the beginning of the 1990s and that, within the field of design,
this marked the advent of post-Fordist modes of outsourcing: design consultancies
would no longer employ designers on traditional contracts, but would hire them
only for specific project tasks, thus avoiding extra costs for the company whilst ren-
dering designers precarious. Given this development, in the 1990s designers were
pushed to inscribe their practices more rigorously within business and commercial
culture, following the maxim of "faster, better, cheaper" in order to keep them-
selves afloat in an increasingly competitive market.[59]

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54   For discussions about the contested nature of the shift from modernism to postmodernism, see for example,
Harvey, *Postmodernity*, p.42. Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism: Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham:
Duke University Press, 1991), p.13.

55   Guy Julier, *The Culture of Design* (London: SAGE, 2008), p.19-20. Jameson denotes this shift described by
Julier as the postmodernist integration of aesthetic production into commodity production generally, see Jameson,
Postmodernism, p.4.

56   Julier, *Culture of Design*, p.26-28.

57   Margaret Thatcher cited by Guy Julier, drawing on a 1991 publication by Whitely: ibid., p.26.

58   Ibid.

59   Ibid., p.30-37.

Incorporation of critique

Placing the developments of the design profession into the broader shift from Fordist to post-Fordist production, it is also interesting to note how it aligns with the emergence of the "flexible worker," who adapts to whatever (precarious) working conditions are proposed to him or her. However, as sociologists Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello point out, this emergence of the flexible worker was marked and initially made desirable by an incorporation of the 'artistic critique' of the 'iron cage' that the protest movements of the 1960s and '70s voiced:[60] the flexibilisation clearly incorporated *creativity* since emerging information technologies were fuelled by inventiveness, imagination and innovation; it incorporated the desire for *autonomy* by proposing new, more individualised enterprise mechanisms and by substituting costly supervision with self-management, i.e. with a monitoring of the self in order to keep productive; finally, it incorporated *authenticity* through production in short series, the rise in importance of fashion, leisure and service sectors that would all respond to individual desires of consumption. The combination of these factors is indeed, then, the very element that fulfils the descriptions of postmodernism, shaping what design historians Adamson and Pavitt call today's "permissive, fluid and hyper-commodified situation of design."[61]

But, as Boltanski and Chiapello further point out, the incorporation of the 'artistic critique' manifested itself while dismissing the 'social critique' with which it has been coupled in the social movements, a critique that demanded social justice, equality and solidarity, and which was much of the time inscribed in anti-capitalist desires.[62] By separating artistic from social demands their subversive power was neutralised and the artistic demands – like autonomy, spontaneity, conviviality, creativity – became manageable as objectives in their own right. By establishing flexible, individual workers as entrepreneurs of the self, who, in order to be successful, needed to be autonomous, spontaneous, authentic, convivial and have visionary intuition, the collectivity that represented the strength of the movements was broken. This transition to establishing workers as entrepreneurs of the self led to the

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60   Boltanski and Chiapello, *Spirit of Capitalism*, p.326.

61   Glenn Adamson and Jane Pavitt, "Postmodernism: Style and Subversion," in *Postmodernism: Style and Subversion, 1970-1990*, ed. Glenn Adamson and Jane Pavitt (London: V&A Publishers, 2011), p.95. Harvey describes this shift as the cultural mass, that heavily drew upon social movements, cut loose and shaped its own identity around money, power, individualism and entrepreneurialism. See Harvey, *Postmodernity*, p.348.

62   See Boltanski and Chiapello, *Spirit of Capitalism*, p.185. See also: Kristin Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

spreading of precarious working conditions as workers would no longer negotiate their contracts collectively, but would do so on an individual basis, always focused on the maximisation of individual interests, regardless of the consequences this would have for other workers.[63]

The whole personality at work

Considering today's flexible and precarious working conditions, it is important to note the extent to which the demise of the social critique is debilitating for many. As Richard Sennett points out, the ones who can prosper in this contemporary, flexible, networked context are those having the ability to deal with short-term relations at work, as well as with reduced perspectives of the future,[64] and who are thus flexible enough to take up the most unexpected opportunities.[65] The development of work in such a flexible, as well as precarious, direction has been possible because, post-Fordism, an emphasis on the service industry was developed. Autonomist sociologist Maurizio Lazzarato describes this service-oriented work as "immaterial labour," a form of labour that "produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity."[66] This formalisation of previously unconsidered activities could not only exist without enormous infrastructure in the global North/West (albeit that much of it still heavily relies on industrial production in other parts of the world), but could also incorporate a vast amount of human activities that had not previously been considered productive labour, such as "activities involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and, more strategically, public opinion."[67]

As we can see, Lazzarato's description of immaterial labour quite aptly fits the work of contemporary designers. And in fact, design jobs can be perceived as authoritatively requiring cooperation and collective coordination, in the sense that "one *has* to express oneself, one *has* to speak, communicate, cooperate and so

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63   Stuart Hall, "Brave New World," *Marxism Today*, no. October (1988): p.24.

64   Sennett, *New Capitalism*, p.31.

65   Ibid., p.126.

66   Maurizio Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labour," in *Radical Thought in Italy : A Potential Politics*, ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p.133.

67   Ibid.

forth."[68] To manage workers engaged in such jobs, i.e. to make them productive, implies the drive to have these workers fully investing their souls in the workplace.[69] In this sense, we can see designers, with their passionate attachment to work, as contemporary "model workers", workers that this economic culture would definitely like to see more of.

Historical and geographical context

When, after this focus on how the procedures of precarisation that designers are exposed to have developed over approximately the last 40 years, we set them into a much broader historical, geographical and social context, something curious occurs: we see that as a phenomenon of the capitalist labour market, procedures of precarisation – in different form and intensity – have always been present. Historically, precarious (but also outright dangerous) working conditions have accompanied the emergence and development of capitalism and have only been contained in the countries of the global North/West through working class struggles for more rights.[70] Geographically, severe precariousness has been a constant for exploited workers in the global South/East and constituted, and still constitutes, the basis for the affluence of the global North/West.[71] Furthermore, socially, precariousness has been long present for women doing apparently unproductive work in the home and for all other workers who have not been recognised as productive or legal in a capitalist society.[72] However, for now, let us only keep in mind this broader context of precariousness as something that we will explore in more depth in the Intermezzo of this thesis.

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68   Ibid., p.135.

69   Ibid., p.134. For an elaboration on the pathologies this passion and investments of the soul generate, see Franco Berardi, *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009).

70   For the development of work in the capitalist mode of production, see, for example, the permanent exhibition at the People's History Museum in Manchester or the industrial museum Armley Mills in Leeds. Moreover, note that capitalism, especially in its inception, has been heavily interlinked with slavery. For the connection between capitalism and slavery, see, for example, the *London Sugar Slavery Gallery* at the Museum of London Docklands. See also: Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2004).

71   See, for example: Naomi Klein, *No Logo: No Space, No Choice, No Jobs* (London: Flamingo, 2001); Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2008).

72   See the following texts for the historical and geographical context of precariousness: Mitropoulos, "Precari-Us?."; Brett Neilson and Ned Rossiter, "Precarity as a Political Concept, or, Fordism as Exception," Theory, Culture & Society 25, no. 7-8 (2008). For a feminist view on precariousness, see for example: Silvia Federici, "Precarious Labour: A Feminist Viewpoint," *Variant: cross currents in culture*, no. 37 (2010).

Questions to address in practice

From this overview of the precarising elements that designers are confronted with, it emerges that although modulating the contents of one's work according to what is rewarded by the market can improve an individual designer's economic situation, this will hardly lead to a life of affluence, let alone stability and security as might still be generally assumed. It also emerges that such a move does not automatically relieve the designer of overwork or sacrificing quality of life for work, nor does it improve the working conditions of designers in general. To achieve a qualitative improvement in content and working conditions, more inventive and collective measures need to be established.

Having exposed the main structural elements of precarisation, it becomes clear that it is often a passionate attachment to working as designers which primarily contributes to render people vulnerable and often willingly exposed to working conditions that are detrimental in the long run. Given the connection between passion and precariousness, the question arises of how to create spaces in which to disassociate one's passion from the mechanisms of control of the market. How to create spaces that make it possible to challenge and reinvent the way designers work and live? How to create spaces in which to employ creativity not to sustain a competitive market economy, but rather to invent alternative economies that break with unpredictability, insecurity and poor remuneration as mechanisms of control?

In order to explore these questions in and through practice, Fabio and I branched out in two directions: learning from other practitioners' experiences and beginning to experiment ourselves with what such spaces could be like. To learn through the situated knowledges of other people who are producing socially and po-litically engaged work – within and beyond design – we began to visit practitioners throughout Europe to engage in conversations with them about the structures that they rely on to sustain themselves, the obstacles they encounter and how they try to overcome them. Conducting these conversations in kitchens, studios, workshop, cafés and squats, allowed us to see how people always formulate specific strategies and tactics to keep their practices afloat despite precariousness. Engaging in these conversations, while at the same time beginning to experiment ourselves with the creation of spaces in which precariousness could be challenged, was a way to check back on what and how we did things, but was also a way to ask questions together. Furthermore, we began to edit and publish these conversations online in order for

them to serve as tools of orientation for other practitioners who might be trying to break out of an individualistic and entrepreneurial mode of practice.[73]

The knowledges gathered through these exchanges, which in some cases developed into friendships or collaborations, are woven in and out of this thesis, constituting the context of practice within which we began to situate ourselves and which would continue to inform the ways in which we reflect on our own experimental support structures against precarisation. How they do so will become apparent in the next section, which will be wholly dedicated to recounting and thinking through a space created by Brave New Alps in 2011 in order to begin to inhabit the question of (as well as the tentative answer to) what a physical space from and within which to challenge precariousness could be like.

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73   To get a flavour of these conversations and the context they created for this research, see appendix C for a series of edited transcripts. Alternatively, see http://www.designingeconomiccultures.net

4. INHABITING AN ECONOMY OF SUPPORT: *MY CASTLE IS YOUR CASTLE*

The inhabitation *My castle is your castle* (April to July, 2011) was the initial experiment in how to intervene in the procedures of precarisation that designers are entangled in. It was an experiment on a micro-scale that had as its objective to explore how, as designers, we can create other economic cultures in our everyday, or, in the words of economic geographer Katherine Gibson, how we can "take back the economy any time, any place,"[74] without waiting until an ideal situation, idea or opportunity presents itself some time in an indefinite future. To set up this first experiment that would allow us to gain embodied knowledges of the obstacles such a "taking back" might entail, Fabio and I drew on the means available to us through a five-months artist residency at the Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw. This residency gave us access to a 25m² working and living space, a travel and production budget, the access to communal living and working spaces and the support of four dedicated female curators.[75]

When starting the residency in March 2011, we were three months into this research and grappling with the symptoms of precariousness and their genealogy as introduced in the previous section. At the same time, we were looking around us to investigate how other socially and politically engaged designers keep their practices afloat. Doing so, we came across the work of the Chicago-based art and design collective Temporary Services, who in their work emphasise the importance of grounding a resistance to the dominant culture in physical space.[76] It was then a combination of our research into the symptoms of precarisation and the idea to ground resistance against them (or at least find other ways of dealing with them) in space in the here and now, that encouraged us to come up with a twofold plan for initiating an economy of support based on the resources of our residency: on the one hand, we decided to "collectivise" the residency by inviting practitioners with an affinity to our research to share the space and the resources with us, thus trying to give "breathing

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74   Katherine Gibson, "Take Back the Economy, Any Time, Any Place: A Manual for Constituting Community Economies," in *Designing and transforming capitalism* (Aarhus 2012).

75   In autumn 2010, we had won an artist prize offered by Museion, the contemporary art centre of our Italian home region Trentino-Alto Adige. The prize was a five months stay at the Artist-In-Residence-Laboratory of CCA Ujazdowski Castle. Moreover, the prize comprised a 5,000€ living allowance, 1,600€ travel budget and an 8,000€ production budget, sponsored by the foundation of the regional bank *Südtiroler Sparkasse*.

76   Brett Bloom, "Radical Space for Art in a Time of Forced Privatization and Market Dominance," http://www.temporaryservices.org/making_room_collab.pdf.

space" to practices which were not necessarily commercially oriented, and on the other hand, we decided to use the budget of our residency to set up a public seminar, *Constructive dismantling,* to investigate what sharing of resources and self-organisation had taken place in Polish society during socialist times, and what had survived and/or what new forms were created after the fall of the regime in 1989.[77] In chosing to experiment with these two strands, we hoped that this would bring openings (but possibly also obstacles) to our research in places where we would not expect them and that they would enable us to ask questions we could not yet formulate.

Preparation

Once the desire was formed to transform "our" castle also into someone else's castle, we were both thrilled, intimidated and doubtful by what this would entail: how to feel at ease sharing a space with someone we might not know well? How to share the resources we had, while still keeping some privacy and space for ourselves? How to actually ensure the experiment was a positive experience? And was it actually a good idea at all to share resources that you obtained and possibly only "deserve" because you worked hard in the past?

To address some of our preoccupations, we opted for the transformation of our 25m^2 studio space into two distinct spaces that could be inhabited relatively independently. This way we hoped to create a space in which our guests would feel welcome and that would allow for a sense of ownership over the space, while at the same time allowing for openness as well as privacy for our co-residents and us.[78] Once we felt comfortable with the spatial plan for collectivising the residency, the question came up more concretely of who our co-residents might be. Not being sure we could cope with sharing the space with whoever expressed interest, we decided to 'play it safe' and to send the invite to the co-residency only to people we had at least once positively connected with in our lives.

So at the end of March 2011, after a series of consultations with our hosting curators, we sent out an open call to our extended mailing list stating that we had just began working on research into precariousness and that for our residency in Poland we wanted to offer other designers and practitioners related to the field of design

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77   For details about these seminars, see Brave New Alps, "Constructive Dismantling Seminars,"
http://www.designingeconomiccultures.net/category/organised-seminars/.

78   We developed the idea for the space together with Polish furniture-maker Pawel Jasiewicz, who we met
during the first month in Warsaw.

the possibility to come to Warsaw for a period of one to three weeks. After having
had replies from a variety of people to this invite, within twenty days, we coordinat-
ed the times and spaces for the co-residency between May and July 2011 and settled
for inviting six practitioners across a variety of disciplines: a female British sculptor
with Polish origins, a female British-Nigerian curator, a male Irish graphic designer,
a male British Germany-based artist, a male British architect and a female Russian
illustrator.[79]

Unfolding

Finally, by the end of April, after almost two months of reflection and preparation,
we were physically sharing our residency resources, inhabiting our first mi-
cro-economy of support. Our co-residents stayed with us for periods ranging from
four to thirty days, and with each resident we discovered different dynamics of
sharing and being together developed. As we had tried to create a very open frame-
work for collectivising the residency, we also attempted not to put any pressure on
people to produce or do anything specific during their stay, so that everyone could
get out of it what they needed and wanted.

Therefore, we saw some co-residents focusing on networking with Polish cu-
rators and institutions, some connecting with other artists in residence, others
again using the time to explore the city for inspiration for future work, while
some plunged into making work with whatever they could find around – or in fact,
depending on the length of their stay, engaging in a mixture of these activities.
So while we saw our co-residents engaged in their activities, they saw us pursuing
our research: organising seminars and conducting interviews to explore Polish DIY
activist culture under socialism and subsequently under capitalism. From time to
time, there would be overlaps between our activities, but generally each of us would
pursue his or her own path.

Eating together in the subsidised restaurant of the museum or cooking together,
became an important factor with some co-residents. But again, this varied substan-
tially from one person to the other and so it could be said that with our six co-res-
idents we went through different modes of sharing, each being characterised by a
different mixture of convivial modes of work and leisure.

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79   A US-American female graphic designer, who had originally contacted us to do an internship with us and to
whom we proposed the co-residency instead, could not come along as she had found a paid job in the USA. The
female Russian illustrator took her space up last-minute.

Reflections

Considering the way the co-residency unfolded, with each of us individually work-
ing alongside each other, it felt like we had set up an economy of support that
enabled others to move forward in their practice, but that within itself did not
substantially challenge the standard, precarising modes of working of the creative
industries. In many ways, we might suggest say that the co-residency felt a bit like
any shared studio space, whether dedicated to research on precariousness or not.

This situation revealed many questions to us, particularly in comparison to
what we had learned from the seminars, interviews and time spent with Polish DIY
activist groups.[80] Through engagement with groups such as the anarchist Warsaw
Food Co-operative, The Nonformal University of Teremiski, or the co-operatively
run Emma Hostel, we not only learned more about how to self-organise education,
housing, food provisioning and cultural production,[81] but in spending time with
the people involved in such self-organised, leftist economic cultures it was brought
to the fore the extent to which all of them found it important to actively challenge
dominant ways of doing and being in their area of engagement.

The two levels that these groups challenged most were related to time and social
relations: they all worked towards a *long-term* as well as *collective* engagement in the
issues they wanted to transform. The elements of endurance in time and collectivity
we encountered in them, were that which in most cases allowed for the emergence
of an affective dimension, a dimension of care for each other, which helped the peo-
ple involved to challenge the subjectivities they were asked to conform to in Polish
society: many of the people we met or learned about during the seminars and site
visits attempted to break out of the more generally pre-figured aspirational path
towards living a middle-class life of individual success in one's respective profes-
sion. Most were attempting to live out ways of being and doing that could actively
contribute to the egalitarian, yet heterogeneous societies they desired. In doing so,
many were operating counter to the expectations of their social environment, but
they continued on their paths because they were embedded in an economy of
support that would reinforce their actions and choices not only on material, but

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80   For an account of the seminars with human geographer Piotr Juskowiak, architect Jakub Szczesny, sociologist
Adrian Zandberg and cultural theorist Teodor Ajder, see:
http://www.designingeconomiccultures.net/category/organised-seminars/

81   For an edited transcript of conversations with these activists, see appendix C or: Brave New Alps, "Designing
Economic Cultures," http://www.designingeconomiccultures.net/.

also on affective and intellectual levels.

So by living through *My castle is your castle*, whilst also encountering these other ways of operating outside the creative industries, we realised that our micro-economy of support was lacking some important substance that could have allowed us to enter a dimension that could significantly extend beyond the days or weeks spent together in the co-residency. In this sense, from this micro-experiment, we deduced that on a larger scale to intervene only in the material procedures of precarisation would not necessarily challenge precariousness in general. Besides this major insight, from our reflections on this first inhabitation of our research questions, six more issues came to the fore for further investigation and experimentation:

a) Creating a very open framework for an economy of support easily creates a depoliticised context in which our doing is not radically questioned. There is a need to create frameworks for experimenting with economic cultures into which one cannot simply flow with the usual modes of being and working that are characterised by individualisation. Frameworks would need to be created that support the emergence of a collective dimension of doing.

b) Power relations cannot simply be dissolved through self-organisation, but must be worked on consciously, as otherwise they tend simply to be reproduced on a smaller scale. In the case of this first experiment, they had simply been shifted from the institution onto us, since we still set up a minimal selection process and automatically kept on referring to our co-residents as 'guests' throughout the whole time. Would power relations be diluted or distributed if we imagined a proliferation of peer-to-peer support structures? What if ever more designers saw sharing resources as part of their practice?

c) There is a necessity to create frameworks in which we do not continuously blur work and recreation, or where we almost establish frameworks of "recreation through work." This would probably entail creating spaces where mutual care for our well-being is prioritised over work and where there is a degree of protection from the productiveness that is required within the context of the creative industries. But this brings up questions of how we define what it means to be productive. How do we define what counts as work and what does not?

d) There is a need to supplement short-term, spontaneous or sporadic support structures against precarisation with long term ones as this would allow the inclusion of people who do not have the privilege of flexibility, which, as we have seen, is one of the elements involved in procedures of precarisation.

e) Creating translocal connections is important, but there also seems to be a need to create connections that are not spatially dispersed in order to allow for the creation of more close-knit and possibly long-term economies of support.

f) Addressing one's doubts and insecurities around beginning to experiment with economies of support is important, however, it is also important not to get blocked by them. From this experiment, we learned that once you start experimenting with other ways of doing, initial preoccupations mostly dissolve and even seem foolish in hindsight, while instead they bring up new and unexpected questions.

With these issues raised, this first experiment, even in its micro-dimension, quite powerfully showed us the limits of our habitual thinking and acting, which seem to reproduce what we more or less are already familiar with. In doing so, it led us to question how and to what extent, as designers, we have internalised ways of thinking, doing and relating to each other that make us functional as well as vulnerable to the procedures of precarisation we are presented with. In this sense, the unfolding of the residency, allowed us to begin to explore more complex questions that concern not only the material support structures needed to respond to precariousness, but also the relational and theoretical tools we need to build in order to deal with precariousness in more strategic ways.

Timeline:

My castle is your castle

at A-I-R Laboratory, CCA Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw

21-30 April – Building of the "room
in a room" for the co-residents

29 April-12 May – British-Polish
sculptor in residence

14-31 May – British-Nigerian
curator in residence

4-30 June – Irish graphic
designer in residence

15-30 June – British
artist in residence

25 June-3 July – British
architect in residence

18-22 July – Russian
illustrator in residence

| JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUN | JUL | AUG | SEP | OCT | NOV | DEC |

2011

1 March – Start of
the residency

7 April – Slots for five
co-residents are set

1 August – End of
the residency

23 March – Call for
co-residency is sent out

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FIGURE 10 and 11 *above*   Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA) Ujazdowski Castle and the Laboratorium building that in its left wing hosts five studios for artists in residence, March 2011

FIGURE 12 and 13 *middle*   The studio-apartment that was allocated to us and the floor plan of the left wing of the Laboratorium building with the blackened out space intended to be allocated to the "room in a room" structure for our co-residents

FIGURE 14 *below*   The shape of the planned "room in a room" structure, adapting to the shape of the studio (roughly 3,30 x 3 x 2,30 m)

FIGURE 15 *above*   Construction of the structure for our co-residents over a period of nine days with Pawel Jasiewicz and Anna Sikorska, 21-30 April 2011

FIGURE 16 to 18 *below*   The "room in a room" is ready for welcoming our co-residents, 1 May 2011

FIGURE 19 and 20   The co-residency space in use, May to July 2011

Timeline:

Constructive Dismantling **and** *Public A-I-R micro-festival*

at A-I-R Laboratory, CCA Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw

28 June – visit to the Polish Co-operative
Museum, Warsaw

21 June – seminar: "DIY culture and autonomy
in the everyday before and after 1989"
with Adrian Zandberg

16 May – seminar: "The relation to public
space in Poland before and after 1989"
with Piotr Juskowiak and Jakub Szczesny

4 July – seminar: "DIY practices in Moldova
before and after 1989" with Teodor Ajder

18 July – seminar: "Beat capitalism with a carrot.
Presentation of the Warsaw Food Co-operative"
with Tomek Sikora

19 April – presentation of the seminar
series *Constructive Dismantling*

| JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUN | JUL | AUG | SEP | OCT | NOV | DEC |

2011

19-21 July – get reclaimed wood and prepare it for
building the structure for the upcoming festival

26-28 July – build of the structure

23-31 July – group residency for a group of students from
Goldsmiths College (London), Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw,
Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design, Budapest

29-31 July – *Public A-I-R* micro-festival:

29 July – "Co-operatives rule!" with the Warsaw
Food Co-operative

30 July – "WSPÓL.DZIELNIA. Emotional mapping of
a pre-war co-operative housing estate" with Emilia
Piotrowska and Igor Sarzynski

30 July – "Active citizenship, a Polish tradition"
with Ilona Iłowiecka-Tanska

31 July – "Freeganism rules!" with the Warsaw
Food Co-operative

31 July – skills fair: all-day skills swap, organised
with people we got to know through our contacts
with the Warsaw Food Co-operative

31 July – "Drinking (and eating) the park. An
introduction to foraging in urban areas" with Juliet
Delventhal and Brave New Alps

FIGURE 21 *above*   *Constructive Dismantling* – seminar with Tomek Sikora of the Warsaw Food Co-operative in the communal kitchen of A-I-R Laboratory, 18 July 2011

FIGURE 22 *below*   *Constructive Dismantling* – visit to the Warsaw Museum of Co-operatives, 28 June 2011

FIGURE 23 *above*   *Public A-I-R* micro-festival – opening evening, cooking "stone soup" with chef-in-residence Juliet Delventhal, public park surrounding CCA Ujazdowski Castle, 29 July 2011

FIGURE 24 *below*   *Public A-I-R* micro-festival – Vietnamese-Polish chef Ngo Van Tuong speaks about the cuisine of the Vietnamese community in Poland, 31 July 2011

FIGURE 25 to 30 *above* *Public A-I-R* micro-festival – "Co-operatives Rule!" with members of the Warsaw Food Co-op; "WSPÓL.DZIELNIA – emotional mapping of a pre-war cooperative housing estate" – a presentations by pedagogues and community activists Emilia Piotrowska and Igor Sarzynski; "skills exchange" – learning to use a compass; "Foraging in the Park" with Juliet Delventhal and Brave New Alps; "Drinking the Park" – serving elderflower cordial made from flowers foraged in the park; preparing Springrolls Warsaw Style with Dorota Podlaska and Ngo Van Tuong, 30 and 31 July 2011

FIGURE 31 *below* *Public A-I-R* micro-festival – the festival in one of the sunny moments between the heavy showers, 30 July 2011

5. PRECARIOUSNESS AS THE EVER TRANSFORMING NORM

Given the issues raised when inhabiting our first micro-economy of support, it is necessary to consider to what extent procedures of precarisation are not only constituted by external factors, but by the subjectivities we are assuming as designers within the creative industries. For this analysis, I will draw on Michel Foucault's and Gilles Deleuze's work around how governmentality operates in making us as subjects. By considering the technologies of power and the self as theorised by Foucault, I will explore how power relations around precariousness are played out in the field of design to determine and modulate the conduct of individuals and how they contribute to designers effecting operations on their own bodies, thoughts, conduct and way of being in order to transform themselves.[82]

Governmentality and techniques of power

To read the precariousness of designers and the behaviours associated with it through Foucault and Deleuze allows us to see connections between "governmentality," as constituted by technologies of domination of others, technologies of the self and modulations through control, and economic reason.[83] Throughout Foucault's work, we find a focus on how power relations operate in society to shape subjectivities through an ensemble of techniques that is applied at every level of the social body to ensure, very often, the maintenance and development of production relations that suit the economic processes of their time.[84] In his analysis of the techniques of power, Foucault unravels how these are played out to shape bodies (and minds) in order to increase their forces in terms of economic utility, and to diminish these same forces in terms of resistance.[85] Regarding the technologies of the self, Foucault analyses how we constitute ourselves as subjects according to models that are proposed, suggested, imposed on us by our culture, society and social group.[86]

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82   Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in *Michel Foucault: Ethics - Subjectivity and Truth; the Essential Works of Michel Foucault*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin Books, 1997), p.225.

83   Ibid. See also: Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on Control Societies," in *Negotiations, 1972-1990* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

84   See for example: Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), p.140; Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality: With Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault* ed. Graham Burchell, et al. (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991).

85   Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p.138.

86   Foucault, "Practice of Freedom," p.291.

The way disciplinary techniques of power are adopted is outlined by Foucault using the example of soldiers who, by the late eighteenth century, had become professional figures that could be formed like clay: subjects that, through disciplinary techniques, could be made pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit, made into docile bodies that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved.[87] The uninterrupted coercion and supervising processes of soldiers began to be adapted to ensure that these professionals operated as desired – with necessary technique, speed and efficiency. With the rise of governmentality, which went hand-in-hand with the rise of capitalism,[88] disciplining mechanisms developed to comprise of a whole micro-penality of time, activity, behaviour, speech, body and sexuality, whose punishment would extend from light physical punishment to minor deprivations and petty humiliations.[89] In this way, a system of gratification and punishment was established that served the production of subjected and practiced "docile bodies" – economically productive and obedient. Within the disciplining institutions Foucault describes as shaping people's docile conduct according to governmental desires, which besides the military comprised of factories, schools, hospitals and the family, collective dispositions are being systemically broken up. Each individual has his- or her-own place and each place is individual, in order for the disciplining entity to create a "learning machine" that allows for efficient supervising, hierarchising and rewarding. The useless or dangerous multitude of bodies is thus transformed into "ordered multiplicities" that can be disciplined.[90]

After Foucault's death, Deleuze takes up his principles of discipline and elaborated on them by stating that we no longer live in disciplinary societies, but have entered control societies. Here, Deleuze proposes that power relations are deeply rooted in the social nexus and contribute to a modulation of people's behaviours and desires through more subtle procedures of control, which function according to governmental perception of the economically favourable.[91] These subtle procedures, which we certainly also find within the precarisation of designers, include the modulation of retribution according to individual merit, the proposal of competition as

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87   Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.135-36.

88   Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, p.16.

89   Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.178.

90   Ibid., p.143-48.

91   Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972-1990* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p.177-82.

a healthy and motivating force, and the replacement of fixed periods of education by permanent training accompanied by continuous control. However, according to Deleuze, the particularity of control societies is also that people rather than rebelling against these procedures, "strangely boast of being 'motivated'; they re-request apprenticeships and permanent training."[92] This is an attitude that became very apparent in the discussion following the seminar series I organised at Goldsmiths, where MA students with work experience would, for instance, define the pressures of precariousness as that which pushes them to put extra effort into their design projects and which ultimately makes them produce better work.

However, I would argue, along with philosopher Judith Revel and philosopher and art theorist Gerald Raunig,[93] that although today many social institutions being dismantled and we are indeed experiencing the modulating procedures of control described by Deleuze, we still experience Foucault's notion of discipline both through design education as well as through the techniques of the self, through which we model ourselves according to what we learn to be normal, decent and logical. And where Foucault has elaborated on techniques of the self in regards to sexuality, this also proves to be a useful analytical tool to think about how we relate and fashion ourselves as designers. Following Raunig's proposal of the "modulating university" as both a standardising as well as a modulating institution,[94] I will analyse how, throughout education, designers are formed to be "industry-ready" and, as a result, "precariousness-ready" creative subjects. To do so, I will trace how some of the issues raised by *My castle is your castle* can be traced back to the conduct designers are trained to adopt in order to be ready for the creative industries, how they are made *pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit*, but also ready to constantly re-form and de-form themselves.

The importance of this analysis is underlined by relating the power relations precariousness represents back to Foucault's notion that "every power relationship implies at least *in potentia* a strategy of struggle,"[95] because it can be exercised only

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92   Ibid., p.182.

93   See: Judith Revel, "Per Una Biopolitica Della Moltitudine," in *Biopolitica Minore*, ed. Paolo Perticari (Roma: manifestolibri, 2003), p.60-61. Gerald Raunig, *Factories of Knowledge, Industries of Creativity* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2013), p.45-46.

94   Raunig, *Factories of Knowledge*, p.29.

95   Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), p.225.

over free subjects. Thus, I argue that tracing how designers are made docile, creative subjects represents an important step when wanting to challenge more consciously and strategically the techniques of power and control that contribute to the precarisation of designers.[96]

A depoliticised context

To unravel how designers are made docile creative subjects it is useful to examine the complex sociocultural formations (Foucault's *dispositifs*) within which designers are first studying and then working, and which, amongst others, consist of education, the discourse around what defines success and the functioning of the creative industries. In relation to the difficulties constituted by precarisation that, in particular, socially engaged designers experience, the analysis of the creative industries by feminist sociologist Angela McRobbie is telling, particularly because her research is directed at socially and politically engaged subcultures within them. Through her research, McRobbie defines the creative industries as largely depoliticised: she observes how cultural production, which was once deeply embedded in social institutions and practiced as a "way of life", tends today to be ever more read primarily and immediately in terms of commercial opportunities.[97]

Every idea and every product, even of counter-culture, tends to be instantly evaluated for its economic potential. This "commercial thinking" is an attitude that is taken up as the norm to which to conform by most actors gravitating toward the industry, ranging from cultural and educational institutions to the practitioners themselves. In this process of commercialisation, social engagement and "critical creativity" are squeezed out,[98] without eliminating, paradoxically, the irregular and insecure living being made by creatives, but rather intensifying it as everyone becomes trapped in a rat race against everyone else.[99] With so much emphasis on a total mobilisation of the self, in which every bit of potential should be put to good

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96   For an account on the connection between governmentality and cultural work, especially in relation to how cultural policies seek to offer cultural workers "solutions" that are desirable for the market, see Mark Banks, *The Politics of Cultural Work* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.46-52.

97   McRobbie, "Holloway to Hollywood," p.98. In refering to cultural production as a way of life, McRobbie takes up Raymond Williams' notion of culture as ordinary, as a way of life that is constituted both by common meanings and the arts, see Raymond Williams, "Culture Is Ordinary," in *The Everyday Life Reader*, ed. Ben Highmore (London: Routledge, 2002), p.93.

98   Angela McRobbie, "Clubs to Companies: Notes on the Decline of Political Culture in Speeded up Creative Worlds," *Cultural studies* 16, no. 4 (2002): p.520.

99   McRobbie, "Holloway to Hollywood," p.98.

economic use, all forms of solidarity and cooperation that go beyond an economic benefit tend to be neglected in favour of an individualised competition for money and success,[100] thus contributing to the self-precarisation of designers.

Designers modulated as *homines oeconomici*

McRobbie's outline of the depoliticised context of the creative industries, which nevertheless requires a total mobilisation of the self, resonates not only with my own experience, but with what Foucault describes as the formation of neoliberal *homo oeconomicus*: the entrepreneur of the self, a subject that is the source of one's earnings and that thus applies economic rationality to behaviours that would not previously have been read in economic terms before, such as creativity, friendship or affects.[101] This attitude connects to the maxim for success often projected within design education: "if it doesn't make money it's your hobby."[102] In its simplicity and manifesto-like feel, such a maxim, at its root, tries to eliminate any critical questioning of the techniques of power that shape design practices towards such a mentality , towards the perpetuation of self-precarising attitudes.

Indeed, reading guidebooks for designers like "*How to be a graphic designer without losing your soul*" by graphic designer Adrian Shaughnessy,[103] reveals the extent to which the depoliticised rational of *homo oeconomicus* is constantly taken as the primary model through which to fashion oneself, even when considering the incorporation of social critique into one's work. Despite Shaughnessy, for instance, opening up big questions about the "integrity" of designers in relation to the creative industries, noting, for example, the difficulty of "preserving integrity in the remorseless climate of modern business,"[104] he closes these questions down as quickly as he throws them up. He continuously avoids the difficulties he recognises,

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100   Angela McRobbie, "The Los Angelisation of London," transversal, http://eipcp.net/transversal/0207/mcrobbie/en.

101   See Foucault lectures at the Collège de France from the 14, 21 and 28 March 1979: Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège the France, 1978-1979*, ed. Michel Senellart (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

102   A phrase used by a trainer in a career services session for MA design students that I attended in March 2011, and that brings to light the attitude that many design schools foster.

103   Adrian Shaughnessy, *How to Be a Graphic Designer without Losing Your Soul* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005).

104   Ibid., p.25.

instead making them a matter of individual responsibility through statements like
the following:

> And although the great Josef-Müller Brockmann said 'All design work has a
> political character,' this book assumes that political questions are a matter
> of individual consciences.[105]

Thus, by conscripting the argument in a statement such as Brockmann's to-
wards a (neo)liberal discourse solely focused on the individual, the author forgoes
potentially radical and much-needed discussions about the functioning and val-
ue-practices of the creative industries in favour of the idea of the "proper conduct
of designers":[106] a conduct that navigates an extremely competitive market through
individual choices.[107] In doing so, Shaughnessy implies that designerly conduct
needs to take competition and commercialisation as a given, rather than something
to discuss, confront and determine collectively. By reducing the political character
of design to something that is up to our individual consciousness,[108] he forgets that
the political is generally defined as that which is played out collectively. Further-
more, he does not acknowledge that every design, as well as the way we practice
as designers, is expressing a politics, whether it is sides with a hegemonic view of
society or not.

However, it is interesting to note that Shaughnessy refers to the individualised
behaviour he proposes within the creative industries as "proper conduct," since
Foucault, when speaking about the techniques of power, also refers to "conduct."
In Foucault's analysis, conduct refers both to "leading others" as well as behaving
within a more or less open field of possibilities.[109] Thus the way Shaughnessy refers
to *proper conduct,* represents both a technique of power exercised through the guide-
book, as well as a technique of the self through which one constantly modulates
one's own behaviour according to the needs of the market: never trying to step out

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105   Ibid., p.14.

106   Ibid., p.25.

107   Ibid., p.13.

108   Ibid., p.14.

109   Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.220-21. Foucault also refers to this double meaning of conduct as "conduire
des conduits," see: Michel Foucault, *Dits Et Écrits IV* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), p.237.

of the given constraints, but instead trying to create the best possible economic deal whilst accommodating one's ethical values within these constraints.

As such, Shaughnessy presents the creative industries to designers as a deadlock of competitiveness and individualisation, in which family and financial commitments are pressuring everyone to make unpleasant compromises. Moreover, making these compromises is pictured as something quite normal as long as they can be read in the logic of *homo oeconomicus*, because "hang on, what's so bad about giving clients what they want? Isn't design a service industry?"[110] But picturing designers as a *homines oeconomici,* even when they do not want to lose their soul, means to modulate them as "docile" in Foucauldian terms, "as someone manageable, someone who responds systematically to systemic modifications artificially introduced into the environment."[111] This perspective on designers, I argue, underlines precisely the depoliticised context of the creative industries, in which – not even in a book with such a pressing title – is there space for a proposal to collectively challenge the subservient service telos of designers, space for the strategic development of "revolts of conduct,"[112] which *in potentia* are always present, no doubt especially amongst readers picking up a book with the given title.

Design education and precarisation

Guidebooks for designers do not function alone as modulating and normalising procedures, but are connected to other apparatus that, in relation to the needs of governmentality, constantly compare, differentiate, hierarchise, homogenise and exclude people according to a range of "degrees of normality" that indicate membership to a social body.[113] Within this social body, higher and lower ranks themselves function as reward and punishment, inviting designers to conform or modulate themselves to what is considered as the norm. In this perspective, design schools function as an apparatus that contributes to initiating the continuous process of shaping and re-shaping of designers. To think through the normalising procedures of design education in relation to precariousness, I will focus on two

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110   Shaughnessy, *Without Losing Your Soul* p.13.

111   Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, p.270.

112   Michel Senellart, "Course Context," in *Michel Foucault. Security, Territory, Population*, ed. ibid. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.372.

113   Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.182-84.

elements of conduct that emerged strongly, namely the surrender of life to work and the focus on individual progress. Although there are many other behaviours that are normalised throughout design education, these two, enmeshed with the underlying ethos of *homo oeconomicus,* particularly tie into perpetuating the (self-) precarisation of designers.

"You are a designer 24/7." This slogan of an Italian design school succinctly makes the point that which many design schools teach: to work as a designer means to be constantly ready to observe, learn, make connections, network, work. There is no leaving work behind at 5 o'clock, instead a readiness to perform design tasks that can become claustrophobic.[114] Indeed, the centrality of creativity, affects and knowledge to the work of designers tends to incorporate all they do, feel and experience into work, but simultaneously sees work leaking into all they do. When being trained within the logic of *homo oeconomicus*, designers run the danger of investing, or at least being urged to invest, every bit of time, attention, energy and affect into work. Activating and developing creative skills, which in principle for designers feels like a satisfying activity, becomes a strain when it is constantly subsumed to work and to functioning economically.[115] By advocating, whether overtly or covertly, design as a 24/7 occupation, there is the risk of removing all stops and emergency breaks that designers need as a form of self-protection within the creative industries, where the overlap of passions and work easily leads to (self-)exploitation, self-sacrifice and ultimately exhaustion.

The formula of "being a designer 24/7" also points towards the importance of social relations for securing paid work since within the creative industries, the "right" social relations are of primary importance for securing an income as well as "success." However, the importance of social relations easily leads to their instrumentalisation in what cultural theorist Andreas Wittel calls "network sociality." With this term, he refers to a sociality that is distinguished by its informational character, as it is "not based on mutual experience or common history, but primarily on an exchange of data and on 'catching up.'"[116] Thus, being with others, for designers today, can most often mean networking, i.e. constructing connections

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114   See, for instance, the psychological issues, as well as the use of performance enhancing substances, that emerged from the research in Italy: Cantiere, *Inquiry*, p.22-25

115   See, for instance, books for designers that elaborate on how to endure creativity: Frank Berzbach, *Kreativität Aushalten: Psychologie Für Designer* (Mainz: Schmidt, 2010).

116   Andreas Wittel, "Toward a Network Sociality," *Theory, Culture & Society* 18, no. 6 (2001): p.51.

that will be helpful in forwarding a "creative career," and in this sense, it resonates when Wittel goes on to observe that today, "working practices have become increasingly networking practices."[117] Going to openings and networking events or simply hanging out in trendy places, all become part of a mechanism to secure paid work, as it is at these occasions that people mingle and talk about their future plans, for which they might need collaborators.

And again, we can observe how design schools are preparing students for entering such an environment of network sociality by reproducing it at various levels within the institution: collaborations are encouraged, but not as a mode of building strong, collective subjectivities that could confront the precarising mechanisms of the creative industries, but as a mode of producing more innovative projects. Being professional is portrayed as being able to successfully produce work with whomever, no matter what "private" social relations or preferences might exist. The productive management of short-term relationships is in fact a quality that sociologist Richard Sennett points out to be a winning asset in today's flexible labour market,[118] and so designers are trained to refine that skill throughout education: networking events are organised, career services emphasise the importance of connecting to the right people and "hanging out" at the local bar in the evenings is proposed as the most appropriate method for finding collaborators. Moreover, the managers and tutors of today's design schools are themselves actively constructing informational social networks that can spur the success of their graduates. And indeed, the more "important" connections a design school (or a department within it) has, the closer to the "top" it is at an institutional level, and the more privileged its graduates will be when starting their working lives.

Interestingly, the designers who will do best in such a networked structure are those most able to successfully hide the commodification of social relationships. But then, as Boltanski and Chiapello point out, when work and play overlap, it often becomes difficult to distinguish between a genuine affinity to someone or a bonding that stops the moment a joint project is concluded.[119] However, being embedded in an environment of network sociality often leads to the perception that any social situation is not only a moment in which to make useful connections, but also a

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117   Ibid., p.53.

118   Sennett, *New Capitalism*, p.4.

119   Boltanski and Chiapello, *Spirit of Capitalism*, p.98.

moment in which on is judged and, thus, down- or up-graded in the opportunities for paid, or, at least, interesting work, leaving one feeling continually trapped in a "diffuse job interview."[120]

This focus on the informational quality of social relations, always attentive to their (potential) economic value, leads, during education, to what McRobbie describes as a "double process of de-socialisation," marked, on the one hand, by the extended celebrity culture perpetuated by a commercial media who focus on single, outstanding personalities and, on the other hand, by social structures themselves, within which people increasingly have to become their own-microstructures in order to secure their survival.[121] These processes of individualisation are, however, described as seemingly marked by choice, that of an individualised dream of affluence based on sheer effort,[122] as well as the talent that lays within all of us and that apparently only we need skillfully tap into.[123] But just as we accept as the norm the modulation of ourselves as designers according to such patterns of thinking and behaving, we are at once rendered more vulnerable to the poor pay, unpredictability and insecurity of precariousness, because within this focus on the self, there remains little space for collectivity and solidarity – not of the old, union-style kind nor a more contemporary one.[124] Thus, the majority of designers coming out of an educational setting that reinforces individualisation, appear to work and drift alongside each other in relative isolation: enclosed in their own passion for work, eager to sooner or later "make it", to land "The Big Project" that will solve all their problems and which will reward them for years of self-exploitation, while everyone else will just need to keep on trying hard. And, as we realised during *My castle is your castle*, such individualising and precarising reasoning is taken as the norm and cannot be transformed solely through single, sporadic or simply material support structures for designers, but needs to be considered in terms of long-term stability, allowing for a questioning of the subjectivity designers have come to assume.

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120   This perception was singled out and discussed during a workshop with the Carrotworkers' Collective in Milan during the second inhabitation of this research, the *Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative*, in October 2011.

121   McRobbie, "Clubs to Companies," p.158.

122   McRobbie, "Holloway to Hollywood," p.104.

123   Ibid., p.101.

124   Angela McRobbie, "Re-Thinking Creative Economy as Radical Social Enterprise," http://www.angelamcrobbie.com/2010/11/art-and-labour/. See also the almost complete unawareness of Italian designers with regards organisation around their rights as workers: Cantiere, *Inquiry*, p.30-34

Considering the way design education works today as a modulating procedure that directs one towards, rather than against, precariousness, it is no wonder that many graduates only learn about the harsh rules of the labour market once they enter (or try to enter with dignity) the world of work. Thus, they can easily assume that when facing precariousness, it is due to personal failure: not having worked hard enough, not being sociable enough, not being talented enough. This unpreparedness to encounter the adversities of poor pay, unpredictability and long-term insecurity means, then, that most designers end up dealing with the effects of precariousness on their own, which in turn leaves them extremely vulnerable. In this sense, it is problematic that design students are considered to be made "industry-ready" through discourses of entrepreneurialism, whereby juggling multiple jobs in order to make a living is not considered a problem, but a "portfolio career." This is because such a discourse does not acknowledge the option that today, a necessary part of designers' work might be to collectively challenge precarising elements of the market through all means possible – through unionisation, for example, and possibly even more so – through innovative ways of self-organisation.[125] From this view of design as emerging from a combination of auto-ethnography and sociological accounts, it becomes clear that as long as we are taught as designers to accept the working conditions of the creative industries as the norm to which we have to modulate ourselves, we will endlessly continue to pit ourselves against each other, making it hard for most to survive, let alone to produce work that is socially meaningful outside the scope of the market.

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125   Unionisation could be an option, though a difficult one, as even in sectors of the creative industries where some workers are unionised, such as broadcasting, freelancers shy away from asking for adequate payment for their services out of fear that the employer might opt for someone cheaper for the next job. See: David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker, "'A Very Complicated Version of Freedom': Conditions and Experiences of Creative Labour in Three Cultural Industries," *Variant: cross currents in culture* (2011). Also, conversations with activists of ReRePre (the Italian network of precarious editorial workers) have underlined the inability of unions to engage with the complexity of the situation of precarious cognitive workers. Moreover, in an interview with Henning Krause, the president of the German association of graphic designers BDG, he mentioned that out of 100,000 communication designers in Germany, only 500 are part of the BDG, and when including all similar associations in the country, the number still only comprises 5,000. An analogous situation of non-affiliation can be found in Italy, see: Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative, "Designers' Inquiry" p.32. However, in the US, over 200,000 freelancers working in a whole range of sectors have come together to stand up for their rights, see "Freelancers Union," http://www.freelancersunion.org/.

6. CONCLUSION OF PART 1

In this chapter we have seen how precarious working conditions impact the lives and practices of designers and how in their development over the past 30+ years, procedures of precarisation have squeezed both the social and political engagement out of people. We have also seen to what extent the subjectivity of designers contributes to the perpetuation of modes of working and living that perpetuate precariousness. Furthermore, it has come to the fore how mechanisms of governmentality, played out in education as well as in the creative industries, both discipline, as well as invite, designers to modulate themselves according to what is apparently to be expected and rewarded by the market. Having seen how these various procedures are undermining the range of actions and the life quality of designers, this initial mapping of the field prompts the question, what it would take to reinforce the counter-powers of designers in order to be better prepared to challenge procedures of precarisation? What would it take to make designers "ready-for-life," ready to set up and sustain practices that not only have space for social and political engagement, but also for having children, being ill, or wanting to care for others?

To launch into the exploration of practical, as well as conceptual tools to reinforce designers' counter-conduct, in the next part I explore more precisely how the precarisation of designers is instrumental to the capitalist economic system we are in. In doing so, I will build up conceptual tools that not only allow designers to inform their counter-conduct by looking beyond what is generally taken as the norm, but support them in imagining ways of practicing design that build towards de-precarising cultures of working and living.

INTERMEZZO

Capitalist value production,
designers and precarisation

7. INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERMEZZO

Why and how is the precarisation of designers tied to the production of value in a capitalist economy? To think through the dynamics of the links between precariousness and capital, we will engage in a strategic critique of the political economy, i.e. a critique of how wealth is produced and distributed in a capitalist society. The need to introduce such a critique in this research, is necessary, on the one hand, in order to see behind the surface of the precariousness that affects designers, and on the other hand, as a vital passage for designers wanting to imagine the creation of economic cultures that do not unquestionably reproduce the precarisation and other pitfalls of a capitalist one. Furthermore, I am convinced that, as designers, we should be urged to engage with such a critique, particularly since the financial collapse of 2008 has led to a fiscal crisis that is unfolding as a destructive force as I write.[126] I see this engagement with Marxist concepts as necessary in order for designers to take up at least one of the possible positions from which to thoroughly question the assumptions about society and the economy they bring to and express through their work.[127]

To prepare us for such a critical reading, the first part of the Intermezzo – drawing on the work of Karl Marx – will introduce a series of concepts of how capitalist value production and accumulation can be understood in their basic form. The introduction of these concepts is important as a critique of capitalism is not generally part of design curricula and thus designers are very often lacking concepts to ground their social critique. Moreover, to engage in contemporary critiques of precariousness, covering core concepts these critiques refer to is crucial. Therefore, the Intermezzo aims at enriching the conceptual tool-box of designers who want to address precariousness by subverting, hacking and (re)appropriating the production and distribution of wealth. Marx's ground-up critique of the capitalist mode of

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126   The unfolding fiscal crisis means that all over Europe the welfare state is cut back to meet the financial crisis. In Greece, people face savage cuts, while being pressured to vote for neoliberal politics. In Italy, the crisis has placed an unelected neoliberal prime minister in charge of saving the state. The failure of the Euro is announced every other week and the people seem to have taken the streets without being able to pressure politicians. For a summary of how the crisis unfolded between 2007 and 2012, see the editors introduction to: Manuel Castells et al., eds., *Aftermath: The Cultures of the Economic Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.xiii-13.

127   In fact, the crisis has already prompted Marx to come back into mainstream discussions, even if often in the perverted guise of the theorist who can help to save capitalism in this moment of crisis. See, for example, the following cover story, "What Would Marx Think?," *Time Magazine*, 2 February 2009. For more press clippings taking up Marx since the economic crisis, see Christian Fuchs and Vincent Mosco, "Introduction: Marx Is Back - the Importance of Marxist Theory and Research for Critical Communication Studies Today," *tripleC* 10, no. 2 (2012): p.127.

production, that aims not only at interpreting the world but at changing it,[128] is still a powerful tool of analysis today. The concepts introduced here will indeed inform the less analytical and more propositive exploration of Part 2, which will engage with contemporary autonomist and feminist Marxist strategies to undo procedures of precarisation. In fact, already in the Intermezzo, through a strategic reading that aims to equip designers with the tools to intervene in procedures of precarisation, we will be following an autonomist and feminist Marxism that aims to strengthen the potential for workers to subvert given dynamics of exploitation and subjectivation by capital.[129] In this sense, the Marxist reading of the capitalist mode of production that I propose is not one of a totality that cannot be challenged and of a history that is linear, but is rather a post-structuralist-inspired reading that aims to contribute to the insights designers have of this economic system in order to strengthen their potential for designing and enacting ruptures.[130]

To work through the implications of a capitalist economy, we first consider some of its core principles and their processual functioning as a way to make visible some of the normalised logics of the economic system we are living in. We then unpack how these principles manifest themselves in the working lives of designers. To do so, we engage with three areas of major relevance from the perspective of designers who do not want to take precariousness as a given: practices of time, innovation and competition. In moving through an analysis of these areas, the aim is to build a series of strategic, conceptual tools that can support designers in building a practice that is sustainable and meaningful in the long-term, both for themselves and for the people they design for.

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128   Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

129   For an overview of the autonomist and feminist Marxist approach to reading the dynamics of capital, see for example, the preface and the introduction to: Harry Cleaver, *Reading Capital Politically* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2000).

130   The inspiration for this reading is drawn from Antonio Negri's approach to Marx's *Grundrisse,* where he states that reality is not linear and that jumps and turns in it are produced by participating subjects. See Antonio Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse* (New York: Autonomedia, 1991), p.56.

8. CAPITALIST VALUE PRODUCTION AND ACCUMULATION

In what follows, we engage with the core principles of the capitalist mode of production so that they can function as points of orientation when considering how precariousness and precarisation play out for, and amongst designers. Here, these principles are rough-cut, despite their diversity of nuances throughout capitalist societies. In their roughness, they serve as elements of reference when wanting to further understand why designers encounter precarious working and living conditions and why it is impossible to undo them through individualised actions.

Capital as a social relation and as a process

Capitalism is an economic system that can be described in many ways: conventional economists would probably suggest that capitalism is a market economy. This is a correct, yet simplistic description that does not acknowledge how capital functions in society and its effects on people's lives. A more fruitful definition, especially for the case I am trying to make about precariousness, can be found with Marx, who, in engaging in a ground-up critique of capitalism, always situates the functioning of capital within an economic, political and philosophical discourse, and thus addresses his critique not to capitalism as a monolithic thing, but to *capital as a social relation.* A social relation that is given when the means of production are separated from the producers, when they are owned by some people, while others own only their labour-power. This implies that such a separation is only overcome by bringing together the means of production and the producers in an exchange of seeming equality, i.e. when workers accept to sell their labour-power to the employers for a defined period of time. However, in the capitalist mode of production, this apparent equality between workers and employers is broken once the worker accepts a contract. From that moment onwards, all their capacities will be directed towards working under the command of the employer in order to increase the wealth of the latter.[131]

   This unequal exchange is based on the fact that workers, without possession of – or access to – the means necessary to (re)produce their livelihoods, need to sell their labour-power as a commodity on the labour market in order to then be paid a wage with which to buy back from the market what they need in order to live. In this exchange of labour-power for wages, workers are set to work to produce wealth, but

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131   Bruna Ingrao and Fabio Ranchetti, *Il Mercato Nel Pensiero Economico* (Milano: Hoepli, 1996), p.171.

then only paid a fraction of the wealth which they produced. Were it otherwise, the capitalists would not gain anything out of this process. In this sense, Marx's capital social relation implies that the production of livelihoods passes through the market and that some people profit from this process, while others are lose out. Moreover, as autonomist philosopher Jason Read reminds us, capital as a social relation also always implies the production of subjectivities that are functional to it and with them, the creation of normalised quotidian practices, habits and subjective comportments.[132]

With regards to the capital social relation being marked by unequal processes of exchange, David Harvey points out that capital is a process, not a thing, and, as such, exists only as long as it is in motion.[133] This need for motion means that for capital(ism) to exist, commodities need to be exchanged on the market with a (more or less constant) rate of profit that allows for the capitalist accumulation process to continue. For this reason, much effort within a capitalist economy is focused on keeping that process of exchange and accumulation fluid, by, for example, allowing people to pre-finance their needs and desires through credit or bombarding people with advertising. Thus, when today we speak of neoliberal politics and the "commodification of everything," we imply that the satisfaction of needs and desires – and with them the production of subjectivity – are ever more closely bound to processes of accumulation. Today, capital puts to work ever more lifestyles, desires and knowledges:[134] primary needs like education and health care, but also culture and information, are being commodified in order to fuel processes of accumulation, even if this very often means precarising people's lives and enhancing the divide between those with and those without money.

Unintelligibility of commodities

In a capitalist society, the value of commodities – which in themselves are made up of human labour, raw materials and the means of production that went into them – is not defined by the use-value they have, but by the monetary value they can be translated into when passing through the market. This translation of the value of a commodity into money and the processes of layering that accompany it, are what

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132   Jason Read, *The Micro-Politics of Capital: Marx and the Prehistory of the Present* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), p.36-42.

133   David Harvey, *A Companion to Marx's Capital* (London: Verso, 2010), p.12.

134   Read, *Micro-Politics of Capital*, p.18.

Marx calls "the fetishism of the commodity and its secret."[135] In this, he means that money conceals the labour processes behind commodities and that people no longer relate to each other as social human beings, but relate to each other through commodities encountered on the market.[136] This has today become so complex that, as Frederic Jameson points out, it is often not even conceivable to people: daily experiences are interlinked with processes all over the world, but yet are not accessible to the immediate, lived experience.[137]

Translated into a practical example, this means that, considering an object such as a computer, the owner cannot possibly know what the working conditions were for all the people that were involved in the process of putting the object onto an office table. There are a vast amount of globally distributed labour-processes involved in producing, delivering and ultimately disposing of a computer: the mining of raw materials, the generation of the energy needed for transport and production, the production and assembling of the parts, bringing it to the shop and selling it, not to mention designing the computer, generating the operational system to run on it, producing the advertising for it, as well as the processes that enter into the picture once the computer is disposed of. Each of these processes, when unpacked, might reveal working conditions and environmental side-effects which are less than desirable.[138] However, none of these conditions and side-effects are directly intelligible in the product as it is bought over the counter.

These long chains of production imply a large amount of mediation within which antagonisms between workers around the world are created. Within these antagonisms, the wealth of each relatively better-off labourer is very likely to be based on the exploitation of labourers (or of nature, which similarly impacts directly on those living from that nature) further down the chain, all in order for the capitalists to maximise their profits.

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135 Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy. Volume I* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), p.163.

136 Ibid., p.165-66.

137 Frederic Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping," in *Marxism and the Interpretaton of Culture*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg and Cary Nelson (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988), p.349.

138 For the various conditions implied in the production of computers around the world, see for example: Elizabeth Dias, "First Blood Diamonds, Now Blood Computers?," http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,1912594,00.html. Wu Ming 1, "Fetishism of Digital Commodities and Hidden Exploitation: The Cases of Amazon and Apple," http://www.wumingfoundation.com/english/wumingblog/?p=1895. Andrew Ross, *No-Collar: The Humane Workplace and Its Hidden Costs* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004). "Processed World," http://www.processedworld.com/; Franco Berardi, *Precarious Rhapsody: Semiocapitalism and the Pathologies of the Post-Alpha Generation* (London: Minor Compositions, 2009); Jennifer Gabrys, *Digital Rubbish: A Natural History of Electronics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), p.127-46.

Two processes of exchange

To begin to understand how value is produced and accumulated, it is important to note that within a capitalist economy there are two main exchange circuits taking place: one that starts out with the commodity (C), then exchanged for money (M) in order to then return to the commodity form (C) – C-M-C. The other begins with money (M), exchanged for a commodity (C), to then return to the money form (M) – M-C-M.[139]

Workers are mainly involved in the Commodity-Money-Commodity process, going from the particular, i.e. their labour-power as commodity (C), to the universal, i.e. money in the form of a wage (M), to then go back to the particular by using the money earned to buy the commodities needed or wanted (C).[140] This route, from a particular commodity to the universal of money in order to then go back to the particular of a commodity, obviously represents a complicated process: the worker enters the market needing to find someone who wants the commodity s/he possess (this is the commodity of labour-power, which for designers is also made up of social skills and creativity) in order to sell it for money with which s/he can then buy the commodity s/he needed or wanted in the first place. The capitalists, on the other hand, are mainly involved in the Money-Commodity-Money process, in which they enter the market with money, buy the commodities they want (generally these are labour-power and means of production), set them to work and then exchange the produced commodities to end up again with money.

Considering these two processes of exchange, it is easier to enter the market already with the universal of money, in order to then buy the particular commodity wanted. And in fact, those who command the universal (M), are in a more powerful position socially than those who command the particular (C). In contrast to commodities, money can effectively be accumulated endlessly, since money is independent of all limits, and "no one directly needs to purchase because he has just sold."[141] We can thus see that people who are in the position to accumulate money for future needs and investments are, at the same time, appropriating social power, because they are the ones in the position to directly convert what they own into any other commodity,

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139   Marx, *Capital. V1*, p.188-244.

140   Today, workers are also involved in M-C-M circuits, for example, when they invest money earned into pension funds. At that moment in the process, they become capitalists.

141   Marx, *Capital. V1*, p.208.

rather than first selling their labour-power. At a collective level, this differentiation of social and monetary power then becomes the main constituent of class-power.

What can be seen when further comparing the M-C-M to the C-M-C circulation is that not all money is necessarily capital. Capital is created when someone decides to use money in a certain way. Thus, capital arises only when money is inserted into a M-C-M circulation:[142] would this circulation be based on equivalence, we would start out with €100, exchange it for a commodity, and then exchange that commodity back for €100. Such a circulation based on equivalence would not be in the interest of whoever engages in such lengthy and often risky processes of exchange. The interest in an exchange that ends in money, not in a use-value in the form of a commodity to be consumed, is the augmentation of the initial amount of money, for example: €100 –› commodity –› €120 (M-C-M').

It is in this M-C-M' circulation that money becomes capital, as its owner "releases the money, but only with the cunning intention of getting it back again. The money therefore is not spent, it is merely advanced."[143] The increment reached on the original sum advanced is then referred to as "surplus-value" and within capitalism, as it is a process and not a thing, this circulation geared towards the production of surplus-value needs to continue endlessly and thus requires constant growth.[144] Were this constant growth from M to M' to stop, capitalism would come to a halt, or at least enter into heavy crisis, as no profits would be being made. This also means that a capitalist – whether being good, bad, "green", social, power-hungry or humble – due to the fierce competition of who can "make it" on the market, needs to continuously reinvest some of the surplus generated. Only in this way can s/he preserve his/her capital and continue to be a capitalist.[145] So for the money-owners, the system has to grow, and when it does not, there is a crisis. And in a crisis, all good social and environmental purposes easily to down the drain – whether considering a single capitalist or the collective behaviour in a national or global economy – as the need for self-preservation on the market prevails over other necessities. These dynamics will be better addressed further on, when we consider the role innovation plays within a competitive capitalist economy.

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142   For an elaboration on the transformation of money into capital, see ibid., p.247-48.

143   Ibid., p.249.

144   Ibid., p.254.

145   Ibid., p.739.

Production of surplus-value

Looking at the M-C-M' circulation, the question emerges, where is the surplus-money resulting from such a circulation coming from? How is it generated? How does the money-owner get more out of this process than he has put into it? What puts him in a privileged position in this M-C-M formula? [146]

For this formula to work, the money-owner needs to find a commodity on the market that possesses the peculiar property of being a source of value. He needs to find a commodity that, in being consumed, creates more value than that which it requires to buy it in the first place.[147] The commodity on the market that foremost corresponds to this requirement is labour-power: the worker selling his/her labour-power to the money-owner is in fact selling a commodity that consists of the mental and physical capabilities of a human being that can be set to work.[148] By selling these human capabilities as labour-power, the potential to produce use-value for exchange on the market is traded.

However, for the money-owner to gain surplus-value out of the acquisition of labour-power, he needs to make sure that the labour-power given to him allows him to make more money than that which he finally pays the labourer. For such a situation to become possible, in which the workers are actually willing to first sell their labour-power to produce commodities that they then buy back with their wage in order to live, Marx notes that, historically

> the owner of money must find the free worker available on the
> commodity market; and this worker must be free in a double sense that as a
> free individual he can dispose of his labour-power as his own commodity,
> and that, on the other hand, he has no other commodity for sale, i.e. he is
> rid of them, he is free of all the objects needed for the realization of his
> labour-power.[149]

In other words, it is necessary for the money-owner to find people on the market who possess nothing but their labour-power to sell, i.e. people who do not

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146   Ibid., p.269.

147   Ibid., p.270.

148   Ibid.

149   Ibid., p.272-73.

themselves have access to the means of production for securing their subsistence, people who, in order to survive, need – and, to a certain extent want – to access money by selling their ability to work.[150] Once this process is set in motion, it continually reproduces itself, becomes normalised and becomes entangled in global chains of interdependency that are difficult to untangle. In fact, many workers today do not feel compelled to ask where the necessity to work for a wage or fee stems from and, when this question is asked, possible alternatives to making a living are scarce.

Definition of productive labour

In this process of exchange and accumulation, it is crucial for capital to establish the value of labour-power over a tight definition of productivity: being productive within capitalism means being able to produce surplus-value.[151] Activities that do not fit this narrow definition are deemed unproductive and besides not being attributed a money-value, they are also devalued socially. Through this definition, capital narrows down the scope of accepted activities, and excludes all those being labelled as "unproductive" of the social contract, which would guarantee a basic set of rights, as well as access to money.[152]

A central example of how this tight definition plays out in social relations and exploitative practices is the way reproductive labour, i.e. the work put into caring for waged labourers and their children or elderly family members, has long been considered unproductive (by capitalists and Marxists alike), and has thus devalued the social position of the people carrying out this kind of work. However, the work of feminist Marxists in the 1970s brought to the fore that although reproductive labour has constantly been labelled as unproductive, it significantly reduces the living costs of the male worker's family, who in turn can be paid a lower wage.[153] They thus argued that not only the capitalist employer, but also the economic

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150   As Read points out in reference to the unpublished chapter "Results of the Immediate Process of Production" of Marx's *Capital*, once capitalism is up and running, the free worker, in contrast to the slave, is compelled by his own wants. See Read, *Micro-Politics of Capital*, p.99.

151   For a definition of productive labour see the elaborations on how absolute and relative surplus-value are produced in capitalism: Marx, *Capital. V1*, p.644.

152   Silvia Federici, "Wages against Housework," (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1975), p.2.

153   See for example: Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, "Women and the Subversion of the Community," http://libcom.org/library/power-women-subversion-community-della-costa-selma-james; Federici, "Against Housework." Maria Mies et al., *Women: The Last Colony* (London: Zed, 1988). Leopoldina Fortunati, *The Arcane of Reproduction: Housework, Prostitution, Labor and Capital* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Autonomedia, 1995).

competitiveness of a nation-state,[154] profits not only from the labour-power of the male worker, but also from the unpaid labour his wife, mother or sister puts into reproducing the male worker and into producing new labour-power by raising children whose subjectivities are formed to docilely and eagerly fit into the labour-market.[155]

Following this analysis of what needs to be considered productive labour within a capitalist society, we can recognise that the wage-relation within capitalism hides much of the unpaid labour upon which capital accumulation is premised.[156] Were it not for the unpaid, unrecognised and 'unproductive' labour that goes into maintaining workers productive (both by caring for them and the environment they live in), capitalism could not exist. The importance of this feminist Marxist analysis of what is officially labelled productive work and its effects on subjectivity is particularly important in relation to the precariousness of designers and the strategies of counter-conduct that can be derived from it. We will thus take up this critique again when considering how capitalist practices of time are framed and, in Part 2, we consider how feminist practices can inspire the enactment of de-precarising counter-conducts.

Production of the working class

Considering the situation that sees the capitalist on one side and people possessing only their labour-power (with different degrees of value) on the other, it is important to point out that this situation is not a natural given. Rather, it has been constructed, and is still being constructed, through a long, historical process during which people are separated from the means of (re)production necessary to secure their survival and to address their desires autonomously from the market.

Marx referred to this process of separation between the people and the means of production as "primitive accumulation," during which commonly shared resources are enclosed, i.e. taken away from common use and either privatised or taken into state ownership.[157] In this process of accumulation on one side and dispossession

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154 For a contemporary elaboration on the economic wealth of reproductive labour, see Tito Boeri et al., eds., *Working Hours and Job Sharing in the Eu and USA: Are Europeans Lazy? Or Americans Crazy?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

155 Federici, "Against Housework," p.5.

156 Federici, "Precarious Labour."

157 Marx, *Capital. V1*, p.714.

on the other, the social means of subsistence and production – the commons – are turned into private property for the use of capital, while the producers that relied on them to guarantee their livelihoods are turned into wage-labourers.[158] This enclosure of commons, i.e. of resources that are cheaply available, is still continuing today, even within countries that appear to be already fully capitalist. The precarisation of workers can be understood as part of these processes of enclosure, where rights are taken away and the welfare state is dismantled, no matter how many people take to the streets and how much violent police action it takes to crush the protests against such precarising measures. But enclosures today are also taking place through more subtle means in, for instance, the attempted enclosure of people's imagination through the popular suggestion of the impossibility of imagining a socio-economic system that differs from the one rotating around capital.[159] However, as we will see extensively in Part 2, movements around the protection and creation of commons are today also one of the main sites of struggle against precarisation and exploitation.

The mechanism of capitalist value production as just laid out are rather clear cut, in which "one subject (capital) controls the other subject (working class) through the *imposition of work* and surplus work."[160] Yet, in contemporary society, we experience a blurring of the boundary between workers and capitalists. Workers are, for example, not only forced but lured into becoming micro-capitalists through the necessity to secure their future through, for example, private pension schemes that invest on the stock market, and, as we have seen in Part 1, through the ways people are broadly normalised into behaving as *homo oeconomicus* – always eager to profit in some way from their actions, seeing, for example, education as an investment in their future selves. This means that levels of complexity are reached that make it difficult to imagine how to break through the capital social relation, in which we are often both money-owners and workers. Consider, for example, small design studios that operate as businesses, possibly drawing on the underpaid or unpaid work of interns, but who themselves are struggling to earn a living and have possibly been

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158   Ibid., p.874-75.

159   As an often quoted phrase points out, for most people today it seems to be easier to imagine the end of the world rather than the end of capitalism. Regarding this phrase, it is not clear who it can be attributed to exactly. It first appeared in written form in the text *Future City* by Frederic Jameson in the *New Left Review* in 2003. For a discussion about the origin of this quote, see http://qlipoth.blogspot.com/2009/11/easier-to-imagine-end-of-world.html

160   Harry Cleaver, *Translator's Introductions. Marx Beyond Marx by Antonio Negri* (New York: Autonomedia, 1991), p.xxi.

urged to open their own studio since no other option could be seen on the horizon.

Having worked through some basic concepts and functions of the capitalist mode of production, we will move to the next section of the Intermezzo, where we explore how these concepts play out in the everyday practices of designers, and the further ramifications this implies.

9. PRECARISING VALUE PRACTICES OF CAPITAL

Autonomist economist Massimo De Angelis points out that, in our society, we are continuously (re)producing capitalism because the values we have learned to consider important, desirable and a priority, are based on principles that capital accumulation relies on. Thus, by orienting our everyday practices around these economic values, we are co-producing the very social form, organisational reach, modes of doing and relating that are rendering us, and others, precarious. In this section, in order to disentangle some of the complexities of the capital social relation, what it values and how it plays out concretely in the lives of designers, we follow De Angelis' suggestion to analyse how capital as a social force "aspires to colonise life with its peculiar mode of doing and articulating social powers."[161] By analysing how capital's modes of doing and articulating social powers act in precarising designers, and with them many others, it becomes possible to see how some of our ways of doing and social relations can be disentangled from capital and its precarising effects. Thus, we will now focus on how capitalist practices of time, innovation and fragmentation manifest themselves in the lives of designers.

Precarising practices of time within design

Snatching as much of people's (unpaid) time as possible, during work and during leisure: this is a major element of the capital social relation and one which manifests itself prominently within the design profession. The way in which this snatching of time is endorsed within the field of design can be exemplified by analysing the practice of the Toronto-based Institute without Boundaries (IwB), a postgraduate design course started in 2003 as a collaboration between The School of Design at George Brown College and graphic designer Bruce Mau. Tracing how the course was advertised and subsequently unfolded reveals how several crucial boundaries had really been done away with, namely the ones between education and exploitation. I would argue that, especially during the first years, during which Mau was involved,[162] the course was, in fact, a high-profile internship: marketed as a highly

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161   Massimo De Angelis, *The Beginning of History: Value Struggles and Global Capital* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), p.13.

162   Once the initial project *Massive Change* was concluded, Mau appears to have withdrawn, and in 2012 he is evident neither as part of staff nor faculty members. From the blog of the program we learn that students still visit his studio every year: Institute without Boundaries, "Blog," http://worldhouse.ca/blog/.

experimental and engaged study program, prospective students were expected to pay large amounts of money to be allowed to work within Bruce Mau Studio for the period of twelve months.[163]

Between 2003 and 2005, students with undergraduate degrees were recruited on the program on the premise of working on a project called *Massive Change,* which had been previously commissioned to Bruce Mau Studio by the Vancouver Art Gallery and that would address the future of design. Applicants for the program were advised that they would be required to work 40+ hours per week and, thus, working a part-time job on the side was not recommended.[164] However, applicants were offered help in accessing loans in order to be able to pay for the program.[165] Moreover, between 2002 and 2005, the IwB website further informed applicants, that, as a critical member of the design team, each student would share responsibility for ensuring that the developed project met the high standards of Bruce Mau Studio.[166] This note, which reads with some irony in an outline of a 'study programme,' becomes yet more incredible when it adds that applicants "will be expected to lease an Apple iBook at an approximate annual cost of $1,600.00 (Cdn.), with the opportunity to buy out the computer at the end of the year for market value."[167]

The ambiguous premise on which the 'study programme' was advertised becomes even more explicit when reading the book *Massive Change* that accompanied the eventual exhibition after the second year of the programme.[168] Here, Mau states that the enormous commission by the Vancouver Art Gallery which resulted in *Massive Change* (a project that gained him and the IwB huge exposure in the field of design) would not have been possible were it not for the ingenious idea of combining the elaboration of the commission with an invite to develop an educational

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163   In 2002, fees for home students were set at $12,000 (Cdn.) and for international students at $19,500 (Cdn.). The website as of October 2002, stating fees for 2003, was accessed through the internet archive "Wayback Machine" at: Institute without Boundaries, "Frequently Asked Questions," http://web.archive.org/web/20021220004415/http://www.gbrownc.on.ca/institutewithoutboundaries/faq.html.

164   Ibid.

165   Ibid.. This is an interesting note, since just four years earlier, Mau published a design manifesto that apparently outlines the ethos of his studio, which at point 31 states, "Don't borrow money": Bruce Mau, "Incomplete Manifesto for Growth," http://www.brucemaudesign.com/4817/112450/work/incomplete-manifesto-for-growth.

166   Institute without Boundaries, "How Will I Learn?," http://web.archive.org/web/20021220003315/http://www.gbrownc.on.ca/institutewithoutboundaries/question6.html.

167   Institute without Boundaries, "Frequently Asked Questions".

168   Bruce Mau and Jennifer Leonard, *Massive Change* (London: Phaidon, 2004).

program together with George Brown College.[169] And indeed, with this move, Mau and the IwB have not only advocated an approach that is "about the design of the world" rather than about the world of design,[170] but they have also opened up a new and distinctly worrying territory in design education by pushing practices of free-labour to their extreme.

The absurdity of such free-labour, or rather 'pay-to-labour,' is made possible by framing the whole endeavour as a breaking out of narrow specialisations, as a testing ground for post-Fordist modes of production, and by accrediting the whole programme through an established college.[171] And in fact, considering how the boundaries of the factory have dissolved with post-Fordism and the ways in which work leaks into all areas of life, in those first years with Mau, the IwB has pushed the boundaries of how, within the field of design, unpaid time can be snatched from people and put to work for someone else's profits – albeit in the promise of an education, high-profile contacts and a prestigious work experience, which all supposedly contribute to the development of a future career.[172]

However, every time designers try to meet their ambitions (or perhaps even their lack of a better option) through the offer of free-labour (or even by paying their way into high-profile internships, as with the IwB), this contributes to a negative spiral for almost everyone: why might someone ever again pay for something when it is instead possible to have it for free? Every time unpaid labour is performed, the flawed perception is reinforced that certain kinds of work have lost all monetary value.[173] The consequence of this proliferation of free-labour is the effective erosion of stable jobs, as well as an augmentation of pressure on those who manage to acquire a paid contract. Pressure to do over-time rises: pressure to give

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169   For Mau's statements on the inception of the *Institute without Boundaries* see ibid., p.20; Kathryn Simon, "Bruce Mau," BOMB Magazine, http://bombsite.com/issues/91/articles/2732.

170   The ubiquitously found quote from Mau on the project is: "*Massive Change* is not about the world of design; it's about the design of the world."

171   Leitmotifs of the course from 2002 retrieved from: "Institute without Boundaries," http://web.archive.org/web/20021002221205/http://www.institutewithoutboundaries.com/.

172   Since Bruce Mau left the program, the studio space is hosted within George Brown College, but the course still seems to function like a design consultancy (indeed, it defines itself as a Toronto-based design studio) that can be hired or engaged by clients/partners in helping them to solve their problems. For the academic year 2012/2013, the program's client/partner is the Dublin City Council and the year is dedicated to prototyping a „new model for solving important issues challenging 21st century cities." See "Institute without Boundaries," http://worldhouse.ca/. Barry Sheehan, "The Dublin Project," http://thedublinproject.com/the-dublin-project/.

173   Ross Perlin, *Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the Brave New Economy* (London/New York: Verso, 2011), p.xv.

ever more unpaid time to one's employer in order to avoid being thrown back into the labour-market, where others are waiting to take over that job or internship.[174]

The continuous escalation of more or less subtle invitations to perform free-labour, creates a climate in which giving one's time and labour-power for free seems a normality, and even a necessity if one is ever to get into a respectable, as well as paid, position. However, when looking at the monetary transactions behind the often sweetened discourse and exploitative practice of free-labour, it becomes evident that it is in fact the free-labourers' families, governments' tax money, EU money or the credit-arrangements of the free-labourers themselves that are subsidising the companies or organisations they work for. This is because savings, stipends or credit-money are covering the unpaid workers' needs for housing, food, transport and so on, and are, thus, quietly but directly subsidising their employers: workers are themselves paying for their reproduction as workers, a function that should actually be performed by whoever puts that labour-power to work and profits from it. And to clarify, also making coffee, photocopying, tiding up storage or finishing a project with a couple of extra hours at home, all contribute to the profit an "employer" is making.

The basic principles of capitalist practices of time

But to take a step back, it is necessary to analyse how an exploitative practice such as the one proposed by the IwB, and by many others who profit from free-labour, fits into the bigger picture of how the capital social relation renders time. This relation classically establishes that, once workers have sold their working day to the capitalist, the latter is eager to use the time acquired in the most efficient way possible. This is so, because the most efficient use of the labour-time/labour-power acquired maximises the valorisation of the capital already invested in machines and materials. In this logic of valorisation, every extra minute of labour that can be squeezed out of the worker increases the amount of surplus-value produced for the capitalist.

The principle underlying this logic is that surplus-value is generated by having the worker work longer than it takes to generate his or her salary: if the value of a day's work amounts to €100 and these €100 of value can be created through half a day's labour, then the worker is giving his or her labour for free to the capitalist for

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174   Both the study of the BDG in Germany and the *Designers' Inquiry* in Italy show that doing over-time is often required but seldom paid for in the world of design. Moreover, throughout this research, accounts of people being pressured through subtle mobbing techniques have emerged, for example, being continuously asked if they are working part-time whenever they leave the design agency after a regular, eight-hour working day.

the rest of the day.[175] Thus, the more time without remuneration the worker gives to the capitalist, the more surplus-value the latter can gain from what is produced during a working day. If the worker can even be convinced to pay for being allowed to perform free-labour – for instance through the social pressure created through an oversupply of labourers as we will see in more detail later – this is of course the best situation for the capitalist.

This dynamic clearly creates a situation that disadvantages the worker, but, as we have already seen in the previous section, the worker within capitalism is generally put in a position within which s/he cannot refuse waged labour as it is the only option s/he is given by which to make a living. However, since the inception of capital as a social relation, there has been a constant struggle with regards the value of a working day, i.e. how much workers need to be paid in return for their labour-power. This struggle has generally been determined by the definition of "socially necessary labour-time," which is classically defined as the time required to produce any use-value under the conditions of production *normal for a given society* and with the average degree of skill and intensity of labour *prevalent in that society* (italics mine).[176] The focus on defining the value of labour-time as that which is socially necessary is crucial (as we will see later on in more detail in the section on practices of competition and fragmentation), as this social necessity varies from place to place. Thus wages are defined by the socially necessary labour-time needed to reproduce labour-power by paying for housing, food, health care, transport and so on, which vary greatly between countries, especially when considered on a global scale.[177]

Following the logic of socially necessary labour-time, the working day within capitalism is classically defined as being made up of the time necessary to produce the daily average means of subsistence for the worker and the time necessary to produce surplus value for the capitalist. This composition can be pictured as follows: a line A – – – – – – B representing the length of the socially necessary labour-time to produce the equivalent of the labourers' means of subsistence – here we assume it is six hours. The labour is then extended beyond AB by two hours

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175   Marx, *Capital. V1*, p.300.

176   Ibid., p.129.

177   The level of poverty, which in turn defines the minimum wage for workers, is defined through a calculation of the cost of a basic commodity bundle, which contains the goods assumed to be necessary for a basic lifestyle in a given society. It is around the composition of this bundle that political class struggle emerges, as it is the manipulation of its content that decides on the wages to be paid. See for example: ibid., p.275.

(A – – – – – – B – – C), during which the surplus value for the capitalist is produced. AB thus represents the necessary labour-time, which defines the wage, while BC represents the surplus labour-time given to the employer without remuneration.[178]

This exemplifies well how in a capitalist mode of production, labour can never be reduced to AB, or to what is necessary to live well, as it is precisely BC that ensures the capitalist's profit. It is between A and C that the working day fluctuates, whereby the capitalist gains more, the shorter AB is in relation to BC.[179] Consequently, a struggle over time between the class of capitalists and the class of workers emerges: for the capitalists, the length of the working day should be as long as possible, but in opposition the workers need time to satisfy their physical, affective and intellectual needs. Workers need to eat, sleep, love, care, learn, but they also need to defend themselves from a working day that would effectively shorten their life by completely exhausting them.[180]

Currently, designers, especially when working freelance, are mostly left to themselves when needing to establish the levels of socially-necessary labour time that goes into their design work. The fact that, in many countries, there does not exist an easily accessible and applicable scale of fees that could be adapted to the range and levels of work, penalises designers. Data collected through *Designers' Inquiry* reveals, for example, that young designers are primarily applying somewhat arbitrary measures in order to define their fees and often undersell their labour-power,[181] thus lowering the general perception of the money-value of design work. Clearly, it can be argued that this underselling is also the result of the sheer amount of designers looking for work and that the resulting competition between them pushes fees down. However, given the almost complete lack of useful points of orientation to what might constitute a proper fee undoubtedly exacerbates the situation. Moreover, designers' inclination towards sacrificing their labour-time in order to work with clients who are perceived as prestigious, needs to be considered as, indeed, both freelancers as well as design studios tend to also take into consideration the symbolic or social capital, i.e. the prestige and connections they

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178   Ibid. p.430

179   Ibid., p.431.

180   Ibid., p.342-44.

181   Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative, "Designers' Inquiry" p.11-16.

acquire,[182] when working with or for (and this distinction is often blurred) someone they perceive as important.[183]

Normalisation of capitalist practices of time

When thinking through the time-practices valued by the capital social relation, it is useful to consider how the notion of time, according to which people function today, has been modulated over centuries through time-disciplining techniques. This modulation in capitalism has been – and still is – crucial, precisely because time-discipline decisively determines how much free-labour can be appropriated for the production of surplus-value. As one of the factory inspectors cited by Marx noted, "moments are the elements of profit,"[184] which make the management of workers' time crucial within capitalism. Consequently, with the development of capitalism, a tight time-discipline at work became crucial for the capitalist: setting exact times for breaks, implementing a system of fines and the supervision of the labour-process, streamlining the production process, even stealing workers' time by turning the factory clock forward in the morning and backward in the evening became common practice.[185]

And in fact, the notion of temporality and time as we know today in the global North/West is socially constructed. It is in capitalism that the idea of a working day, a working week and a working life has been established, whereby to normalise such concepts of time in relation to wage-labour, a temporal disciplining of societies needed to take place. It required centuries until workers were compelled by social conditions to sell their whole, active life-time to the capitalist in return for their conventional means of subsistence.[186] In England, for example, for the greater part of the eighteenth century, workers would still only work as much as necessary to live: if four days could cover their needs, they would not work for the rest of the week. When they could avoid the drudgery of wage labour, with all its additional

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182   Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).

183   Adam Arvidsson et al., "Passionate Work? Labour Conditions in the Milan Fashion Industry," *Journal for Cultural Research* 14, no. 3 (2010).

184   Marx, *Capital. V1*, p.352.

185   Ibid., p.349-50.

186   Ibid., p.382.

disciplining within the factory, they would simply avoid doing so.[187] Thus, to reach our contemporary, embodied notion of temporality, in which work dictates the rhythms of our lives, it took centuries of, what Foucault would describe as, forms and techniques of power that act locally in order to subject people to the discipline of the workplace.[188] It took violence and social pressure in order to have people function according to the time-logic of capital.[189]

And still today, a large part of education is geared towards insisting people stick to given timeframes, work within deadlines, and measure activities to a clock and a calendar respectively. With regards the ways in which designers are being time-disciplined through tight deadlines of project work at university, through career-services that teach techniques of time- and self-management, but, above all, by being taught to love one's work as the activity through which to be most oneself, these measures can all be read as techniques to ensure the productivity of even those designers who will be precarious, those working freelance or pursuing their own thing. It is a form of control that is instilled within the individual in order that s/he functions according to the rules of productivity even when, or maybe today *especially* when, they are *not* in a regular job, when they are precariously moving in and out of paid work. It is apparent that revealing one's time-discipline is perceived as a prerequisite to getting into an ever more slightly privileged position within the world of precariousness: being ready to invest all time necessary to stick to a tight deadline, to be acquainted and comfortable with high-pressure, short-term projects and collaborations, to time-manage oneself to be efficiently streamlined in one's daily, monthly and yearly attitudes, deferring time-consuming desires or needs to an indefinite future.

Considering this normalisation of time-discipline, the most radical gesture today would seem to be to break with this internalised productive notion of time; to find a rhythm and a pace that is not consciously or unconsciously geared towards productivity, but towards a good life. Many designers are far from such a gesture at the moment, and what is more, many are not only submitting themselves to today's

187 Ibid., p.385.

188 For how Foucault relates to the disciplining described by Marx, especially in chapter 10 of *Capital,* see the lecture he gave in Salvador de Bahia in 1976: Michel Foucault, "The Mesh of Power," http://viewpointmag.com/2012/09/12/the-mesh-of-power/.

189 For accounts of the violence and social pressure, see for example: Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*; Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Allen Lane, 1991); Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*.

systemically unstable time-frames with the associated levels of pressure to perform, but are doing so by giving their time and labour-power for free to others, in the hope that they might gain from it at a later moment in time.

Considering that today it is commonplace in the creative industries for free-labour to be both assumed and carried out, the struggles to shorten the length of the working day and for better wages that have been fought in the past, seem far removed. But given that money-owners always and necessarily tend to find ways to shorten the length of the socially necessary labour-time, i.e. the workers' labour time that needs to be paid in order to allow the workers to live, it is clear that the more this time is reduces, the greater the profits they make.

To begin from this assumption of capital's compulsory reduction of socially-necessary labour-time, when reading the discourse around free and underpaid labour in the creative industries, we can see how intrinsic rewards and self-realization underlying much creative work are instrumental in allowing creatives tolerate being exploited by their "employers."

Moreover, this discourse can be read in parallel to the discourse around the free-labour performed by women in the household, as a labour of love. When in the 1970s feminist Marxist Silvia Federici writes that capital had to convince women that housework is a natural, unavoidable, even fulfilling, and thus unwaged activity, the same could be said about the work of many designers today.[190] Although design is today conceived as a major driver of the economy, being "allowed" to perform creative work (which often is indeed not that creative at all) is still largely perceived as something to be grateful for, rather than something designers should expect decent remuneration for. Consequently, the offers of as well as requests for free-labour, which surround designers on all sides, are portrayed as "great opportunities," when in fact they are compelling people to dedicate their time and labour-power for free for someone else's gain.

To add to this discourse around free, creative labour is that institutions such as universities tend to become ever more complicit in it. Since the Bologna Process,[191] for example, through which initiative periods of free labour were not only

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190   Federici, "Against Housework," p.2.

191   The Bologna Process was initiated in 1999 and aimed at homogenising education across Europe to create the European Higher Education Area. It introduced the BA, MA and PhD structure to studies across Europe and included an internship to a 3-year BA. For a critical engagement with the Bologna Process and its consequences, see, for example: Edu-factory, http://www.edu-factory.org/wp/.

normalised but institutionalised by framing them as a learning process, young designers are trained, just as are other students, to buy into the logic of free internships to get a foot in the door, to help build a professional network and to 'allow' people to gain experience. Once out of education, the myth of this mechanism for securing a stable, paid position persists and people continue to readily take on unpaid labour following a carrot promising not only payment and stability, but also success, happiness and a meaningful experience.[192]

As pointed out in the example of the IwB, these practices of time around free-labour are fuelling a negative spiral. A spiral that is propelled, on the one hand, by many young designers relying on the savings their parents accumulated through stable jobs and pension schemes, and, on the other hand, by the existence of enough people still believing in the carrot and willing to take on debts in order to pursue a "career." But this cycle could soon be exhausted when it becomes the turn of the precarious generation to support their offspring. At that point, there will be nothing left to support people the way we see it currently happen.[193]

Moreover, when considering how present capitalist practices of time will affect people's future, it is important to point out that, since the financial crisis, a system of debt has been revealed that enslaves the time of the future. Financing one's education, health, housing and so on through an accumulation of debt, occupies the present and the future with the pressure to pay back the credit-money owed. In times when work is precarious, such a situation renders, the indebted designer, for example, even more precarious. Moreover, the constant need for a certain amount of money to cover the monthly repayments easily squeezes out social and political engagement in design, since it takes away all freedom to negotiate or refuse work which does not fit one's political agenda. Furthermore, financially-pressured designers who engage in work that is snatching large amounts of unpaid or underpaid time from them, are left with little or no space to produce work which might challenge the status quo of the very society that is keeping them in their precarious position in the first place.

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192   Carrotworkers' Collective, "Surviving Internships: A Counter Guide to Free Labour in the Arts," (London2011).

193   As already mentioned in Part 1, student debt is soaring, but as it emerged, for example, from a conversation with a well-known U.S. designer, people who have themselves had the privilege to go through private education, cannot afford to offer the same to their children as the income generated through their design work does not allow for it.

Capitalist practices of innovation

In a capitalist mode of production, practices of time are closely linked to practices of innovation. This is because once the length of the working day has been legally established under the pressure of political struggles, the production of surplus value can no longer be increased through the extension of the working hours. At this point, what needs to happen to secure the gain of more surplus value is a revolutionising of the labour process itself.[194] This innovation can be performed in various areas, for example, in the production and distribution process, in the type of commodities produced or in the management of workers. Innovation in these areas is crucial because, as Marx points out,

> the real value of a commodity ... is not its individual, but its social
> value; that is to say, its value is not measured by the labour-time that the
> article costs the producer in each individual case, but by the labour-time
> socially required for production.[195]

In other words, if a single capitalist begins to apply a new production method that lowers his costs of production, he can still sell the produced commodity at its social value and can hence realise an extra surplus-value in comparison to his competitors, with their more costly processes or to less innovative products. As long as this single capitalist is the only one to apply this new method, he has the competitive advantage and can even sell his goods slightly below the social average value, while still not making a loss. Acting this way, he can make a huge profit by taking over the market, squeezing out those producing with costs slightly over the social average.

As we have seen in Part 1, innovation of production processes was also at the root of the shift from Fordism to post-Fordism: not only outsourcing and the computerization of production, but also the incorporation of a social critique into management discourse, have been some of the major innovations marking this transition. This subsequently marked the shift from stable to precarious jobs in the global North/West, and precarising workers with new, innovative contracts and working

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194   Marx, *Capital. V1*, p.430-31.

195   Ibid., p.434.

arrangements gave employers a competitive advantage on the market.[196]

The incessant search for innovation is normalised and normed by what Marx refers to as the "coercive law of competition." This law forces capitalists to try to be ahead of other competitors within the market in order to continuously increase the surplus value produced and to avoid going bankrupt.[197] It is within this logic of competition that many of the links between innovation and design work can be read: for example, high-tech companies allow designers and other professionals to freely experiment in their labs while attempting to catch as much of their free time as possible, through "after-work" activities or by allowing time for "play," which is geared towards producing that one, innovative leap that will give the company the decisive competitive advantage in the market.

The logic of competition is also what drives companies, venture capitalists or angel investors to support small, creative start-ups.[198] As past experiences have shown, innovation is distinctly linked to smallness: patents developed by small firms are twice as likely to be among the top 1% of patents that subsequently register a high economic impact.[199] It is thus no surprise that investment flows in this direction, especially in the technology sectors. However, it is also interesting to note that economists underline the necessity that creative and radical innovators should be urged to leave a new venture after it is up and running, as their mind-set often conflicts with that which is necessary in order to grow and consolidate a company.[200] This might well be because an innovative mind is not necessarily interested in participating in the dynamics of the "coercive law of competition."

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196   However, if through various innovations there is a dramatic increase in productivity, precariousness is not necessarily the result for all workers: a dramatic increase in productivity could bring the costs of production for a commodity, as well as its money-value on the market, way down. If then a fragment of that savings in production costs is passed on to the workers in the form of higher wages, the rate of exploitation could be increased while at the same time increasing the physical living standards of the workers. This means that the capitalist could move from a A – – – – – – B – – C situation to a A – – B – – – – – – C situation, i.e. he could get more unremunerated labour-power, while the workers could still be able to buy loads more of commodities on the market. What is not perceived by workers benefitting from this paradoxical situation, is that their living standards are propped up by exploitation and environmental pollution somewhere else in the process of production. As a dynamic, this high rate of exploitation paired with a rise in living standards for workers has been working, especially in the U.S. until the 1970s, but since, the gains in productivity have not been passed on anymore. The profit has been taken by a minority and social inequalities increased dramatically. See Harvey, *Companion*, p.170-71.

197   Marx, *Capital. V1*, p.433.

198   Venture capitalists invest the pooled money of others, while angel investors generally invest their own capital.

199   Geoff Mulgan et al., "Social Innovation: What It Is, Why It Matters and How It Can Be Accelerated," (London: The Young Foundation, 2007), p.42.

200   Ibid., p.25.

Design innovation as a good in itself?

Since today, innovation is often portrayed as a good in itself, it is interesting to reflect on the social results produced by the connection between value-practices of innovation and design. Being involved in the race for new innovations is, in fact, the activity that often prevents designers from being highly precarious. However, it is important to point out that innovation today, especially in the field of mass-technology, is closely linked to the exploitation of both highly precarious workers and natural resources in the cycles of production, marketing and disposal cycles of these products.[201] Were there to be no exploitation involved in this chain of production, many innovations would not contribute to economic growth in the way they currently do.

Moreover, in respect to the role of machinery in improving people's lives, the introduction of household appliances and its consequences is an interesting case to consider as the machinery has been designed in the spirit of alleviating the toil of reproductive work. But as an analysis of their introduction in rural Germany in the 1950s shows,[202] the hope that appliances such as freezers and washing machines would reduce work and increase free-time for women did not come true. Instead, they allowed women to handle greater amounts of work in the home and on the farm, which in turn allowed men to hand their tasks over to women and to take up work in the factories of the towns. In this instance, the introduction of electronic household appliances did not bring the promised free-time for women, but rather contributed to tie women closer to their "naturalised" role of unpaid housewives whilst increasing the base of men competing to be enrolled into wage-labour. This example suggests that design innovation alone design does not necessarily improve the overall situation of people. In this sense, the introduction of household appliances could have been a liberating, potentially revolutionary force in society, but as it did not go along with a politicization of the workers in regards of how this innovation could really serve their objectives, it only served to tie people more closely into the precarising capital social relation.

Considering how often innovation is instrumental in the expansion of capital's exploitative social relation, it becomes necessary for designers to closely

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201   See for example: Wu Ming 1, "Digital Commodities". For an account of the importance of the exploitation for the Italian legal as well as illegal economy, see for example: Brave New Alps, "Laboratorio Campano," http://www.laboratoriocampano.org/.

202   Thomas Fuchs, "Einst Mühsam Walten, Jetzt Ein Schnelles Schalten" in *Oikos. Von Der Feuerstelle Zur Mikrowelle: Haushalt Und Wohnen Im Wandel*, ed. Michael Andritzky (Gießen: Anbas-Verlag, 1992).

interrogate how the innovation furthered by their designs contributes to particular sorts of approaches to the world. With regards to design that aims to address immediate social issues, there is a need to carefully ask with what agenda, worldview and underlying assumptions of value the designers approach these issues. If, for example, we consider design for development, South African designer Ralph Borland reminds us that, in the 1960s and 1970s, designers working in this field voiced an acute, critical attitude towards framing approaches to solve global inequality in terms of "first world economic practices."[203] Practitioners at the time, like Gui Bonsiepe, were sceptical about the ability of the market and consumable goods to resolve anything, given that these register only the needs that can be satisfied by commodities.[204] Today, instead, exhibitions like *Design for the Other 90%*[205] tie into a discourse about social issues and poverty that encourages designers and entrepreneurs to innovate for "the poor"[206] out of self-interest, because the billions of poor in the world represent a huge market for affordable products and services.[207] The proposal here is that if designers were to comprehend the potential of this market, they could profit from it while at the same time being celebrated as "do-gooders".[208]

Such contemporary arguments for design are inscribing themselves in issues of global concern, but, unfortunately, do so without questioning larger, global mechanisms that are producing poverty in the first place and their own ingrained *homo oeconomicus* approach to the world. This fact is, underlined, for example, in how the catalogue accompanying *Design for the Other 90%* is devoid of any overt politics, simply takes poverty as a given. There is not one essay or fact sheet reflecting on how "the poor" the exhibition is concerned with came into being, how they have been – and are still being – impoverished through colonial or neo-colonial practices such as

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203   Ralph Borland, "Radical Plumbers and Playpumps: Objects in Development" (Trinity College, 2011), p.53.

204   Ibid.

205   Cynthia E. Smith, ed. *Design for the Other 90%* (New York: Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum Smithsonian Institution, 2007); "Design for the Other 90%," Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, http://www.cooperhewitt.org/tags/design-other-90.

206   I use inverted commas for "the poor" as the parameters used to define who counts as poor are too reduced to how little money people live on a day (for example, $1 or $2 a day), tacitly implying that this life is necessarily a more miserable life than 'ours' in the global North/West, which is a position that I do not subscribe to.

207   The *Design for the Other 90%* catalogue subscribes to this view throughout, but it is expressed most evidently in Paul Polak's contribution: Paul Polak, "Design for the Other Ninety Percent," in *Design for the Other 90%*, ed. Cynthia E. Smith (New York: Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum Smithsonian Institution, 2007).

208   For another charitable, bourgeois proposal of 'do good' for graphic designers, see David B. Berman, *Do Good Design: How Designers Can Change the World* (Berkley: New Riders, 2009).

those (re)produced through globalization.[209] In lacking such contextualisation, many of the proposals made for new areas of engagement for designers are uncritically tying into conventional discourses of capital: "the poor" are framed as clients forming a yet unexploited market. And as we (apparently) live in a world where only money can secure access to food, shelter, clean water, health or education, the suggestion is that it is only when designers provide "the poor" with "the means to become entrepreneurs in their own right," that they will succeed in devising innovative "solutions to the causes of poverty."[210] All this is not to say that designers should not engage in issues of poverty and inequality, but to stress the need for a thorough examination of unquestioned assumptions and the consideration of models for the (re)production of livelihoods that do not unquestionably rely on Western business models.

Arguments around design like the ones promoted by *Design for the Other 90%* sadly leave proposals for engaged design practices devoid their social critique: by strengthening the reasons for individualistic searches for profit the desire to tackle issues around poverty and inequality are recuperated into a capitalist discourse of innovation. Thus, the *homo oeconomicus* incorporated over decades by people in the global North/West is simplistically projected onto everyone else in the world, by stating that, for example,

> the poorest people in the world are just like you and me. No matter how community-minded we are, we will take care of the needs of our family first. And we value the most the items we had to work for.[211]

In such a discourse, often found in relation to social innovation, concerns about other people's lives are mobilised, whilst not threatening at all the principles of capitalist accumulation and exploitation that generate these issues in the first place. In fact, the argument that social innovation is the production of new ideas that meets

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209   For a brief overview of the ways globalisation has impoverished people in developing and formerly colonial countries, see for example: David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (New York: Melville House, 2011), p.2-6.

210   Cynthia E. Smith, "World Designs to End Poverty," in *Design for the Other 90%*, ed. ibid. (New York: Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum Smithsonian Institution, 2007), p.16.

211   Martin Fisher, "Design to Kickstart Income," in *Design for the Other 90%*, ed. Cynthia E. Smith (New York: Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum Smithsonian Institution, 2007).

unmet needs,[212] too often sweetens processes involved in the commodification, and thus precarization, of everything. So, although social innovation is concerned with pressing issues around health, education and care, it too often proposes to address these by a unquestioned movement through the market, thus tying ever more people and areas of life into a precarising capital social relation.

In fact, to reflect on the movement of recuperation of desire and critique that exists in many discourses around social innovation, it is useful to draw on Boltanksi and Chiapello, who argue that, in certain conditions, the recuperation of critique can even

> *elude the requirement of strengthening the mechanisms of justice* by making itself more difficult to decipher, by 'clouding the issue'. According to this scenario, the response to critique leads not to the establishment of more just mechanisms but to a change in the modes of profit creation, such that the world is momentarily disrupted with respect to previous referents, and in a state that is extremely difficult to decipher. ... The old world it con demned has disappeared, but people do not know what to make of the new one.[213]

The disorientation generated by the debate around social innovation is clearly linked to the profundity of the issues it wants to tackle, given that it is undoubtedly difficult not to be compelled by arguments that promise to solve problems around poverty, disease and social exclusion. Furthermore, areas of friction are often downplayed or smoothed out, for example when Charles Leadbeater speaks about social innovation through the internet.[214] In doing so, he completely dismisses the toxic materiality and global divide of access that accompanies this medium, and is thus able to make a rather sleek, immaterial and enthusiastic case for such practices of innovation. When such accounts of innovation are presented, it is left to the readers themselves to draw connections between conflicting information presented at different points in the narrative and to analyse the complex processes behind the

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212   Mulgan et al., "Social Innovation," p.8.

213   Boltanski and Chiapello, *Spirit of Capitalism*, p.29.

214   Charles Leadbeater, *We-Think: Mass Innovation, Not Mass Production* (London: Profile Books, 2008).

examples of good-practice presented, in order to be able to make critical sense of it.[215]

Among designers, the disorientation between practices that "do-good" and those that, often unintentionally, create further precariousness, is also generated by a lacking awareness of how the capital social relation functions. This means that designers are often limiting themselves to addressing the symptoms rather than the underlying, exploitative social practices. This situation is perpetuated by the fact that, while much discussion takes place within the field of design around social or green entrepreneurship, the idea and practice of entrepreneurship – often themselves part of the problem – are seldom discussed. And thus the desire of young (or even, often, slightly older and already semi-exhausted) designers to make a living through meaningful work is channelled into sweetened entrepreneurialism. In this way, a thorough questioning of why certain situations develop around which designers want to create meaningful projects, is dismissed. Through this dismissal, the possibility of addressing these issues in more inventive ways, through practices of "counter-innovation" that displace the capital social relation and with it, precariousness, are lost.

Social practices of fragmentation

Besides the "coercive law of competition" reigning amongst capitalists, the capital social relation fosters fragmenting social practices at all levels of society, with competition being among the primary of these practices. As De Angelis points out, competition is so engrained in capitalist society that people seem to be rendered speechless in relation to this dominant relational mode, even claiming that it is simply a fact of life through which the economy is articulated, just as it might have once been claimed that patriarchy is an unquestionable fact of life.[216] Furthermore, most designers take competition and its precarising effects, within and beyond the field of design, as a given. A given towards which their bodies and minds must be continuously trained, in order to make sure they reason and function in ways that secure them a competitive advantage over others. As we have seen in Part 1, design

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215   The report on social innovation by Mulgan, for example, cites the *Grameen Bank* and fair trade as world changing social innovations, without considering the many – more or less hidden – problems these bring with them: Mulgan et al., "Social Innovation," p.47. For a critique of micro-finance as proposed by *Grameen Bank* see for example: Lamia Karim, "An Analysis of Microfinance in Bangladesh," Conversations on diplomacy and power politics, http://diplomacyandpower.blogspot.co.uk/2009/03/true-state-of-microfinance-in.html. For a critique of fair trade, see for example: Fred Pearce, *Confessions of an Eco-Sinner* (London: Eden Project Books, 2008), p.27-35.

216   De Angelis, *Beginning of History*, p.xi.

education is also geared towards preparing students with the individualising skills supposedly necessary to succeed in the market and to be ready to play to the rules of a fragmented profession. In fact, we have also seen how the market rewards some and punishes others through procedures of control and normalisation. Moreover, in the section on practices of time, we have considered how the precarising practices of free-labour within design also heavily rely on the persuasiveness of competition: paying, for example, to be allowed to perform free-labour in a prestigious studio can be read as building up the social and cultural capital that will later provide a competitive advantage in the market, to stand out amongst others.

The competitive practices that designers experience and perform are not simply confined to their professional field but are intrinsic to capitalist societies, whose function depends on pitting people's livelihoods against each other in an endless rat race.[217] This rat race of competition and fragmentation is played out at all levels: it sets one social class against another, one gender against another, one ethnicity against another, one language group against another, and so on and so forth. Especially in a globalised capitalist economy, the mass of cheap energy, raw materials, assembled goods and services can only be produced by setting the working and living conditions of people against each other. As De Angelis explains, this is because

> capital's form of global interdependence means that my going to work to day and eagerly complying with all the requirements of a competitive society and economy implies that my actions have an effect on somebody else somewhere in the world. To put it bluntly, the competitive market logic implies one of three things: 'we' are more efficient than 'them' and thus we contribute to their ruin; 'they' are more efficient than us so 'they' are contributing to 'our' ruin; or the two opposites are true alternately, resulting in an endless rat race that ruins both 'their' and 'our' lives.[218]

This antagonism between "us" and "them" plays out both on an individual and a collective scale: our area of the world against theirs, our nation against theirs, our region against theirs, our city against theirs, our borough against theirs, our business against theirs, our work unit against theirs, me against you. This setting

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217   Ibid., p.41.

218   Ibid., p.153.

of one against the other can manifest itself either in the stark, mediated tensions of the survival of computer-dependent designers as tied to the destruction of other people's habitats and lives, or in the more directly intelligible oppositions in which someone might need to rely on someone else's socially devalued cheap or free-labour simply to be able to be in the position to perform their own job.[219] In this respect, the autonomist economist Harry Cleaver points out how the power differentials created amongst people through capitalist practices function to discipline and control them:

> The waged are used to mediate the relation between capital and the unwaged. The higher waged are used to mediate the relations between capital and the lower waged. Or, inversely, the unwaged are used by capital to discipline the waged; the low waged are used to discipline the high waged.[220]

In this sense, the "divide and rule" of the capital social relation is based on pitting diversities against each other, which then result in hierarchies of power and differentiated access to resources at all levels of society.[221] These fragmenting differences manifest themselves not only through class but also through gender, race, sexual orientation and many more diversities that can be mobilised for creating opposites.

In the work and lives of designers, the competition and fragmentation resulting from such oppositions has furthermore been rendered fierce by the large number of "industry-ready" graduates that enter the market every year, a number that has been steadily rising with the transition to post-Fordism. For now, this saturation of the creative-labour market has resulted in a climate of competitiveness that makes it easy for the industries to draw on a readily available "reserve army" of freelance

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219   As to how livelihoods are pitted against each other in a globalised capitalist economy, see for example Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russel Hochschild, eds., *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy* (London: Granta, 2003).

220   Cleaver, *Reading Capital Politically*, p.160.

221   De Angelis, *Beginning of History*, p.173.

designers.[222] Furthermore, it has created a situation in which small design studios engaged in what could be considered reasonable cultural work, need to rely on the free or underpaid labour of other designers in order to keep afloat in the market, thus ultimately exhausting each other rather than joining forces to confront the procedures that have created that exploitative situation in the first place. However, as we will discuss in more depth in Part 2, this is not a situation that needs to exist indefinitely.

Besides competition between designers, it is also worth considering – even if here we can only do so in passing – how the results of design work are themselves very often contributing to practices of fragmentation by closely tying into the production and marketing of commodities that rely on exploitative chains of production and reinforce class differences. As sociologist Celia Lury explains, the consumer culture we are today thoroughly embedded in is not only shaped by class relations, but is also implicated in how we understand ourselves, our social belongings and politics.[223] In fact, by drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, the commodities we consume can be read as means through which the cultural representation of our social situation can be manipulated.[224] Through this lens, we can see how the role of design could be considered crucial in both fragmenting and consolidating social groups: housing, clothing, technological objects, but also social environments, such as places for consumption or vacation, signify and differentiate social status, towards which ends people are often willing to take precarising choices.

Individualising debt

Since the financial crisis hit in 2008, it has become clear that debt is a condition that today affects millions of people, either directly or indirectly. Furthermore, among designers, debt becomes an ever increasing issue as ever more design graduates have a student loan to pay off. Where there is neither a wealthy family nor an alternative source of funding to back up educational expenses, a considerable number of graduates enter the creative industries with debt to pay off. Leaving education with

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222   Marx describes the industrial reserve army originally as "a necessary product of accumulation of the development of wealth on a capitalist basis, this surplus population also becomes, conversely, the lever of capitalist accumulation, indeed it becomes a condition for the existence of the capitalist mode of production. It forms a disposable industrial reserve army, which belongs to capital just as absolutely as if the latter had bred it at its own cost. Independently of the limits of actual increase of population, it creates a mass of human material always ready for exploitation by capital in the interest of capital's own changing valorisation requirements." See Marx, *Capital. V1*, p.784.

223   Celia Lury, *Consumer Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), p.6.

224   Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1984).

this baggage leaves little space for personal development and criticality, instead forcing designers to accept every possible job in order relieve this financial burden.[225] The entrapment created by debt is succinctly phrased by Maurizio Lazzarato: "the debtor is 'free,' but his actions, his behaviour, are confined to the limits defined by the debt entered into."[226]

Silvia Federici describes the debts accumulated for education as a consequence of the financialisation of our lives: the state is significantly disinvesting in the reproduction of workers, who have to reason as *homo oeconomicus* in ever more areas of their lives, constantly urged to invest in themselves to be fit for work.[227] Federici succinctly summarises the rhetoric that accompanies this financialisation through the example of education: if you do not have (good, high, prestigious) education, your life will be miserable, you will have the most unsatisfactory job. To get a satisfactory job, you need a certificate and this is something that you need to pay for. This neoliberal rhetoric frames education – but also many other areas of life that have become financialised – as an investment in one's social and cultural capital, an investment in the self. Education is no longer seen as contributing to society, to the productivity of one's employer, but instead as an individualistic act that comes with the imperative to shoulder alone all the difficulties associated with repaying the debt one might have incurred through this investment.

The social fragmentation that is produced by portraying the debtor-creditor relationship as one of self-investment has strong rippling effects. On the one hand, as Federici underlines, it constitutes a new class relation that individualises the relation of exploitation. On the other hand, as Lazzarato points out, it shapes people's subjectivity around guilt: not only have debtors sold their future time to the creditors, they are also perceived (and largely perceive themselves) as being involved in some kind of moral indebtedness. Thus, debt can function as a powerful tool that at one and the same time undermines collectivity and exercises social control over people's present and future decisions. Furthermore, as David Graeber puts it, debt has historically been the most effective way to justify relations founded on violence.

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225   For an account of student debt, which in the US amounted to one trillion on April 25th 2012, see: Ann Larson and Malav Kanuga, "April 25th Is "1t Day": Occupy Student Debt," http://www.edu-factory.org/wp/april-25th-is-%E2%80%9C1t-day%E2%80%9D-occupy-student-debt/.

226   Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012).

227   Federici, Silvia, "From Commoning to Debt: Microcredit, Student Debt and the Disinvestment in Reproduction" (Centre for Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths College, London, 12.11.2012)

Debt justifies that which would otherwise seem outrageous and obscene, "because it immediately makes it seem that it's the victim who is doing something wrong."[228]

However, for designers, it is important to consider the fragmenting consequences of debt not only in relation to dealing with precariousness in their own professional field and possibly also their own life, but also as a factor to account for when designing for others. This is particularly the case when engaging in projects that might involve communities and micro-credit as development tactics. Because as anthropologist Lamia Karim shows, in a study of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, that debt through micro-credit – which is mainly aimed at female clients who need to group together to access money – often ties women into spirals of struggle that use their sense of honour and shame as leverage to pressure them to pay back their loans at all costs.[229] Consequently, these practices destroy the tight-knit social fabric that women rely on in rural areas: a woman's failure to repay makes her and her family outcasts who can no longer count on the solidarity of their community. For reasons like this, it is important for designers to be aware of dynamics around debt, as too often solutions like micro-finance are now also in the crisis ridden global North/West presented as uncontested social innovation to which one can securely tie the market-penetration of one's design proposals.[230]

Having outlined the precarising practices of fragmentation that develop around competition and debt, it becomes clear that, very often, the freedom and privileges gained by one strand of workers necessarily implies a lack of freedom and increased precariousness for other workers. It is precisely because of the interconnectedness of workers in the global market that it is important to conceive of struggles against precariousness that go beyond addressing the symptoms and issues of a single category or person. To begin to address precariousness from one circumscribed condition, such as that of designers, can be an important starting point, but in order to contribute to a wider form of social change, the struggle needs to go beyond this initial context. Because what is the worth of freedom, if it is build on the un-freedom of others?

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228   Graeber, *Debt*, p.5.

229   Karim, "Microfinance Bangladesh".

230   Consider, for instance, that the globally acclaimed Grameen Bank has opened branches in several places in the US, such as Queens, Brooklyn and Bronx. Moreover, payday loan companies like Wonga – offering short-term, high-cost credit – are targeting people ever more intensely.

10. CONCLUSION OF THE INTERMEZZO

In this Intermezzo we have seen how precariousness, as designers know it today, is not a given, but a socio-economic relation constructed according to the necessities of the value-production in a capitalist society. From this analysis, it has emerged how designers are entangled in everyday activities and relations of exploitation, which are often not primarily perceived as such since they are taken for the norm. However, to begin to work through some of the procedures of the capitalist mode of production substantially adds to the conceptual tool-box on which to draw to understand the contexts in which designers intervene. These tools are especially useful not only when wanting to counter the precariousness of designers, but also when wanting to comprehend what contributes to the creation of the symptoms of social, political and environmental issues that designers might want to work on.

Being now equipped with more conceptual tools that allow us to see what designers might need to challenge with their counter-conduct against precarisation, in the final part of this thesis, we explore how to move towards practices that actively counter precariousness and contribute to the construction of de-precarising economic cultures. To do so, we will draw on autonomist and feminist Marxists writings that inscribe themselves in a long tradition of people pushing "in-against-and-beyond" capital.[231] To unpack with these writings, we reflect on a second inhabitation, namely the *Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative* (Construction site of non-affirmative practice) that again engages the issues of precariousness through practice.

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231 "In-against-and-beyond" is a labourers' stance that autonomist Marxist John Holloway continually refers to in: John Holloway, *Crack Capitalism* (New York: Pluto Press, 2010).

PART 2

Designing commons against precarisation

11. INTRODUCTION TO PART 2

The pressing question that we have to ask ourselves at this point is how the social practices of production we are engaged in as designers can be transformed through an inventive collective refusal of the procedures that render us precarious. To explore possible strategies to transform the power relations and associated forms of subjectivation, we first work through the conceptual tools developed out of a tradition of autonomist Marxist thought. Here, we primarily engage with concepts of biopolitical production, the common and the refusal of work as developed by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri and the proposals for transformation that Kathi Weeks and Judith Revel make in relation to these concepts. We then work through these concepts and proposals in practice by engaging with the knowledges created during a second inhabitation, namely the *Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative (Construction site for non-affirmative practice)*. From the necessities, blockages and openings arising out of that inhabitation, we move to an engagement with autonomist feminist writings, particularly those by Silvia Federici, Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Massimo De Angelis, who are especially concerned with the social practices required to overcome precariousness, or what Federici calls a "permanent reproductive crisis."[232]

Both the strands of thought, employed here consider helpful approaches to undo procedures of precarisation, have their roots in the operaista movement that developed in Italy from the 1950s onwards, subsequently developing along different points of focus.[233] Contemporary autonomist Marxism has as its touchstone the poststructuralist theories of Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, with a particular focus on the subversive potential of the "most advanced" section of workers, i.e. cognitive workers, as which designers qualify. It is attractive for designers to consider a possible counter-conduct to precariousness by drawing on autonomist Marxist concepts because such an approach rejects history as a linear progression and conceives of capitalism as a system in which the capital social relation creates, and inevitably relies on, the antagonism between two subjectivities: one informed by

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232   Marina Vishmidt, "Permanent Reproductive Crisis: An Interview with Silvia Federici," Mute, http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/permanent-reproductive-crisis-interview-silvia-federici.

233   For a historical overview of the development of autonomist and feminist Marxism starting from Operaismo, see, for example, the introduction to: Cleaver, *Reading Capital Politically*. For a more specific discussion autonomist Marxism and workers struggles in Italy in the 1960s and 1970s see: Lotringer and Marazzi, *Autonomia*.

capital, the other by labour.[234] Thus, as a political theory, it emphasises the autonomy and creativity of labour as the non-linear driving force of history. In the 1970s, having seen how the inception of post-Fordism had already begun to spread from the factory to the whole of society,[235] the autonomist Marxists declared a refusal to "separate economics from politics, and politics from existence."[236] It is the latter which closely connects them to autonomist feminist thinkers, who have as their touchstone a feminist critique of Marx, showing that not only wage labourers are productive for capital. However, feminist Autonomists root their writing strongly in the concrete experiences of feminist as well as anti- and post-colonial struggles, and contrary to autonomist Marxists, who focus strongly on immaterial labour, they insists that subversion could erupt at any point in the global chains of production and exploitation.

In exploring these two strands to build strategies against the procedures of precarisation, we rely on the fact that, on the one hand, these theories connect closely to Foucault's analysis of power as being diffuse in society – thus counter-power can potentially erupt at any point – whilst, on the other hand, the fact that they build on a tradition of labouring, female and colonial subjects that "autonomously,"[237] yet collectively, challenge the exploitation and oppression of the capital social relation. We thus engage, both through theory and practice, with autonomist concepts of subjectivation, production and reproduction, the refusal of work, the common(s) and practices of commoning. In doing so, the concepts developed throughout Part 1 and the Intermezzo will be employed as tools to build up subversive approaches to practices of time, innovation and social relations that can challenge precariousness, whilst at the same time actively constructing economic cultures that function according to values other than the precarising ones of capital.

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234   Jim Fleming, "Editor's Prefaces," in *Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse*, ed. ibid. (New York: Autonomedia, 1991), p.xxvii.

235   Antonio Negri, *The Politics of Subversion: A Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), p.204.

236   Sylvère Lotringer and Christian Marazzi, "The Return of Politics," in *Autonomia: Post-Political Politics*, ed. ibid. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Semiotext(e), 2007), p.9.

237   'Autonomously' here refers to the fact that these struggles have refused to rely on hierarchically-organised institutions like unions and parties in order to make their demands heard. Rather, they found ways to connect horizontally among the subjects in struggle and to self-organise strikes and other forms of resistance.

12. AUTONOMIST MARXISM, SUBJECTIVITY AND THE REFUSAL OF WORK

For Autonomist thinkers, in line with poststructuralist thought, the production of subjectivity is the major terrain on which political struggles take place. Starting from this approach, we can imagine, as designers, what processes of subjectivation we could set in motion to break with the docile yet productive subjectivities fostered, by, amongst others, design education and the creative industries, which ultimately contribute to render designers precarious. Having seen in Part 1 and the Intermezzo the power relations that precarisation relies on, having located their position, found their multiple points of application and seen some of the educational as well as discursive methods through which this form of power is applied, we now explore to what extent Autonomist thought could help us in refusing the kind of precarisation and individualisation that we experience.[238]

Autonomists argue that although as workers we are subordinated to capital, and at least a portion of the wealth we produce is constantly stolen from us, we are not powerless. In fact, they project us as extremely powerful because through our labour, constituted also by our skills and creativity, we are the source of all wealth.[239] Perceiving ourselves as powerful and in a position to act is important in times when precarisation tends to make us feel downhearted. However, they also emphasise that to be able to use of our time and skills in a way that resists that which is prefigured for us, there is a need to act collectively, to become a constituent power that goes beyond the individual. Given the increased fragmentation of not only designers, but all of society, this approach implies a need to find strategies that allow us to create collective subjectivities engaged in counter-conduct. However, this move against precarisation cannot be primarily about rendering what we are more stable and secure. Rather, it needs to be considered as a process focused on "our becoming-other,"[240] one that thus requires inventiveness, creativity and experimentation – which indeed can be powerful agents in bringing designers into the process. To engage in the proposals made not only by Hardt and Negri, but also by thinkers close to them such as the Foucault scholar Judith Revel and feminist theorist Kathi

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238   This kind of analysis as well as an exploration of possible counter-conducts, refers back to Foucault's way of proceeding when confronting power relations: Foucault, "Subject and Power," p.210.

239   For this argument, see for example: Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), p.333.

240   Deleuze cited in: Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, p.x.

Weeks, make, we explore the potential their elaborations on biopolitical production, the common and the refusal of work hold for the de-precarisation of designers.

Designers, biopolitical production and the common

Starting from an analysis of societies of control and the ways in which immaterial labour – within which we include design – is manifest in them,[241] Hardt and Negri theorise the productional modes of post-Fordism as potential sites in which this process of "becoming other" can be located. This is because they see post-Fordist production as focusing on the production of ideas, codes, images, affects and social relationships, which are all sites of the production of subjectivity and which have the potential to be mobilised toward a transformative process.[242] When framing post-Fordist work within the terrain of the production of subjectivity, Hardt and Negri take up Foucault's notions of biopower and biopolitics. Thus, in their reading of Foucault, they identify biopower as the power over life the latter, biopolitics, as the "power of life to resist and determine an alternative production of subjectivity.[243] They then go further by framing post-Fordist production as a biopolitical production that, despite fuelling capital accumulation through cooperation, autonomous work and network organisation,[244] produces "the common." The common, as described by Hardt and Negri, are forms of knowledge, languages, codes, information and affects that can neither be considered public nor private, neither regulated by the state nor by individuals, but instead by its community of producers and users.[245] They also define the production of the common as a production of subjectivity that is potentially inscribed in a counter-conduct. When exploring the potential of the common through its difference from the private and the public, it is important to keep in mind that in autonomist Marxists thought they both are considered to be representative of capital, since the state is conceptualised as guaranteeing the right to private property, a cornerstone of capitalist society, whilst also administrating public property according to its own governmental rules, which do not always

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241   Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000), p.22-41.

242   Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, p.172.

243   Ibid., p.57.

244   Ibid., p.353.

245   Ibid., p.viii.

respond to the needs and desire of the population.[246]

When we now consider the manifold ways of practicing design, we can undoubtedly see them as falling into the category of biopolitical production, since images and imaginaries are created, codes are conceived, affects are produced and social relationships are forged. However, from the point of view of practice, it would be difficult to argue that the biopolitical labour of designers, even in the instances when it creates the common, automatically foster acts of resistance. Most often than not the contrary is true. In this sense, Paolo Virno's note that post-Fordist labour represents only the potential for creating a new world, a potential which will not automatically or necessarily actuate itself,[247] is a significant one. It reminds designers that for a "becoming other" that builds de-precarising ways of being and living, the biopolitical production they engage in must be, to varying degrees, politicised. However, as we have seen with the problems of precariousness politically and socially engaged designers face, it is not sustainable in the long-term to only engage in a politicised biopolitical production of the common. In this problematisation of Hardt and Negri's approach, Matteo Pasquinelli's reflection on real-life practices around the production of the common is enlightening:

> Immaterial conflict is the norm between intellectual workers, despite all the rhetoric of knowledge sharing and digital commons. It is manifested in the well-known rivalry within academia and the art world, to the economy of references, the race of deadlines, the competition for festival selection and between festivals themselves, the envious and suspicious attitudes among activists.[248]

This conflict is the norm because, although Hardt and Negri rightly point out that ideas do not lose their potential to function when shared with others,[249] the

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246   For an elaboration of the difference between the private, the public and the common, see ibid., p.272-73. See also, Ugo Mattei, "Eine Kurze Phänomenologie Der Commons," in *Commons: Für Eine Neue Politik Jenseits Von Markt Und Staat*, ed. Silke Helfrich (Bielefeld: transcript, 2012).

247   For Paolo Virno's reflection on the ambiguities of post-Fordist labour, see: Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life* (Los Angeles, New York: Semiotext(e), 2004); Paolo Virno, *Mondanità: L' Idea Di 'Mondo' Tra Esperienza Sensibile E Sfera Pubblica* (Roma: Manifestolibri, 1994).

248   Matteo Pasquinelli, *Animal Spirits: A Bestiary of the Commons* (Amsterdam/Rotterdam: NAi Publishers / Institute of Network Cultures, 2008), p.49.

249   Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, p.283-84.

wage conditions within post-Fordism appear to follow the same laws as ever.[250] Thus, rivalry among intellectual workers is not created by the common they create, i.e. the open-access codes, languages, knowledges and affects, but by its function within the real economy. Once an idea is attributed to an author or a common is produced and shared for free, it is difficult to make a living from it. Unlike material and social commons that produce and reproduce the goods that nourish or shelter people, the immaterial common produced by cognitive workers does none of this. Thus, it is unable to rupture our dependence on wage labour since those producing the common are still required to earn the money to pay for that which is necessary in order to reproduce themselves.[251]

   More positively, however, the biopolitical production of the common can also be linked to material production such as in the case of "open design," whose makers allow for its free distribution, documentation and modification.[252] We might here ask a series of questions that allow us to consider if, and to what extent, such a case might be employed strategically to resist precarisation and to determine an alternative production of subjectivity. We can thus ask, what is the language that designers use when describing open design and what does this language tell us about a possible transformation inherent to this kind of design? What do designers and producers behind 3D printers, such as MakerBot, mean when they ask, "what kind project can we, as a worldwide community of sharing, do together?"[253] What do they mean by "project" and what is the political agenda of the projects they might have in mind? Do they conceive of them in relation to the successes of 3D-printing they make reference to, namely the printing of vodka glasses during a tech-fair? What do they mean by "world-wide community"? Does this community, in any sense, include those who mine the materials needed to make 3D printing possible in the first place? What do they mean by "sharing"? Does this sharing also refer to the profits

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250   Pasquinelli, *Animal Spirits*, p.81.

251   Moreover, Autonomists argue that it is in the city that the biopolitical production of the common thrives, but where simultaneously capital leeches into the common and the people who most often enthusiastically produce it. This leeching is taking the form of precarious labour, debts and rent. For a discussion of this relation, see for example: ibid.

252   Bas Van Abel et al., eds., *Open Design Now: Why Design Cannot Remain Exclusive* (Amsterdam: BIS Publishers, 2011), p.11.

253   Bre Pettis, "Made in My Backyard," in *Open Design Now: Why Design Can Not Remain Exclusive*, ed. Bas van Abel, et al. (Amsterdam: BIS Publishers, 2011).

made from selling 3D printing kits, which are now worth $10 million?[254] If the answers to all these tentative questions neatly replicate capitalist value-practices that rely on exploitation and fragmentation, then the implications in terms of breaking the precariousness of the chains of people involved do not appear promising. Instead, this might simply lead to a new round of accumulation that bears similarity with how Marx described the cottage industry of the 19th century, when production of "slave-cotton" was taking place within people's dwellings and the value from this production was extracted and channelled into the hands of only a few.[255] Should, however, the answers reveal value-practices that defy the capital social relation and instead reappropriate value in ways that are de-precarising for many, then we might begin to see a potent process of "becoming other" to unfold.

For such transformative answers to become a possibility, there is a need for designers to engage in the complexities of the processes that go on beyond the common of languages, images, codes, and knowledge they produce. Currently, too many examples of open design subscribe to what the P2P Foundation, studying the impact of peer-to-peer technology, describes as the possibility for large, private firms to create and capture value around and on top of the common.[256] The P2P Foundation's advice to corporations that might be afraid of open design and the collaborative economy is to see the common as a source of knowledge and innovation and as a pool of value to which they can contribute in small portions, but out of which they receive the totality of the common in return: "Give a brick, get a house."[257] This move, which is not concerned with substantially transforming the economy, but rather about transforming the way accumulation happens, does not address the working conditions of the people involved in the production of value. The MakerBot, for example, besides the labour that went into its realisation, relies on the availability of free designs online on websites such as Thingiverse, while the 3D-printer itself, the materials for printing or the journals for the 3D-community, are lucratively mobilised. In this sense, the common represented by free software and designs is critical in the selling of more hardware. Thus, the promise made, for example, by open design and 3D-printing, of never needing to buy anything

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254   P2P Foundation, "A Synthetic Overview of the Collaborative Economy," (2012), p.203.

255   See the passages on modern domestic industry and its transformation in: Marx, *Capital. V1*, p.555-601.

256   P2P Foundation, "Collaborative Economy," p.165.

257   Ibid., p.166.

again, proves to be empty, since the act of buying or going through the market is not made superfluous but is simply shifted from one commodity to another. In this sense, the production of the common through open design relies on a language that mobilises people's desire for another way of producing and living, but in reality does not support them to build an economy that could fuel collective processes of de-precarisation.

However, even if, for now, Hardt and Negri's theorisation of biopolitical production as resistance does not really seem to take effect in the work of designers, it remains powerful as a reminder of the potential for change inherent in the skills. It might prompt designers to give a direction to their creation of knowledge, affects, social relations, codes, and languages, towards building paths away from precariousness.

Designers within the multitude

Towards this building of paths away from precariousness (in terms of Autonomist thought), the concept of "the multitude" is another element that can be of inspiration for designers, given the multitude gestures based on the common produced through biopolitical labour towards the possibility of coming together. This coming together, while producing the common, is then imagined as providing both the means of encounter and the possibility to freely express differences.[258] In this sense, Hardt and Negri imagine the multitude as the organisational structure that provides the means for building a democracy that is not based on formal structures and relations, but rather on how we relate to each other.[259] Autonomists trace this conception of the multitude in relation to democracy back to Spinoza, who in the 17th century, theorised it as a political concept that runs counter to the concept of "the people" as theorised by Hobbes, underpinning the whole project of the nation state. Thus, as a concept, it locates the constituent creative element of society within people themselves, rather than in any top-down movement of power.[260]

When considering the multitude as described by Hardt and Negri, it becomes clear that as an abstract concept, it cannot be brought into the everyday without

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258   Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, p.xiv.

259   Ibid., p.94.

260   For how Hardt and Negri as well as Virno relate back to Spinoza's *Ethics* and *Tractatus Politicus*, see: ibid., p.189-94. Virno, *Grammar of the Multitude*, p.21-20. See also: Antonio Negri, *The Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza's Metaphysics and Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

frictions or modifications. However, in relation to the fragmentation designers experience, it is possible to imagine adopting the multitude as a point of orientation along which to organise against precariousness, without losing one's singularity in this coming together. As such a point of orientation, it opens up the possibility of imagining ways of working and living together while remaining singular, without either being hyper-fragmented or melting into a single, grey mass. Thus, imagining designers as part of the multitude also means imagining what might happen were they to let go of an individualistic and competitive approach, in favour of an experimentation with collective forms of making and producing that challenge the procedures of precarisation. In this way, designers might attempt to find a political voice – regarding both their economic and their social roles in society – that links them to other struggles: from a design community often put to work in precarious conditions towards the accumulation of others, we can envisage gaining control over biopolitical activities in order to substantially shift power relations.

As Judith Revel points out, gaining control over biopolitical production reveals the fact that in a regime of biopower, our lives themselves are not only invested with power, but our lives themselves also become power: we are not only disciplined and controlled, but we also always resist it. Thus, power can be localised within our very lives: in our work, languages, bodies, affects, desires and sexuality.[261] And so it is by mobilising the power of our lives – in all its different forms – that we can reappropriate that which is necessary for our lives not to be precarious. By mobilising the power of our lives and creativity, can we attempt to follow Revel's call to "resist and produce, to resist through production, to produce while resisting?"[262]

Revel's call to the multitude for production and resistance connects to the Autonomist call for the "refusal of work," a call that was strong in Italy in the 1960s and 1970s, but that more broadly refers to a tradition of radical workers around the world who "have always tried to get out of work, to subtract themselves from exploitation and the capitalist relation."[263] However, when Autonomists speak of the refusal of work, they do not invoke the end of activity, production or innovation, but rather imply a movement of invention that goes beyond capital, that provokes

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261   Revel, "Biopolitica Della Moltitudine," p.65.

262   My own translation of "Opporsi e produrre, opporsi producendo, produrre opponendosi (…)", ibid.

263   Michael Hardt, "Introduction: Laboratory Italy," in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Michael Hardt and Paolo Virno (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p.5. See for example also: Paul Lafargue, "The Right to Be Lazy," in *The Right to Be Lazy: Essays by Paul Lafargue*, ed. Bernard Marszalek (Oakland: AK Press, 2011).

yet unimagined relations of producing and reproducing livelihoods that allow and facilitate the expansion of creative powers.[264]

For precarious designers, a collective refusal that moves towards the yet unimagined is powerful. What more challenging and imaginative brief to take up than to employ our skills and creativity to find ways to undo the procedures of precarisation? This claim against precarisation also speaks of the liberation of our time, skills and creativity from the telos of the market, whilst prompting designers to contribute to the imagination and constitution of a life in common. This refusal encourages a focus on what we can become when we imagine and engage with the expansion of our collective needs and desires in ways that exceed what capital can "offer." Only when we begin to resist a market- and work-logic and the kind of subjectivity that renders us precarious, can we begin to contribute to the constitution of alternative, not-precarising economic cultures.

At the present state of precariousness, however, such a refusal cannot be performed from one day to the next. Therefore, Kathi Weeks strategically suggests that it is important to structure the demand against capitalist forms of work (and thus also against procedures of precarisation) at different levels: to ask for more money, to ask for better work and to ask for less work – but not in order to stay the way we are, but in order to gain the space that allows us to become different.[265] We can imagine that, through a combination of these demands, it might become possible to gain the time, the money and the serenity to imagine and produce that which can be, and that which we can become, *beyond* the prefigured telos of the design profession and the social system it is embedded in. The desire to go beyond the telos of the profession then also requires going beyond considering ourselves only within our faculty as designers. Precarisation not only takes place within work, and even within work, it is not the same for everyone, suffice to point out the gender inequalities within and beyond the field of design.[266] In fact, Weeks also points out that for the refusal of work claim to significantly impact on society, it needs to be

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264   Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, p.332-33. However, the refusal of work is also directly affecting capital accumulation because the value of the means of production is not being passed on to commodities. Thus, strikes, wildcat strikes, mass walk-outs, slowing down or sabotaging production, are all effective means when wanting to pressure employers and the state.

265   Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press 2011), p.104.

266   See for example the difference having children makes for female or male designers: Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative, "Designers' Inquiry" p.25.

constructed from a feminist point of view. She argues that a social system around capital, in which women are generally urged to provide free labour, ensures that working for wages or relying on a gendered family setting are the only ways through which most of us can meet our basic needs.[267] Crucially, she underlines how it is not sufficient to refuse waged work, but that one must be able to construct a refusal that also addresses the gendered and privatised model of the family as the central organising structure of our reproduction.[268] Only by refusing work that is controlled by capital both in the market and within the family, can the strategy of refusal really embody a transformative politics of everyday life. Such a politics might produce yet unformulated demands that address the personal relations and household configurations we would prefer to base the (re)production of our livelihoods on.[269]

It is important for designers to keep in mind precarisation and this double movement within and beyond work, since the professional field itself still largely draws on conceptions influenced by a male worldview, both in what is understood to be good and worthwhile design as well as in the latent (or often not so latent) sexism present within the profession itself. Without challenging this male centred conception of the world, which manifests itself within and beyond design, it is difficult to imagine that refusal of work and precarisation would be directed where *all of us* would want to be. This double movement against precarisation, then, urges us – and this is crucial – to collectively ask questions about our lives outside work: how do we want to live, how do we want to relate to each other, how do we want to reproduce our lives? In the next section, we will analyse an inhabitation that was set up in order to engage with these questions in practice and to formulate and live out tentative answers with other socially and politically engaged designers.

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267   And indeed, even many designers need to rely on the support of their families to even remain within their profession. See: ibid., p.11-13.

268   Weeks, *Problem with Work*, p.110.

269   Ibid., p.169-70.

13. INHABITING AN ECONOMY OF SUPPORT:
CANTIERE PER PRATICHE NON-AFFERMATIVE

Premises and preparation

As designers we are not only exposed, but also implicated in the procedures and power relations of precarisation. Thus, wanting to challenge them also means wanting to change our relationship to others. As we have seen, fragmentation among designers only exacerbates precariousness and a shift in power relations as to how we organise our ways of working and living is a difficult endeavour. According to this realisation, for the second inhabitation of this research, Fabio and I wanted to experiment with the creation of a context in which to challenge individualistic career- or survival-thinking. We wanted to create a context in which the biopolitical production designers engage in could potentially build towards a common of solidarity and collectivity.

Knowing that proceeding through inhabitations always shapes our subjectivities, we this time assumed that there would be no way to change the processes of precarisation without changing ourselves, and that there would be no way to change ourselves without changing our modes of practising design and relating to each other. Therefore, with a desire to experience collectivity as a multitude in which singularities are valued and to experiment with a creative refusal of standard modes of working, we decided to collectivise a second residency, this time in Milan at Careof DOCVA, a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to contemporary cultural production. Having begun to negotiate the terms of this second residency while still in Warsaw, we aimed to create and share a politicised space that would challenge the tight frames of temporality, innovation and competition of the creative industries. We hoped that such a space would allow for a "becoming other" to unfold, even if we could not predict what that "other" might be.

The preparation of the two-month residency, which allowed for the use of a 150m² project space as well as adjacent living space plus a €3,600 grant,[270] was in many ways, a messy process. This process of preparation was driven by a combination of the parameters given by our host and those of both our conscious and our intuitive decisions, influenced by the experiences of the co-residency in Warsaw and by inspiration drawn from Autonomist writings. Thus this second residency,

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270   The money was granted by the the regional fund for culture of the Autonomous Province of South Tyrol (Italy).

although more informed by theoretical knowledge, was not simply a linear move
from theory to practice. Even the preparations revealed that many of the attractive
Autonomist concepts would serve more as points of orientation on the horizon that
allowing for an approximate navigation, rather than a recipe that could be followed
to shift and re-appropriate the power relations of precarisation: reality and practice
proved too complex, too implicated in social relations, material constraints and per-
sonal hesitations to move along simply according to theoretical constructions. Thus,
even if theoretical constructions are recognised as inspiring and vital in order to
pierce through blockages in practice, the conflicting front lines running through us
are so many that it is difficult to address, let alone "exit," them all at once. Moreo-
ver, it takes time to produce the structures and subjectivities that allow us to resist,
as well as to define, other ways of doing that are inspired by theory. It takes time,
especially, if it is about constructing them in ways that we can effectively sustain in
the long-term. However, one needs to start somewhere and another two months of
sharing a residency seemed a good (re)entry point.

Creating a politicised space
Given the difficulty for designers to separate life and work, our desire was to cre-
ate a space in which the biopolitical production of up to ten recent graduates from
Italian design schools, whose work focuses on social, political or environmental
issues, could at once become a movement of refusal, as well as of creation, of pro-
duction and resistance that could nourish multiple ways of "doing."[271] This implied
that in terms of this shared residency, we did not want to reproduce the short-term,
consecutive and a-political engagement with others that the residency in Warsaw
found itself inscribed in. Rather, we wanted to create a space in which minds and
bodies could meet for a prolonged period of time, breaking with the fragmentation
designers experience in their everyday. We wanted to create a situation, then, that
at least *in potentia,* would allow for the possibility to band together, to form what
Hardt and Negri call "a social body that is more powerful than any of our individual
bodies alone."[272] Without exiting the individualised existence of designers, we de-
cided there would be little chance of imagining and enacting a social and economic

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271   For the Mexico-based Autonomist sociologist John Holloway, "doing" is the activity that opposes abstract
labour. See: Holloway, *Crack Capitalism*.

272   Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, p.180.

culture that could challenge precarisation through acts of refusal and constitution. In order for this politicisation to be initiated and substantialised by theoretical engagement, we also decided to organise a series of seminars that would circle around precariousness and the designer's role in the economy. For these seminars, we invited the heterodox economist Hervé Baron, who had been recommended to us by autonomist economist Andrea Fumagalli, and who would engage with us in discussion about the social imaginary in capitalism.[273]

Power

During this second inhabitation, we also wanted to find ways to address the issue of power: in Warsaw, the framework we had chosen in order to share the residency had only moved the power we wanted to contest, i.e. the power related to the exclusivity of residencies and of the procedures of precarisation, from the institution onto us. However, as Foucault points out, power never goes away, but can only be shifted or lived differently. Therefore, we felt an urgency to shift power from hierarchical structures to a distribution of power that would allow everyone involved to have agency over the shared residency.

Furthermore, in Milan, an initial hierarchy had again been established, with us as the "gatekeepers" of the shared residency. We were not only the ones choosing the co-residents, but were again the main reference points for the curators. But this time, we were able to be much clearer in articulating to the curators what this shared residency should be about and how we wanted it to operate as belonging in the same degree to everyone involved. Regarding the power Fabio and I embodied with regards to the other designers we would invite, we framed our roles as facilitators, making it clear to ourselves that this time, unlike in Warsaw, we would dedicate most of our time to this role and would value it, even if it does often leave you with a feeling of not having done anything, simply because you might not be able to see the tangible result of your efforts.

To further consider measures to share or dissipate power, we engaged with reflections on the micropolitics of groups as proposed by the Belgian activist David

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273 Baron describes himself as an economist with a passion for philosophy. In fact, he combines a post-Kenynsian approach to institutional economics with the philosophy of Cornelius Castoriadis. From June 2011 onwards, we had a series of online conversations and e-mail exchanges with Baron in order to establish what angle his seminars could take in Milan.

Vercautern.[274] He proposes a series of anti-hierarchical artifices for groups, based on his own experiences in activist groups, as well as his readings of Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari and the American ecofeminist Starhawk. From the many artifices proposed by Vercautern, which address both issues coming up in groups that are constituting themselves and groups that are in crisis, we primarily adopted the following in the construction site: to not only focus on macropolitics, like objectives to be reached, programs to be drawn or diaries to be filled, but to focus on the micropolitics, around the tone and the words we use, our bodily attitudes, the times that we give ourselves and the relations of power that will be exercised between us; to make de facto power structures visible so that they can be contested and negotiated; to rotate the roles the unfolding of the collective residency would require, so that roles with more or less power would be exchanged and experienced by everyone; to trust the collective intelligence of the group.

Open call

In order to invite people to share the space, we circulated an open call through the mailing lists of Italian design schools, stating that the collectivised residency, which we called *Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative* (Construction site for non-affirmative practice),[275] wanted to constitute a buffer between getting out of education and going into work, a buffer which, we hoped, would allow people to further develop critical projects they might have begun for their final thesis. We also stated that this initiative was part of our research into precariousness and alternative economic cultures, formed around the question of what organisational structures and strategies could support designers who want to contribute to a more equal, just and un-alienated society. We further stated that we would contribute to the space with the organisation of a series of eight seminars and encounters that explore the implications for designers within the capitalist economy. We stated that the shared residency implied that everyone invited could use the gallery space to their liking, but that, as we had been unable to negotiate the shared use of the living space, everyone needed to make their own provisions for sleeping.

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274   David Vercautern, *Micropolitiques Des Groupes: Pour Une Écologies Des Pratiques Collectives* (Paris: Les prairies ordinaires, 2011).

275   The "non-affirmative" in the title hints at the discussion within design that splits design work into two areas: one affirmative of social norms and one (potentially) critical of them. For how this distinction is roughly laid out in this discussion, see Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, "A/B," http://www.dunneandraby.co.uk/content/projects/476/0.

The decision to invite only people who speak Italian was, at the time, driven by a desire to create, for at least two months, a space in which language would not be a barrier for discussions and engagement. Having always studied in multilingual contexts, we wanted, for once, to avoid the inhibitions and obstacles created by having to use English to converse about the complex issues that affect our lives – a language which, for many Italian designers, constitutes a major obstacle. Moreover, we felt that by bringing together precarious designers who are confronting the same context (marked by chronic under-funding of the cultural and educational sectors, the strong political and economic effects of the financial crisis, the messiness of the Italian legislation and tax system that regulates work and the sexism that pervades all of society), it would allow us to make our discussions more focused and rooted in everyone's daily experiences, which, in turn, we hoped would represent a concrete basis on which different desires could grow. Finally, we also hoped that by inviting people who live "close enough" to each other it would allow for relations to emerge that might not be, by sheer distance, tied to a two-month period, but that could, at least potentially, have the "spatial ability" to be cultivated beyond the period of the collectivised residency.

After having sent out the open call in mid-July 2011, by the first week of August we had sixteen responses to it. From these, we chose ten people who we thought could benefit from the time in Milan and whose expectations for the shared residency were not overrated in terms of what it could bring to their practice. So by the first week of August, we invited the following practitioners to share the residency: a female illustrator (MA - ISIA[276]), who has produced a thesis that aimed at introducing Italian graphic designers to more critical theory; a male infographic designer (BA - IUAV[277]), who had produced a publication on environmental degradation and its consequences on health; a female product designer (BA - UNIBZ[278]), who narrated stories about precariousness through objects and spatial arrangements; a male communication designer (BA - UNIBZ), who had produced work on migration and prejudice; a female communication designer (MA - IUAV), who had produced a thesis on the image production around the Italian starlet system; a male designer (BA - UNIBZ), who had produced a performance on illegal trafficking of small arms

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276   Istituto Superiore per le Industrie Artistiche, Urbino.

277   Università IUAV di Venezia.

278   Free University of Bozen-Bolzano.

departing from Italy; an all-male collective of three graphic designers and one product designer (all MA - IUAV), who work on the revival of medium-scale manufacturing in Italy.

Unfolding of the collective residency

After these initial considerations and preparations, at the beginning of September 2011, all co-residents – Fabio and I included – finally met around a few roughly-constructed tables in an otherwise empty project space. During these first days of the shared residency, there was a general sense of being a bit lost: eight almost empty weeks before us, a new city and routine to get acquainted to, a group of new people to share a space and ideas with and, above all, the big question of what to expect or make from this shared construction site for non-affirmative practice.

In order to take some first steps that could give shape to the residency, we decided to start with a series of presentations where each of us could introduce his or her past projects so that we would all get a sense of who we are, what we do and what our respective interests are. We then also arranged, together with our curators, a series of visits to museums and design studios so that we would get to know the cultural complex the project space was embedded in, as well as the wider Milanese context.[279] Furthermore, we decided that, in pairs, we would take turns to prepare lunch for the whole group, as this would help to keep everyone's costs down.

During the first weeks, working in the shared space was quite awkward. On the one hand, because of our sense of being lost, on the other hand, because the space itself had acoustics that made it difficult to speak to each other. So at the beginning, there was a lot of "what?", "sorry?", "can you repeat?" throughout our conversations, until we found a table arrangement that would allow for "comfortable" conversation. Besides getting used to sharing the co-working space, cooking for each other was also initially a bit of a challenge until we realised that – besides always needing to prepare a gluten-free, vegan and dairy-free version of each dish – no-one was picky and everyone had at least one winning dish in their cookery repertoire. Thus, once this initial hurdle around cooking for each other was taken, leaving the co-working space and having lunch together in the flat of the residency became a daily moment of pleasure and conviviality but also a moment of exchange

279   Careof DOCVA is part of La Fabbrica del Vapore, a cultural complex hosted within an old steam lock factory. There are about ten other cultural organisations and design studios hosted in the same complex.

around anxieties of precariousness that could, at times, take up almost the whole afternoon. Unrestricted by the screens that reminded us of work to do or the for attention from pop-up messages from social networks, during these afternoons we would remain around the table drinking coffee, sharing experiences of our lives as precarious designers, laughing at the irony of it all, but also bolstering our confidence to refuse to accept certain conditions of work again. In other situations, we would do the washing up and prepare ingredients for dinner whilst chatting about how we envisaged our practices would ideally evolve, but also about the anxieties of possibly needing to take on jobs that would grind us down. If, then, we still felt like not going back to the project space, we would move to the living room to keep on grappling with questions of where to start changing the things that cause us to be anxious, overworked and/or frustrated.

The transition from awkwardness to conviviality, both in the project space and the kitchen, was also greatly encouraged by the first series of seminars on the social imaginary in capitalism, which Hervé Baron led during the third week. The seminars, which were open to the public and usually took about four hours, were aimed at giving an introduction to how capitalism, the very system that precarises us, has developed, how it is implicated in the construction of social imaginaries and how it relies on the construction of specific subjectivities. The seminars took as their starting point the work of the philosopher and economist Cornelius Castoriadis and from there discussed the interplay between how we shape the social imaginary and how it shapes us, i.e. the modalities through which a society reproduces the representation of itself and how it establishes its own identity through this representation.[280] Here we focused on analysing how today "the economy" is only what "the economy" defines as such, how the social imaginary relates to our ambitions and how being a very specialised worker makes it more difficult to escape the various control mechanisms present in society. We further discussed, in a more propositive vein, the need to construct new institutions and imaginaries that undo the very ambitions that precarise us.

In this sense, the aim of these seminars was not to propose ready solutions to our questions of what the role of designers is within the economy and to how this

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280   The work of Castoriadis, especially the one developed within the group *Socialisme ou Barbarie* (1949 and 1965), was influential in the development of autonomist Marxist thought in Italy. This work focused on an antistalinist conception of workers' autonomy in the form of workers' self-management. For a more detailed account of this connection, see Cleaver, *Reading Capital Politically*, p.63-66.

role can be played out differently, but to stimulate questions and doubts, to create stimulating relays between Baron's theoretical expositions and our experiences as derived from practice. In this, the seminars succeeded and indeed, the first four days with Baron were not only intellectual marathons for everyone following his argumentation, but were also excellent stimulators for animated discussions that would continue over a residency-cooked dinner and extend way beyond midnight. In fact, I believe that Baron's passionate "performance" during the seminars and his eccentric, yet shy, character paired with his personal story of having made a living as a waiter rather than as a hard-core economist, pushed all of us to expose our own political desires as well as our ambitions, perplexities and anxieties around working as designers. This "coming out" was in turn crucial in constructing a common ground between us, very much circulating around questions such as, "how to have a critical approach in a system that is rotten in all parts," "can we begin to consider every action a political action," "how to transform the figure of the designer into a figure that is perceived and can be lived in all its complexity," "how to be independent in a system that grinds you down," "where to begin from in order to substantially change this situation."

In the weeks following the first four seminars with Baron, we used our time and collective energies to explore these questions, as well as various delineations of them, through a series of research activities organised according to where the focus of everyone's particular practice lay. The second week of October, we collaboratively organised a series of public events dedicated to exploring the practices of activist groups who challenge procedures of precarisation. The first of these meetings was with San Precario, a Milan-based collective that mobilises against exploitation in the service sector, using direct action to pressure over-exploitative employers. In conversation with them, our questions circulated around their humorous direct action strategies with which they aim to rupture the dominant discourse in Italy which portrays being exposed to precariousness as a personal misfortune, as a situation that makes others feel pity for you, but also a situation that you can get out of if only you persevere in trying hard to be a good, successful worker. By sharing their actions and insights into procedures of precarisation that are transversal across a variety of professions, San Precario left us with the insight they had made their own

driving principle: there is nothing left to lose, but all to invent.[281]

The second meeting was with two Italian members of the London-based Carrot-workers' Collective that campaigns against un- and underpaid internships in the cultural sector. With them, the discussion circled around the way the promise of a better – or even successful – future, which always seems to linger around the next corner, is sustainably keeping cultural workers productive, no matter how low their pay and how long their hours of work. Furthermore, we considered the role taboos, like speaking about money, anxieties and skewed power relations, have in making precariousness an individualising experience and how the Collective is using the production of photoromances depicting these taboos as a tool to transform an individualising experience into one that can bring cultural workers together.[282]

In the last meeting in this series, we encountered Serpica Naro, a Milan-based collective that takes action against exploitative practices in the fashion industry and that actively tries to build a counter-system of garment production. Our discussion with them focused particularly on how they attempt to break the consent fashion-workers at all levels perform towards this industry. We learned how they do so by exposing the downfalls of the industry through pranks, while also facilitating the production and circulation of garments outside standard fashion circuits.[283] Closing the week with them meant to close a week of intense engagement with the experiences of workers who try to challenge procedures of precarisation, to get inspired and to consider what sort of actions the field of design that we knew would require in order to be transformed.

Behind the scenes of these and many other activities that were open to the public (see timetable at the end of this section), we continued to experiment away from the various activities that were not open to the public accountability of the project space. For example, we explored practices of freeganism by visiting the "mercati generali" on a Saturday when vendors are leaving behind the fruits and vegetables they could not sell on Monday. Such moments as these were when we enjoyed thinking about the possibilities and difficulties related to ways of providing life's

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281   To learn more about the actions of San Precario, see for example Tarì and Vanni, "On the Life and Deeds of San Precario, Patron Saint of Precarious Workers and Lives"; San Precario, "95 Tesi Sulla Precarietà Di San Precario," Chainworkers, http://www.chainworkers.org/node/611 ; Brave New Alps, "Conversations: Zoe Romano".

282   See for example, Carrotworkers' Collective, "Surviving Internships."

283   Serpica Naro developed out of San Precario, of which it is in fact an anagram. "Serpica Naro," http://www.serpicanaro.com/.

necessities whilst circumnavigating the use of money. We also visited community-supported agriculture groups and social centres, went to lectures (for example by Franco Berardi), watched documentaries (like *The Take* by Naomi Klein) and, above all, spent a lot of time discussing whilst cooking and eating together.

In the activities we engaged in throughout the two months of the co-residency, whether in or outside the project space, the question that persistently came up was how to activate our creativity and skills in ways that were not dictated by the market and that did not rely on the precarisation of others. As we collectively began to realise how the capital social relation plays out in our lives, our desire grew to continue to collectively experiment with building support structures that would allow us to research and experiment with ways of co-producing our livelihoods: the desire to discover how to practice as designers in ways that have the potential to not only resist our own, but also other people's precarisation, while contributing to the creation of other social imaginaries.[284]

Reflections on the shared residency

Reflecting on what unfolded during the eight weeks in Milan, it could be described in Franco Berardi's words as the unfolding of a singular process of producing a singular world of sociality.[285] It was the creation of a world of sociality in which political action could be seen as the desire to break with the individuality, fragmentation, competition and precariousness we live with as designers. In this light, the collectivised residency could also be seen as an attempt to live the world we might want to create – and here I say "might" because whilst we know we want to move away from precarisation and fragmentation, we do not have one clear destination. This, however, does not mean that we cannot begin to move from where we are, but rather that we can experiment with breaking the separation between means and ends, to try to make the means the ends, while retaining the freedom to change route when necessary without becoming dogmatic.

In Milan, the experimentation with acts of resisting and producing, resisting through production and producing while resisting, implied also a collective

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284   To get a flavour of the kind of discussions that the shared residency triggered, see appendix D for an edited and translated piece of collective writing that we undertook at the end of the residency. This piece was later published in the Italian magazine Unità di Crisi, "Orientation," *Krisis* 2013. The appendix also contains the unedited, Italian version of this piece of writing.

285   Berardi, *Precarious Rhapsody*, p.83.

consideration of how our qualities and skills as designers can be uncoupled from their constant implication in precarising procedures. Thus, we were able to begin to slowly establish our political action by attempting to bring together what Boltanski and Chiapello identify as artistic and social critique: bringing together our desire for social justice and equality with our desire for a world of spontaneity, conviviality and sensitivity to difference.[286] By formulating questions around these desires, the sharing of a space for co-working was transformed into a space for collective research: we had built an initial common ground by sharing both the working and the living space, by mapping the ways in which us and others were affected by precariousness, and by the recurrent questioning of how to redefine the role of designers in contemporary, crisis-ridden societies.

Living space and care

One of the observations that emerged from this collectivised residency was the importance that the shared cooking and eating space had in acting like a sort of glue or fertiliser for us as a group. The way we used the apartment space of the residency transformed the *Cantiere* from a pure co-working space into a co-living space to the extent that towards the end of the eight weeks, we would almost tend to spend more time together in the kitchen than in the project space. In this co-living situation, what emerged most strongly was a great attention to caring for one another, a care that was initially catalysed by cooking for each other and that then extended to supporting each other in coping with our doubts and fears, in sharing the elements of economic or social pressure that each of us was exposed to. Whilst we had not consciously decided to care for one another, we could say that sharing equally the task of cooking meant that we had to immediately pay attention to each other: allergies had to be avoided, politically-driven eating habits accommodated, but above all, hungry bellies had to be filled. Doing so meant to give the kind of attention to each other that simply working together could not have brought about.

Reflecting on the residency in hindsight, the element of mutual care that emerged brought to the fore how important affective and intellectual support structures are when dealing with the diverse obstacles and uncertainties that precariousness brings. To be in an environment with the possibility to freely express doubts, fears and desires, to show weaknesses, where to strategise together, proved

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286   Boltanski and Chiapello, *Spirit of Capitalism*, p.97.

crucial in letting the questions around how to deal with precariousness emerge, while at the same time experiencing the potential to tackle these collectively. In fact, studying and researching together in an environment of mutual care was what most of us valued in the shared residency. Having all previously worked in other studio settings, we understood that our time together could equally have not produced this outcome, that we could have exited the shared residency much the same as when we entered it. However, we had been able to get out of individualised positions, which allowed us to experience the emergence of a collective subjectivity that we wanted to sustain and develop beyond the period in Milan. Furthermore, the emerging elements of collectivity had allowed us to begin to challenge acquired value-systems of time, innovation and competition. It allowed us to be in a position from which to imagine the design and implementation of diverse, multiple and interlinked support structures from which to begin to resist procedures of precari-sation productively.

In relation to the autonomist writings that inspired the direction of this sec-ond residency, the element of care that we experienced brought up issues with the remoteness, as well as weakness, with which care is addressed when Hardt and Negri theorise the disruptive potentials of biopolitical production. Although they speak about love as the centre for the production of social life,[287] the very process-es that would make up the daily practice of love are mostly falling by the wayside. The experiences in Milan brought to the fore that mutual care, enacted in the small gestures of the everyday, is a major element in creating empowering social rela-tions – the very thing that, in my understanding, is a core aspect of what biopolitical production as counter-conduct is about. Embodied knowledges of the importance of care when wanting to construct economies of support against precarisation thus redirected my attention from autonomist Marxist thought to autonomist feminist practices, since their notion of "counterplanning from the kitchen"[288] promised to bring an angle to this research that I had, until now, only touched upon in the definition of reproductive labour. Hence, in the last section of this thesis, we will engage in building further tools against precarisation through an engagement with feminist concepts and practices related to care.

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287   Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, p.xii.

288   See for instance the title of a text from 1975: Silvia Federici and Nicole Cox, "Counterplanning from the Kitchen," in *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* ed. Silvia Federici (Oakland: PM Press, 2012).

Accessibility and sustainability

In discussions about the initial experiment in Milan, a node that emerged as problematic was the question of accessibility and the sustainability of the collectivised residency as a politicised co-working and co-research space. This problem of accessibility was for us exemplarily marked by the fact that although the residency-apartment had the capacity to host everyone taking part in the *Cantiere*, for the curator of the residency, opening up the living space to the other designers sharing the work space, was an absolute 'no go'. On the one hand, this was due to internal politics within the cultural complex La Fabbrica del Vapore who host the residency, to avoid implying that the apartment was an easily accessible resource. On the other hand, it was because already opening up the project space to practitioners who had not been selected by the curator represented an element of uncertainty that seemed difficult to deal with. Clearly, not being able to offer housing to any of the designers we would invite was a big limitation on who could actually participate. Indeed, most people who responded to the open call did so because they had enough family support to either cover their living costs or to offer some security should their plans to make a living through design work fail. This meant that from its outset, this experiment could only undo the fragmentation between designers who could already count on some form of security. It also meant that for such a space to become sustainable on a longer term, especially in a state like Italy which notoriously underfunds its cultural sector, alternative forms of access to the means of reproduction would need to be found.

Now, rather than seeing the downfalls around accessibility and sustainability as absolutely disqualifying the approach taken, I would rather want to take them as two major issues to be addressed in possible further initiatives to build upon and from this experience. It is important to acknowledge the mechanisms of exclusion and the instability of the reproduction of such spaces and to find ways to address these mechanisms in order for such spaces to become both socially and economically sustainable. Therefore, I think such downfalls as we encountered in Milan should not prevent us from experimenting with ways to counter precarisation. The important thing is not to exploit the experimentation with such collectivised spaces in order to gain privileges for a confined group of people, but to use them to actively strategise against precariousness in ways that go beyond the situation of the people involved and that transverse not only issues of our own profession, but of society at large.

Indeed, a question that emerged over and over again in our discussions about the sustainability of such an endeavour was how our desire to undo the procedures that precarise us connect up to the precariousness and exploitation of other people around the world. Questions of local as well as global power differentials were raised in relation to who produces our means of production and reproduction even in moments when we might be gaining some autonomy from precarisation for ourselves. So much of our work and lives as designers relies on the exploitation of others, such that seeing a light at the end of the tunnel is at times impossible. In relation to this impossibility, Negri and Hardt's proposal that the most advanced section of worker – which they define as cognitive workers and that would thus include designers – but as a revolutionary force seems to appear to be self-contradictory. However, it is a contradiction that urges us to consider ways of working, living and organising that go beyond our own concerns and that intervene in the power differentials we see among the precarious and exploited.

Hence, becoming active beyond the concerns of a confined group is something that needs to be sought actively and continuously, because, as De Angelis reminds us, in a society where the capital social relation is pervasive, "each 'scale' of social productive aggregation, (an individual, a 'firm', a city, a district, a county a macro-region or a free trade area) faces strong pressure to turn into a node set against the respective 'rest of the world'."[289] And in fact, as the collective formed in Milan, questions were raised and remained open around the issue of how to become more inclusive and more sustainable at the same time. Pressure to make a living and to access what we need by going over the money-form, is high and with it, the lure of commodifiyng what we do, to render our time within the work of the collective productive. As long as there are no material support structures in place that protect us at least to some degree from the coercive forces of the market, operating through it is the only way in which we are allowed to live – even if we have created an immaterial common that binds us together. But, as we have tried to experiment through this research, there are ways to go through the market that are less precarising than others.

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289   De Angelis, *Beginning of History*, p.218.

Timeline:

Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative
at Careof DOCVA, Milan

21 October – talk
by Marta Bianchi on
cultural associations

22 October – visit the
ethical purchasing
group GAS Lola

20 October – *A tavola con...*, discussion over lunch
with Alberto Bassi and Fiorella Bulegato

24 October – lecture
by Dario Banfi on
freelancing in Italy

7 October – workshop with the Carrotworkers'
Collective; discussion with Serpica Naro

25 October – *A tavola
con...*, discussion over
lunch with Giovanni
Anceschi

6 October – discussion with the Carrotworkers' Collective

5 October – discussion with San Precario

26 October – *A tavola
con...*, discussion over
lunch with Stefano
Maffei

26-29 September & 17-20 October – seminar series:
"Capitalism and the social imaginary" with Hervé Baron

| JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUN | JUL | AUG | SEP | OCT | NOV | DEC |

2011

5 September – start
of the residency

30 October – end
of the residency

4-9 October – exhibition *RUN RUN RUN RUN*,
curated by Melissa Destino and Caterina Giuliani

19 October – starting a piece of collective writing for a
"Manual for non-affirmative orientation practices"

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FIGURE 32 *top* *Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative* – the project space just before the first encounter with all
co-residents, 5 September 2011

FIGURE 33 *bottom* Getting to know each others work through three days of initial presentations,
7-9 September 2011

FIGURES 34 and 35   The project space during the second week of the co-residency (*above*) and during the second-last week (*below*) – reflecting how the dynamic between the co-residents has changed, 12-16 September and 17-22 October 2011

FIGURES 36 and 37   *The social imaginary in capitalism*, a series of eight seminars with economist Hervé Baron, 26 September 2011 (*above*) and 18 October 2011 (*below*)

FIGURES 38, 39 and 40   Discussions with three collectives organising against precariousness: San Precario, 4 October 2011 (*above*), the Carrotworkers' Collective, 5 October 2011 (*middle*) and Serpica Naro, 7 Octber 2011 (*below*)
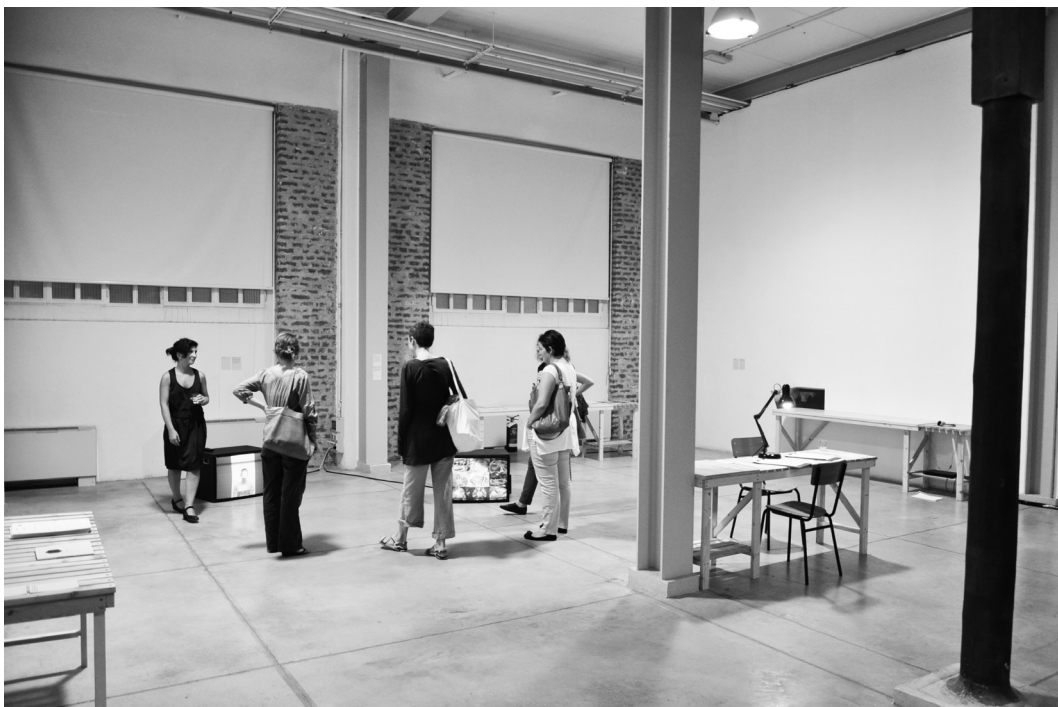
FIGURE 41 *above*   High-school students being introduced to the issues worked on within the *Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative*, 8 October 2011

FIGURE 42 *below*   *Run, run, run, run* – Melissa Destino and Caterina Giuliani giving visitors a guided tour to the exhibition on precariousness curated by them, 8 October 2011

FIGURE 43 to 46   The living space of the residency, used daily for cooking, eating and planning together,
September and October 2011

FIGURE 47 *above*   *A tavola con ... Alberto Bassi and Fiorella Bulegato*, one of three lunch-time conversations with invited guests about the possibility of reviving small to medium scale manufacturing in Italy, 20 October 2011

FIGURES 48 and 49   Two of the many informal (thus scarcely documented) instances in which we explored practices of collective organising outside the spaces of the Fabbrica del Vapore: sourcing left-over vegetables and fruit from the Mercati Generali, 23 September 2011, (*middle*) and visiting the people of the solidarity buying group GAS Lola, 21 October 2011 (*below*)

Becoming a collective – a collective becoming

Throughout the eight weeks spent in Milan, our desire to keep on researching together grew and, as the last week approached, we decided to continue to work together, trying to form a collective. So, since November 2011, we have been experimenting with becoming a collective. To do so, we have together formulated a mission statement of sorts which we intend to help keep us on track. We have also set up a website that collects what we do in order to give us a sense that what we engage in collectively is not simply dissipating in a void. The current description of the collective (who decided to stick with the description Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative) states that we are

> working to pose questions, study and experiment with support structures for critically engaged design practices.
>
> As designers, we feel deeply involved not only in the making of objects, but also in the creation of relations, processes, languages and collective imaginaries. As a consequence, we believe that our research should raise questions about what kind of society we want to contribute to with our work and to question the role we play in the economic system we are living in.
>
> The Construction site is a virtual and physical space, where we carry on this research and where we try to translate it into practice according to modalities that are verified step by step. The Construction site is also a place in which we take care of our "becoming collective". We are open to various forms of collaboration and to whoever is interested in participating.[290]

Admittedly, this statement is ambitious, but it is precisely this ambition which keeps us together and fuels our desire to put in common our time, knowledge, skills, affects and energies in order create tools of analysis that are helpful in understanding and intervening in the complexity of the contemporary world.

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290   "Cantiere - About," http://pratichenonaffermative.net/en/about/.

Researching together: *Designers' Inquiry*[291]

From our desire to continue to research together, there grew our first "big" collective project: *Designers' Inquiry.*[292] This project is an investigation into the socio-economic conditions of designers in Italy, which we developed between February 2012 and April 2013.[293] The idea of producing an inquiry came out of the discussions we had after a presentation we made in an Italian design school in December 2011. During the presentation of our collective experience, we spoke, among other things, about the precariousness that accompanies designers today and the difficulty of the transition from being a student to becoming a worker. After our presentation, students were especially keen to find out more on this particular topic. However, in the discussion, two male, mid-aged tutors attempted to de-potentialise our experiences and arguments by attributing them to our personal inability to deal with the market. The de-potentialising comments, coming from such a privileged position, irritated us and led us to discussions about how design students are educated with very little concern – and maybe even awareness – of what the contemporary world of work looks like and that perhaps there is a need to intervene in this situation.

The experience of that evening and subsequent discussions brought us to the point where we wanted to find or create a tool that would allow us to engage a wider group of designers the question of what it means to work as a designer today and what desires there are to change the current situation. Thus, in looking for a suitable tool for this endeavour, we began a process of self-education on the production of knowledge from below that aims from its inception at a transformation of studied reality. The core text around which we developed our learning process was Marta Malo de Molina's *Common Notions.* In this text, the activist of the Spanish collective Precarias a la deriva, traces a genealogy of tools used in the movements of self-organisation that aim(ed) at creating knowledges that could be used strategically in each movement's respective struggles.[294] Branching out from this text, we also came across Marx's workers' inquiry of 1880, which he had developed not only

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291   A first version of this section has been prepared together with Caterina Giuliani, a member of the collective, for the ephemera conference "The politics of workers' inquiry" in May 2013 at Essex University.

292   See appendix B for the report of the inquiry.

293   Regarding the time-frame of the inquiry, it is important to note that as a collective we are working at our own pace, trying to keep into consideration that everyone involved is needing to deal with how to make a living and so the time spent on collective research is always being cut out from messy, precarious working lives.

294   Malo de Molina, "Common Notions".

to assemble facts about the conditions of French workers, but also to make workers reflect critically on their conditions and their context.[295] Besides being struck by the fact that many of Marx's one hundred questions are still relevant today, we found that this kind of inquiry would constitute for us a tool to both initiate a discussion, as well as solidify a base of common experiences on which to build further actions and interventions to transform reality.

Through this process of self-education, we also came to see the inquiry as a phase and a tool inserted into a much larger process of investigation that we are engaged in and that borrows freely from methods and experiences developed in the past: consciousness-raising groups and critical pedagogy,[296] Italian co-research,[297] participatory action-research,[298] inquiries and militant research.[299] Thus, although we were aware of the range of sociological research that had been done into the working conditions of designers in Europe,[300] we nevertheless felt the need to produce an inquiry that would not only be an analysis but a tool that could impact on how designers perceive themselves. In this sense, by producing an inquiry ourselves amongst our peers and inserting it into a larger collective research process, we really wanted to spur a much-needed reflection *among* designers rather than *on* designers. By choosing the format of a questionnaire that, by an empiricist sociologist, might be judged biased as well as randomly distributed among participants, we were simply making an attempt to get as many designers as possible involved in a critical reflection on their conditions, with the intention of ultimately opening up a path for a common struggle against procedures of precarisation and towards the transformation of the designer's role in society.

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295   Karl Marx, "A Workers' Inquiry," http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/04/20.htm.

296   For example: Kathie Sarachild, "Consciousness-Raising: A Radical Weapon," in *Feminist Revolution*, ed. Redstockings (New York: Random House, 1978). Paolo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (London/New York: Continuum, 2007).

297   For example: Romano Alquati, *Per Fare Conricerca* (Padova: Calusca Edizioni, 1993). Raniero Panzieri, "Uso Socialista Dell'inchiesta Operaia," transversal, http://eipcp.net/transversal/0406/panzieri/it/print. Gigi Roggero, "Appendice. Strumenti D'inchiesta," in *Precariopoli. Parole E Pratiche Delle Nuove Lotte Sul Lavoro* (Roma: Manifestolibri, 2005).

298   For example: Yoland Wadsworth, "What Is Participatory Action Research?," http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/ari/p-ywadsworth98.html

299   For example: Team Colors Collective, "Workshop: What Is Militant Research?"; Stevphen Shukaitis and David Graeber, eds., *Constituent Imagination: Militant Investigations, Collective Theorization* (Oakland/Edinburgh: AK Press, 2007); Colectivo Situaciones, "On the Researcher-Militant," transversal, http://eipcp.net/transversal/0406/colectivosituaciones/en

300   For example, Gill, "Technobohemians."; "Variant, Issue 41, Spring 2011". Arvidsson, Malossi, and Serpica Naro, "Passionate Work?."

So studying experiences of bottom-up research and trying to create a combination of tools that could work for us, we finally built a questionnaire of 78 questions that invited designers to reflect on seven areas of their lives: their family background, their working conditions, the way they encounter(ed) internships, their satisfaction, their working environment and their health, their thoughts on the figure of the designer in society and, finally, their experience regarding the organisation around their rights as workers. Having elaborated on these questions, which we hoped would invite designers to think about the wide range of influences their work has on all areas of their lives, we launched the inquiry through an anonymous online questionnaire in April 2012 during the Milan Design Week.

After having collected 767 fully-completed online questionnaires over a period of two months,[301] we began to take a series of "opening" steps in the elaboration of the answers by organising two workshops, each lasting several days, during which other designers could join us to evaluate and visualise the data and testimonies collected. For us, these workshops were moments during which to involve more designers in in depth discussions and reflections about procedures of precarisation, and although these sessions might not always have been as productive as we wished in terms of finalising any work – always leaving much work to do between these collective moments – they were important instances in which to extend the discussion and actively involve more people. Engaging with the elaboration of the collected data was, at times, depressing, since so many areas of designers' lives were negatively affected by their work (or non-work). Furthermore, throughout the qualitative parts of the inquiry, there emerged a common sense of resignation that things will not change and possibly will only get worse. However, studying the results of the inquiry closely and breaking them down into small parts according to the various sections, there emerged in our discussion a strong sense of hope and pugnacity as we saw how procedures of precarisation could be undone starting from many different areas and direction. Thus, rather than feeling overwhelmed by the monolithic nature of precariousness, we finally got a sense that undoing procedures of precarisation was possible. It might not be possible to do away with all of them at once, but one by one or even a couple a time, they could be tackled to make space for other ways of doing and becoming.

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301   The design specialisation of our participants was ranged from graphic, web and product design to animation, fashion, illustration, architecture and design research. We did not want to restrict the inquiry to any specific specialisation as, from our own experience, we know that today many designers constantly move between these fields.

After 14 months of more or less intense work on the inquiry, by April 2013 the
report of the results was finally ready to be launched. Again, we chose the Milan
Design Week to do so, simply because it is the moment of a major concentration of
Italian and international designers in one place and so we could metaphorically be
seen as being present at the factory gates were it the 1950s and 1960s. Through a
collaboration with the Italian national newspaper *La Stampa* – which as a relation-
ship in itself sparked many difficult discussions within the collective about complic-
ity with precarising working modes in other fields – we also spread the word about
the inquiry beyond the field of design.[302]

As I write, these events of April 2013 are just a few weeks old and the collective
is entering a phase in which we want to build initiatives, actions and workshops
based on the results in order to intervene in the status quo of precarious working
conditions.

Reflections on our becoming collective

Considering that the co-residency transformed into a collective that still keeps on
working together, I would like to think that in Milan, we built together the begin-
ning of a co-research,[303] which could be described, in the words of Romano Alquati,
as a process of engagement with a world found unacceptable, a process driven by
the will to transform this world into not only the direction of one's individual, but
above all one's collective desires.[304] However, as a group of people embarking on the
process of becoming a collective that might allow us to "become other," the diffi-
culty we most clearly encounter is that we are now dispersed all over Italy (and at
times all over Europe), while also lacking a reliable material support structure for
our activities.

The physical distance between us, often imposed by our respective work com-
mitments as well as the price of travel tickets, binds us to handle conversations

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302   See appendix E for our contribution.

303   Co-research, or conricerca in Italian, emerged in Italy in the 1960s and 1970s as a way of using the tools of
the social sciences as tools to support class struggle. Main exponents of Italian conricerca were Romano Alquati,
Danilo Montaldi, Raniero Panzieri and Mario Tronti. Giggi Roggero, a former student of Alquati and one of today's
major exponents of co-research in Italy, describes the co-researcher as one who wants to destroy the object of his
study. Given this definition, I believe that the work of the Cantiere is more nuanced, as whilst we want to "destroy"
procedures of precarisation, we also want to use the knowledge we create through co-research to build up other
ways of doing. Thus, I would suggest we generally feel closer to what today is described as "militant research," a
research that re-appropriates the capacity of worlds-making.

304   Alquati, *Fare Conricerca*, p.119.

online, which in turn is tedious and lacks the element of conviviality and care that marks the periods when we spend time together in "the real world." Thus, our activities together, which for most of us are taking place outside other commitments which secure our livelihoods, at times risk becoming black holes that absorb rather than amplify our energies. Given this situation, the affective and intellectual support structure against precarisation that we built among us is itself always precarious, always exposed to the threat that someone retreats from an engagement with the collective because the pressure to somehow make a living remains high. However, since November 2011, we have managed (in different constellations) to still meet in person every two or three months for several days at a time. For these energising gatherings, we can luckily still count on the support of Careof DOC-VA, who let us use their residency space a couple of times a year for short periods of time – although they themselves are now undergoing cuts in funding and the precarisation of their working contracts, so this breathing space might be closing down as well. Furthermore, for our gatherings we count on our own flexibility to host one another in often quite improvised ways in our own homes, on commissions for running workshop or doing talks, as well as on little "work-arounds" in order to access resources that allow the work of the collective to continue. In the situation we are living through at the moment as a collective, which is not self-sustaining, our remaining a collective has become closely bound to working together on something concrete, like writing collective texts for publications, organising workshops or going on a summer retreat.[305] It seems that since the shared working and living space has gone, which had allowed for the fluid combination of individual as well as collective work, for incidentality and the sense that we were living out a proper economy of support for our practices, we are now at a point where our counter-planning needs to be scheduled into our busy days. This situation could lead to a dissolution of our collective becoming, but we are still working on swinging the situation around, using our design skills to create a support structure that also works at a material level to our favour.[306]

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305   As a collective we have published several texts and interviews in Italian design magazines and newspapers in which we reflect on the issues that move us. See appendix F for these published materials.

306   Here it is important to remember for us that collective decisions are built up gradually and for them to be sustainable even when they are radical, they cannot really happen from one day to the next. To remind us of this, we like to remember what we learned from our visit in February 2012, to the Teatro Valle Occupato in Rome: the communards (as they call themselves) did not decide from one day to the next to force access to these unused resources, however they have built up to it over years of collective work and campaigning for better protection as workers (especially within the field of acting).

Our collective becoming has, however, positively impacted on our respective practices: as Brave New Alps, we are now able to imagine that we could root our practice in the alpine area we come from, mobilising and sharing the network of resources we have access to through our families and other social networks; the female product designer involved in the Cantiere, who also comes from a rural place in the Alps, has decided to combine her design work with the farm work of her parents, who, over the last 25 years, have built up a berry farm; the male graphic designer from Trieste is now using his excellent cooking and foraging skills to run courses with migrant workers; the female illustrator is so compelled by the approach of militant research that she is now exploring ways in which to get children involved in this kind of undoing and re-making of the world. While everyone is planning and building his or her own practice based on their respective hometowns and resources they can, to a greater or lesser extent, draw on, we are also all continuously in conversation as to how our efforts could add up, how we could strengthen each other and how this will all build up to a more general subversion of what design work is, or can be, about.

Collectivity and horizontality

For the collective emerging from the shared residency, the desire also grew to contribute to a reformulation of ways in which we could work together that address issues that go beyond our group, whilst doing so in ways that are not fully or implicitly tied to precarising procedures. In this endeavour, the concept of the multitude is a helpful stepping stone for us as it allows us to consider the possibilities of exiting individualisation and entering collectivity without melting into one voice, without giving up the freedom to express dissent without obligation to power. It is in working with this concept that we challenge the understanding of ourselves and the way we interact with each other. This manifests itself in a 'becoming collective' as well as a "becoming other," during which we attempt to rotate roles and responsibilities in order to avoid the creeping in of unwanted power relations.

Furthermore, we continuously try to propose openings for others to join in order to avoid the trap of becoming a sclerotic "career collective," since the pressure to conform to conventional modalities of being and doing not only stems from precariousness, but also from peers, families and from within our well-disciplined and controlled selves. Towards this attempt, John Holloway's idea of horizontality, i.e. "that all should be involved in decision-making processes on an equal basis and that

there should be no leaders,"[307] is useful since he describes it as an idea that is diffi-cult to make work as an absolute rule and that it is thus more helpful to think of it instead as a constant struggle against verticality. Taking horizontality as a constant commitment is useful in two ways: it takes away some of the pressure, as well as the frustration, of 'failure' and it reminds us that keeping an open structure means keeping discussions diverse. Taking away pressure is an important point, particular-ly in moments when frictions arise around ways of doing and when people leave or join the collective. In these moments, taking horizontality as a project rather than a rule, helps to reflect on what is happening and to deal with it constructively rather than falling into (self-) accusations of not being able to live up to the rule.

Reflecting how knowledges created through this research tie into the work of the Cantiere, might effectively be tending to go against horizontality, given that I am the one who (currently) has most time to grapple with the issues we are col-lectively working through. However, as I and everyone else is aware of this, we are working towards not letting this situation escape into unspoken verticality. I like to think that for the collective, this situation is working at our advantage currently, until my bursary runs out. Thus for now, even though the Cantiere came out of an experiment set up by Fabio and I, we have embarked, in the words of Malo de Moli-na, in a bottom-up research process that is "an open trip, in which we know the ori-gin and how it started, but we do not know where it will finish."[308] Considering what this trip brought to this thesis, I know that the work with the collective opened up ways of thinking and intervening in procedures of precarisation that I would not have seen or imagined without it.

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307   Holloway, *Crack Capitalism*, p.43.

308   Marta Malo de Molina, "Common Notions, Part 2: Institutional Analysis, Participatory Action-Research, Militant Research," transversal, http://eipcp.net/transversal/0707/malo/en.

Timeline:

Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative – becoming collective[309]

November 2011 – continuation of the collective writing over the internet

13 December 2011 – collective presentation at the School of Design at the Politecnico di Milano

19 December 2011 – collective presentation at the Faculty of Design and Art of the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano (IT)

20 December 2011 – group micropolitics workshop with Valeria Graziano in Bozen-Bolzano

5 June – participation in the workshop "Organising as an open source" with Valery Alzaga, and presentation of *Designers' Inquiry*, Casco, Utrecht (NL)

20 June – the on-line questionnaire of *Designers' Inquiry* closes

27 June-1 July – at Careof DOCVA for a first analysis of the data resulting from the on-line questionnaire of *Designers' Inquiry*

23-29 July – relaxation and conversations in the mountains

16 November – the magazine *Progetto Grafico* publishes an interview with the Cantiere

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2012

10 February – Presentation at the conference "Designing and transforming capitalism," Aarhus University (DK)

2-4 March – meeting in Venice to work on *Designers' Inquiry*

20 April – Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative becomes an association

17 April – launch of *Designers' Inquiry*

13-22 April – at Careof DOCVA during the Milan Design Week to launch *Cantieroteca* and the *Designers' Inquiry*

14-18 December – catching up at Careof DOCVA to finalise the data analysis of *Designers' Inquiry*

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309 Throughout all this time, we also had numerous online conversations and met each other in small groups of two to three people – depending on our current (dis-)location.

Timeline:

Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative – becoming collective (continued)

8-10 March – participation at the graphic
design festival "Fahrenheit," Ravenna (IT)

9 March – participation in the conference
"The art of struggle," Uninomade, Palermo (IT)

14 March – meeting with *La Stampa*

17 March – *Designers' Inquiry* goes to print

7-14 April – launching event of the results
of *Designers' Inquiry*, Milan Design Week,
Careof DOCVA

25-27 January –
meeting at Careof
DOCVA catching up
and bringing together
data analysis

9 April – *Designers' Inquiry* published
within a supplement of the national
newspaper *La Stampa*

3 May – *Designers' Inquiry*, paper presented at
ephemera conference, Essex University, Colchester (UK)

25 May – *Designers' Inquiry*, presentation, "Milano
e Oltre," Triennale Design Museum, Milan

27 June – Meeting with Dario Banfi of ACTA and Sergio
Bevilacqua to plan a possible collaboration between
the Cantiere and the municipality of Milan

30 June – meeting for discussing further the
collaboration with the municipality of Milan

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2013

4 October – *Designers' Inquiry*, presentation
and workshop, "Settimana del Buonvivere,"
"Romagna Creative District," Forlì (IT)

22 April – radio interview
on *Designers' Inqiury*,
EcoRadio, Rome

24-26 June – mountain retreat to plan a possible
collaboration with ACTA and the municipality of Milan

20 February – *A tavola con…*,
conversation over lunch
with Wu Ming 2 and Antar
Mohamed, Careof DOCVA

25 May-9 June – *Designers' Inquiry*, exhibited at "Panorama,"
Festival international de l'affiche et du graphisme, Chaumont (FR)

9 February – launch of the new website

6 February – meeting with the director of
the national newspaper *La Stampa*

3 February – our reflections on design
education in Italy are published on *Abitare*

31 January – hand-in of application
for public funding (later rejected)

FIGURE 50 and 51 *above*   *Designers' Inquiry* – posters and leaf-lets for the launch of the online questionnaire
during the Milan Design Week, Careof DOCVA, 17-22 April 2012

FIGURE 52 *below*   Workshop with labour organizer Valery Alzaga, Casco, Utrecht, 5 June 2012

FIGURE 53 *above*   *Designers' Inquiry* – first collective analysis of the collected data, FDV Residency, Milan, 29 June to 1 July 2012

FIGURE 54 *below*   *Designers' Inquiry* – open workshop to visualise the elaborated data, FDV Residency, Milan, 25-27 January 2013
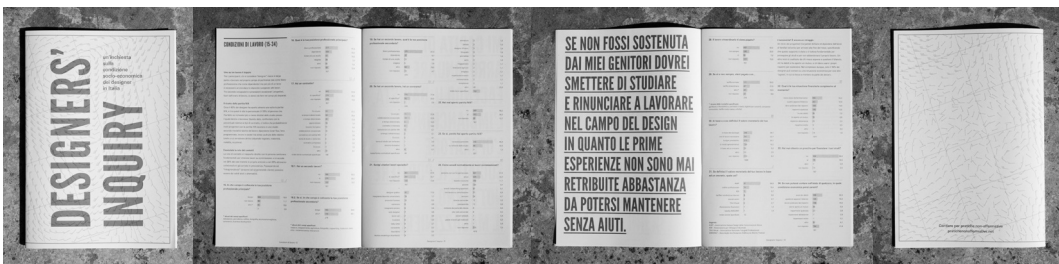
FIGURE 55 and 56   *Designers' Inquiry* – launch of the report during the Milan Design Week, Careof DOCVA, 7-14
April 2013

FIGURE 57 *above*   Collective presentation at the Faculty of Design and Art of the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano
(IT), 19 December 2011

FIGURE 58 *middle*   Micropolitics workshop with Valeria Graziano, Bozen-Bolzano (IT), 20 December 2011

FIGURE 59 *below*   *Designers' Inquiry* – presentation at "Milano e Oltre", Triennale Design Museum, Milan, 25 May
2013

FIGURE 60 to 63   Summer retreat in the Italian Alps, Nomi, 23-29 July 2012

Overall reflections on this inhabitation

The situated, embodied knowledges created through the engagement with the
Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative were a real turning point in this research:
they let us experience the potential for undoing procedures of precarisation that
unfold when we step out of our comfort zone and orient our doing along noncap-
italist values. Compared to the first inhabitation in Warsaw, the space created in
Milan allowed us to question ourselves and to challenge our ways of doing even
beyond the eight initial weeks. While the experience in Warsaw raised issues about
the docile subjectivities designers are trained to assume and taught us that a change
in material structure does not necessarily render us less precarious, the activities
with the Cantiere threw back to us the fact that a change in subjectivity must go
hand-in-hand with a change in material structures and ways of doing to enable us
to move towards a "becoming other" that is de-precarising in all areas of our lives.
Within the Cantiere, we have not yet achieved the balance that would allow to really
sustain the collective, however in our own particular design practices, our collective
research has already encouraged a variety of us to build more sustainable arrange-
ments for ourselves that can also be opened up to others.

   In terms of an engagement with theory, this experience has made me realise
that although the Italian Autonomist thought produced by and around Negri opens
up how we can think of design practice in politicised ways, these theories do not
necessarily offer concrete strategies of how to sustain what they call "exit" or
"refusal or work." Moreover, having engaged on various occasions with activities
organised by Italian activists who refer to autonomist thought, these encounters
were very often perceived as patronising, stifling, in love with the straightforward-
ness of abstract ideas rather than with the messiness of practice and they often
ended in the silencing of critical voices or in discussions around what actions might
be judged as radical enough.[310] On these occasions, my personal reaction was to
think that if a "de-precarising revolution" was to feel like this, I would have serious
doubts about wanting to be part of it. Nevertheless, I still consider Italian Autono-
mist thought valuable, but that it needs to be challenged through practice and other
kind of approaches of how to move towards a just and equal society. Practice has
this fantastic (and, at times, damned) ability to test concepts, to set them to work

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310   Here I refer especially to the *Commonwear* seminars (spring 2012) and the seminar *The art of struggle* (March
2013) organised by Uninomade.

and to see if they hold, but also to demand more, or other, concepts to make sense of its functioning in the world and to reorient itself when it gets stuck.

Thus the engagement with the Cantiere energised a trajectory of collective activities against precarisation, but also brought up really interesting questions and obstacles to work through in the continuation of our, at times more, at times less, intertwined research paths: How can we mobilise our immaterial, social and material resources along values and through practices that create de-precarising procedures and support structures which are sustainable in the long-term? How can we mobilise them in ways that produce de-precarising effects beyond ourselves or a relative small group of people? How can we valorise the political aspect of the element of care that emerged among us? How can we bring more concrete micro- as well as nanopolitical procedures against precarisation into our lives? How can we mobilise situated and embodied theories in order to inspire a strategic and practice-oriented (re)formulation of how we go about organising our lives and design practices together with others? To explore these questions, in the next section of this thesis, we engage with feminist autonomist approaches to work and the commons. To think through their proposals and to formulate tools for re-orienting design practice, we also draw on the experiences gathered around the commons in Dheisheh (Occupied Palestinian Territories) and in New Cross (London).

14. AUTONOMIST FEMINIST MARXISM, COMMONING AND CARE

Autonomist feminist activists and thinkers are closely concerned with issues of exploitation and coercion related to the reproduction of our livelihoods. In their emergence in Italy, and internationally in the 1970s, [311] they produced a ground-breaking critique of Marx and Marxism by stating how important the unpaid reproductive labour performed by women world-wide was for the continued accumulation of capital. Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James' seminal work "Women and the subversion of the community" and subsequent writings by members of the international group Wages for Housework, exposed how women's exploitation by, and production for capital, is hidden in the social factory because they do not get paid for the hours spent on care work that ensures (male) workers are able to go to work day after day. [312]

From this critique developed in the 1970s, the contemporary current of autonomist feminist thinkers – which, for my purpose, I group around Silvia Federici and Massimo De Angelis [313] – argue that the most intense struggles against precarisation are being fought in places where capital is threatening people's livelihoods, i.e. in places where people are exposed to, amongst other things, land expropriation, environmental destruction and soaring food prices. Thus, unlike autonomists closer to Hardt and Negri, they untie the potential for social change from the most advanced sector of workers. This also means that they focus less on the immaterial common of languages, codes and knowledges in their discussion of the potential for autonomy from the capital social relation held by collectively produced and used resources, but more on the potential held by material and social commons. They develop Marx's analysis of the commons and their enclosure in their approach to collectively held resources today, while at the same time challenging capitalist appropriations of the commons. They do so by persistently asking how commons can

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311   For an overview of the development of autonomist feminist thought in Italy, see: Mariarosa Dalla Costa, "Workersim, Feminism and Some Efforts of the United Nations,"
http://www.commoner.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/the-operai-maria-rosa-final-version.pdf.

312   Dalla Costa and James' pamphlet of 1971 is today often referred to as the "Communist Manifesto of the 21st century": Dalla Costa and James, "Subversion of the Community".

313   In this strand of thinkers, I also include the people involved in the Midnight Notes Collective, like Harry Cleaver, and George Caffentzis.

concretely shift power towards workers within the capital social relation,[314] which
is why we are taking their approach here in order to concretely envisage how the
obstacles encountered with and by the Cantiere per pratiche non-affirmative might
be overcome.

Commons and enclosures

To proceed with an engagement with autonomist feminist thought, it is first use-
ful to clarify what they refer to when speaking about the commons. Historically,
commons were, for example, pieces of land that people – who held common rights
– could access to graze their animals, collect firewood, turf and fruits as well as to
provide for other subsistence needs.[315] The gradual enclosure of these commons
meant that rights of common use were taken away from people and social power
shifted towards money-owners. Marx's accounts of these enclosures highlights how
they were supported by both the state and the church, and that while states became
progressively more wealthy, their populations steadily became impoverished. This
process of taking away rights of common use which had secured people's reproduc-
tion, was taken even further by the so-called 'clearing of estates' by which those liv-
ing on the newly-enclosed pieces of land were moved elsewhere. The consequence
of these enclosures was the incorporation of soil into capital and the creation of the
required supplies of "free" and rightless proletarians who could then only secure
their survival by joining the emerging urban industries.[316]

This expropriation was by no means a peaceful one, but was enforced with
violence. Brutal state and church power was used to discipline the dispossessed
and enforce these transformations onto them: incarceration, violent punishment
and executions were the primary means to force people to sell their labour pow-
er.[317] This same violence was used to break women's power in the community, who,

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314   Their anti-capitalist stand thus differs significantly from a more mainstream economic approach to the commons, which generally asks how shared resources can be governed so that they become productive within a capitalist economy. For a discussion of this difference in approach, see George Caffentzis, "The Future of "the Commons": Neoliberalism's "Plan B" or the Original Disaccumulation of Capital?," New Formations, no. 69 (2010). For how commons are theorised as functioning profitably within a capitalist economy, see for example Elinor Ostrom, Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

315   Commons were not in themselves egalitarian as not everyone could access them. For the access and use of commons in England, see: J.M. Neeson, Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure and Social Change in England, 1700-1820 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

316   For an account of these enclosures also called "primitive accumulation," see Marx, *Capital. V1*, p.886-95.

317   Ibid., p.897-98. See also Linebaugh, *London Hanged*.

through their reproductive work and their knowledges in relation to health, largely
contributed to the independence of communities. Silvia Federici, in a meticulous
study of the violent disciplining of women that accompanied enclosures, traces how
women were forced into slave-like roles that devalued reproductive work.[318] More-
over, autonomist feminist thinkers state that these processes of enclosure are far
from being over: today, enclosures and violence are still necessary in the global ex-
pansion of capitalism and, just as in Marx's time, it is not simply naturally that the
owners of the means of production and subsistence find the workers freely available
on the market as sellers of their own labour-power.[319] Instead, this situation needs to
be created – evidently by all means possible – and sustained by precarising workers
and dismantling the welfare state, no matter how many people take to the streets
and how much violent police action is needed to crush the protests.[320] Enclosures
are even taking place through more subtle means like, for instance, the attempted
enclosure of people's imagination so that it almost seems impossible to imagine a
socio-economic system that differs from the one rotating around capital.

Thus, through the enclosure of commons the capitalist social relation is being
re-produced by incessantly forcing workers to sell their labour-power in order to
live, whilst capitalists continue to enrich themselves in the process.[321] Therefore, we
can see how through constant – whether more or less violent – processes of enclo-
sure, the capital social relation continuously reproduces not only itself but also a
class of people dependent on wages.[322]

An autonomist feminist approach to the commons

Proposing to explore an autonomist feminist line of thought to tackle particularly
material issues of precariousness, means to move the focus from an immaterial con-
ception of "the common" to a very material conception of "the commons," which, in
itself, holds a strong relation to reproductive work as a means to

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318   See, Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*. For a further account of the enclosure of the female body and mind, see:
Mies, Bennholdt-Thomson, and Werlhof, *Women: The Last Colony*.

319   Marx, *Capital. V1*, p.274.

320   For elaborations on continued enclosures, see for example Midnight Notes Collective, "The New Enclosures,"
http://www.midnightnotes.org/newenclos.html.

321   Marx, *Capital. V1*, p.723.

322   Ibid., p.724.

securing livelihoods outside the precarising constraints of the market.[323] In fact, the way autonomist feminist thought addresses issues of precariousness can be summarised with De Angelis' words, who states that his interest in the commons "is grounded in a desire for the *conditions* necessary to promote social justice, sustainability, and happy lives for all."[324]

In grounding the desire for a different society in the production and reproduction of anti-capitalist commons, De Angelis further clarifies that, from an autonomist feminist viewpoint, commons are not resources in common-use as they might be defined within neoliberal capitalist policy, but they are the base on which social practices other to those defined by the capital social relation are built.[325] In this sense, commons need to be thought of as standing in antithesis to all forms of enclosure and exploitation. They cannot only be imagined as playing a crucial role in (re)defining how we co-produce our livelihoods, but also as the very means through which we can limit our role in reproducing precarising procedures and through which society can be substantially transformed. Thus, commons are perceived by autonomist feminist thinkers as positioned within a field of power relations, in which they are not only sites of extraordinary possibility, but also sites of struggle, since their remains high potential that they do not become transformative, but instead merely attempt to give a human face to capitalist exploitation.[326]

When considering how, as designers, we could mobilise the commons to create non-precarising economic cultures, the image that De Angelis evokes of the commons standing on three columns is useful in order to understand the conceptual and practical tools they require us to build.[327] Firstly, the commons are based on commonly produced, used and reproduced resources – whether material, social or immaterial – that contribute to the reproduction of livelihoods outside the market. Secondly, the commons necessitate the building of a heterogeneous, non-

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323   In the work of Federici and De Angelis on the commons resonates also the work on the subsistence perspective developed by eco-feminists, see for example Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, *Ecofeminism* (London: Zed Books, 1993). Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen and Maria Mies, *The Subsistence Perspective: Beyond the Globalised Economy* (London/New York: Zed Books, 1999).

324   An Architektur, "On the Commons: A Public Interview with Massimo De Angelis and Stavros Stavrides," *e-flux journal* June-August, no. 17 (2010).

325   De Angelis, *Beginning of History*, p.145.

326   For an elaboration on the potential of co-optation of the commons, see for example Silvia Federici, "Women, Reproduction, and the Construction of Commons " http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBBbVpbmRP0.

327   An Architektur, "On the Commons," p.2-3.

essentialist and often trans-local community that takes care of them, that negotiates, as well as regulates, their use so that they do not end up being depleted.[328] Thirdly, they rely on the practice of commoning, i.e. the pro-active act of collectively producing and taking care of the commons through horizontal processes.[329] Based on these three elements, an autonomist feminist notion of the commons acknowledges the possibility of a virtuous yet constantly negotiated, interdependence between people.[330] Furthermore, they highlight the element of care linked to the commons, given that the ethics of care as described by feminist political scientist Joan Tronto, implies a shift from the dilemma between autonomy and dependency to a more sophisticated notion of interdependence that considers the multiple viewpoints and needs of the people involved.[331] Silvia Federici and Camille Barbagallo, for example, underline the importance of connecting the commons with care and reproduction towards the development of "self-reproducing movements," i.e. movements that do not "separate political work from the activities necessary to the reproduction of our life, for no struggle is sustainable that ignores the needs, experiences, and practices that reproducing ourselves entails."[332] For designers wanting to challenge precarisation, this would imply avoiding a separation between the activism developed within design practices and the practices and needs of reproduction.

For designers, such a commons-based approach to undoing precarisation means taking all paid and unpaid workers as a frame of reference for their practices and lives in order to avoid falling into the dynamics of the capitalist mode of production which constantly pits the livelihoods of singularities against each other.[333] In fact, Harry Cleaver reminds us that in order to effectively address precariousness, it is not enough to think globally and act locally, but that it is necessary to consider how

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328   In fact, for a long time, commons have been dismissed as unviable based on observations made by Garrett Hardin that commons necessarily end up being depleted. However, in his analysis, he had no place for a negotiating community but only for greedy individuals. See: Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162, no. 3859 (1968).

329   The term 'commoning' has been introduced by autonomist Marxist historian Peter Linebaugh, "The Who and Whom of Liberty Taking," Mute Magazine, http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/who-and-whom-liberty-taking.

330   Here their conception of community links to critical accounts by Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

331   Joan C. Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p.101-02.

332   See the introduction to "Carework and the commons": Silvia Federici and Camille Barbagallo, "Introduction," *The Commoner*, no. 15 (2012).

333   De Angelis, *Beginning of History*, p.117.

our local actions can complement each other, whilst allowing the lines of flight of
commoning to take off in many different directions.[334] Considering the work we do
as designers, where can we begin to enact a multiplicity of ways in which to bring
together a sustainable politics and practice of the commons, both in our practice
and in our lives? How to practice along the commons in order to design precarisa-
tion out of our, and other people's, lives? How can we design in order to shift power
relations between production and reproduction so that the precarising and exploit-
ative conditions under which we eat, sleep, travel, laugh, wear, communicate or
work are no longer taken for granted?

Before trying to answer these questions specifically in relation to design, we will
take an excursion into two practice-based investigations of the commons that were
of major importance when grappling with the potential practices of commoning
could have in our lives. The first excursion takes us to Campus in Camps, an exper-
imental university programme within the Palestinian refugee camp of Dheisheh,
where Fabio and I had the opportunity – alongside others – to test whether the
notions and practices around the commons could hold even in such a complex and
highly conflicted context. The second excursion takes us to an engagement with the
New Cross Commoners, a group of people living in the neighbourhood of Goldsmiths
College, together with whom I explored practices of commoning in London.

Campus in Camps – commoning in Palestinian refugee camps

In autumn 2012, Fabio and I joined the university programme Campus in Camps,[335]
located in the Palestinian refugee camp of Dheisheh next to Bethlehem, as project
activators.[336] Joining the programme, gave us the opportunity to ask – together with
15 Palestinian refugees[337] – a series of questions around the notion of the commons

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334   Massimo De Angelis, "An Interview with Harry Cleaver,"
https://webspace.utexas.edu/hcleaver/www/InterviewwithHarryCleaver.html.

335   The aim of the two-year programme, initiated in January 2012, is to explore and produce "new forms of
representation of camps and refugees beyond the static and traditional symbols of victimisation, passivity and
poverty." "Campus in Camps - About," http://www.campusincamps.ps/en/about/. The programme is supported
by the GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) and the United Nations Relief and Works
Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). It is delivered in collaboration with Al Quds University
(Jerusalem) and Bard College (New York).

336   The role of project activators within the programme is to support participants in concretely realising projects
that create new imaginaries around what it means to be a refugee and what is needed to create an empowering
culture within the camps. Our research work as project activators was made possible through the funding of the GIZ
and Movin'Up – mobility grants for young artists based in Italy.

337   All participants had already completed BA degrees in a variety of subjects, such as business administration,
social work and media studies, and they were all paid a monthly stipend.

and commoning: How do the values and practices of the common(s) function in a non-Western context? Can they bring new perspectives to contexts that are more demanding than the precariousness of designers? What can they, contribute, for example, to the unblocking of extremely complex situations like the one of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Having previously thoroughly engaged with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict whilst working with programme initiators Alessandro Petti and Sandi Hilal as part of *Decolonizing Architecture*,[338] we were intrigued, after almost two years of focusing on the issues of precarious designers, by the possibilities of taking the knowledges and tools we had built up to a context that had the potential to both undo, as well as to enrich, concepts that might be proven to work fine in a European context.

On arrival, we were introduced to the issues, approaches and theories the participants had already engaged in, among which was the autonomist notion of the common, as well as an appreciation of Islamic traditions of shared property.[339] Moreover, we learned that, together with the critical pedagogue Munir Fashi, the participants had decided to start publishing a collective dictionary, in the form of a fanzine, that would allow them to share their reflections on Palestinian refugee-hood with the wider local, as well as trans-local, community. So with our and three more project activators' arrival, the moment had come to give concrete form to the participants' ideas and desires.

For the creation of the first issue of the fanzine, Fabio and I teamed up with the participants who were interested in reflecting on the common(s) in relation to the refugee camps they had grown up in. To do so, we began by walking around the camp of Dheisheh and the neighbouring sprawl-city of Doha, which is also mainly populated by refugees for whom, due to the growing population since 1949, there was no more space within the confines of the camp. During our daily walks and discussions, which extended over a period of four weeks, we asked questions about the use of space and property in the camp and in the adjacent city and were always attentive to discussing what forms of social relations these uses engendered. Here

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338   *Decolonizing Architecture,* which is now more precisely called *Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency*, started in 2007 in order to reimagine how Israeli colonial architecture could be subverted, reused, profaned and recycled once conflict between the parts was settled, but also on those occasions in which the Israeli Military Force retreats and leaves its built structures behind. For more information, see "Decolonizing Architecture," http://www.decolonizing.ps/site/.

339   For shared property in Islamic traditions, like the *waqf*, see Siraj Sait and Hilary Lim, *Land, Law and Islam: Property and Human Rights in the Muslim World* (London: Zed, 2006).

it became clear that, while Doha functioned according to private property rules as in any other city, Dheisheh did not have a clear notion of private property, since houses were built on land rented by the United Nations.[340] The ambiguity of who owns what and the social practices resulting from it, led us to think about the camps themselves as being a common: there is no intervention by state planning to regulate the camps and houses are, for example, extended in vernacular ways through negotiations with neighbours rather than carried out in accordance to the UNRWA planning regulations.[341] Administrative matters, disputes and crime are also taken care of by the Popular Committees of each camp rather than through appeal to the Palestinian National Authorities. Moreover, since 1949, the barren land of the hillside on which the Dheisheh refugee camp has been established had been transformed into a sort of urban park, as densely packed with plants as it is with concrete shelters: loquat and mulberry trees branch out into the streets from small gardens, prickly pears line the alleys, vines climb along walls and olive trees proudly stand their ground – all contributing to independent local food production.

By producing a fanzine that reflects on the camps as commons and the micro-practices of commoning that maintain the camps,[342] it emerged that a built-up environment which is collectively produced and managed through activities of collective negotiation, can feel emancipatory, both to those within and those outside, almost as if it were an island of self-rule within a territory intensely regulated by (colonial) state control. However, it also became clear that whilst what, at some levels, might be considered an emancipatory common, at other levels – such as gender and sexual orientation – might be considered discriminating and oppressive. Thus, while producing the fanzine, the question emerged of the variety of elements and processes that were necessary in order to effectively create a culture of commoning that avoids pitting people against each other and that is emancipatory for everyone involved in its production and its reproduction.

Besides the production of the fanzine, another opportunity to think about the commons and commoning was provided by the course *Agriculture as Resistance,*

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340 During our research, it became clear that the knowledge about who owns the land on which Dheisheh is built is very confused and that this confusion provokes myths about the future of the camp.

341 Of course here it would be interesting to also reflect on the role that the weekly, and at times also daily, incursions of the Israeli military play in terms of urban planning. Take, for example, the instance when in 2002, the Hawashin neighbourhood in the refugee camp of Jenin was bulldozed to the ground.

342 See appendix G for the first issue of the fanzine.

run by Vivien Sansour during our stay. Engaging in her seminar activities made us realise how activities related to the maintenance of "generational commons" such as olive trees and terraced fields, which were hundreds of years old, struggle to be seen as radical or even slightly significant political acts. For participants of Campus in Camps framed these activities as "normal", as something that had always existed, something that has no political value. Thus, we were also able to reflect on how, within this conflict and the progressive context of Campus in Camps, the possibilities of defining other ways of doing were limited by what could be read as capitalist logics of framing what constitutes a valuable activity.

Overall, thinking through the common(s) in the context of Campus in Camps, rather than undoing notions built up throughout the research up to that point, only reinforced our conception of the transformative potential of the commons, since in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, they proved to be powerful tools to unhinge entrenched conceptions of how to relate to one another across manifold lines of division.

FIGURE 64 *above*   Dheisheh refugee camp, overlooked from just outside the Campus in Camps building; on the opposite hill raises the city of Doha

FIGURE 65 middle   Campus in Camps – the building hosting the experimental programme (on the ground floor) within the park of the cultural centre Al Feneiq

FIGURE 66 *below*   Campus in Camps – one of the regular Monday-meetings between the participants, Alessandro Petti (programme leader), Sandi Hilal (UNRWA representative) and the project activators
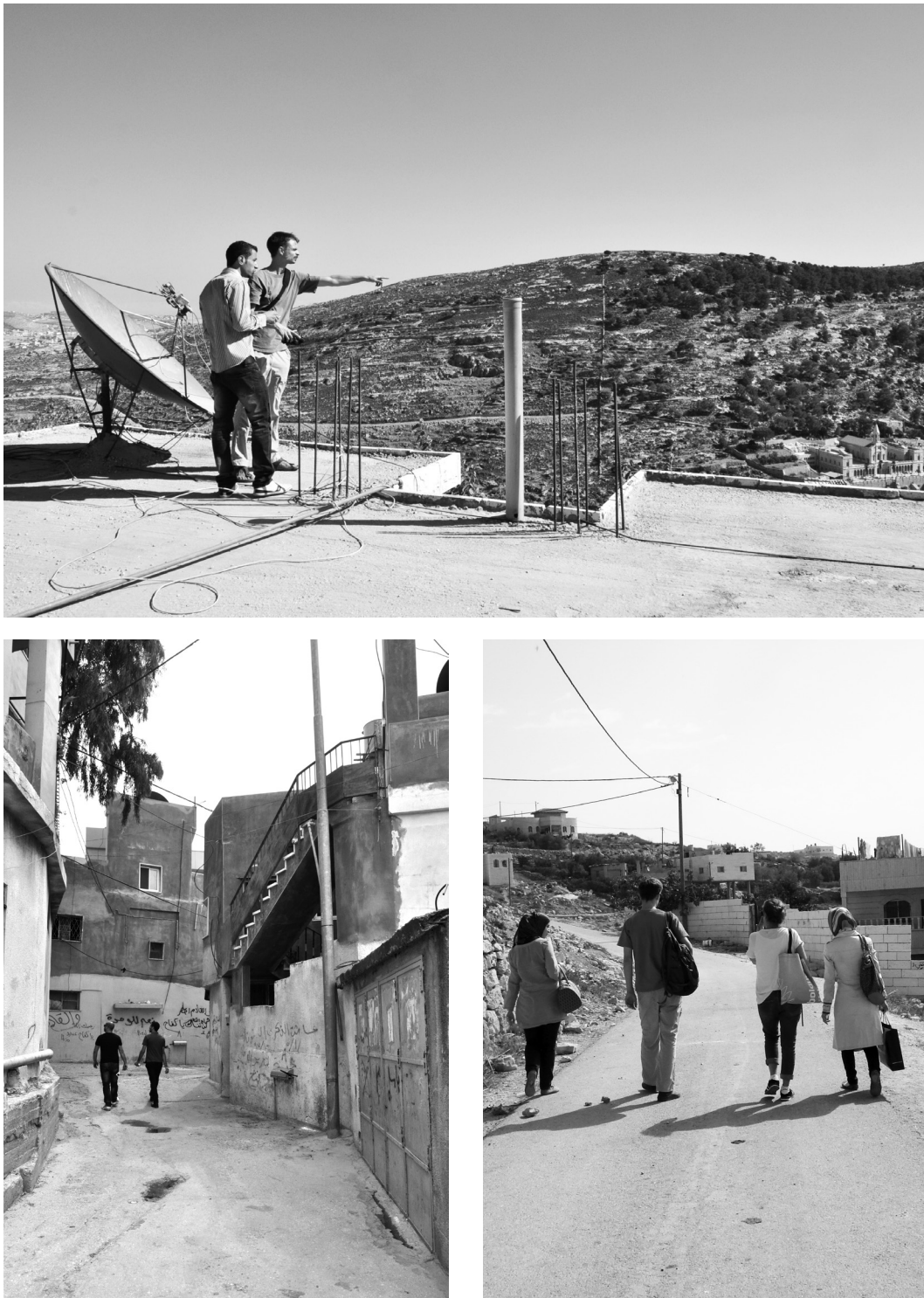
FIGURE 67 to 69 *Commons & Commoning* – searching for areas of commoning in the urban and rural fabric in and
around the camps, Dheisheh and Al-Fawwar refugee camps, September and October 2012

FIGURE 70 *below* *Commons & Commoning* – visit to a women's agricultural co-operative, discussing agriculture as a strategy of resistance, Derbalut, 15 September 2012

FIGURE 71 *above* *Commons & Commoning* – learning to make bread while discussing the work around producing, making and eating food as a practice of commoning, Dheisheh, 2 October 2012
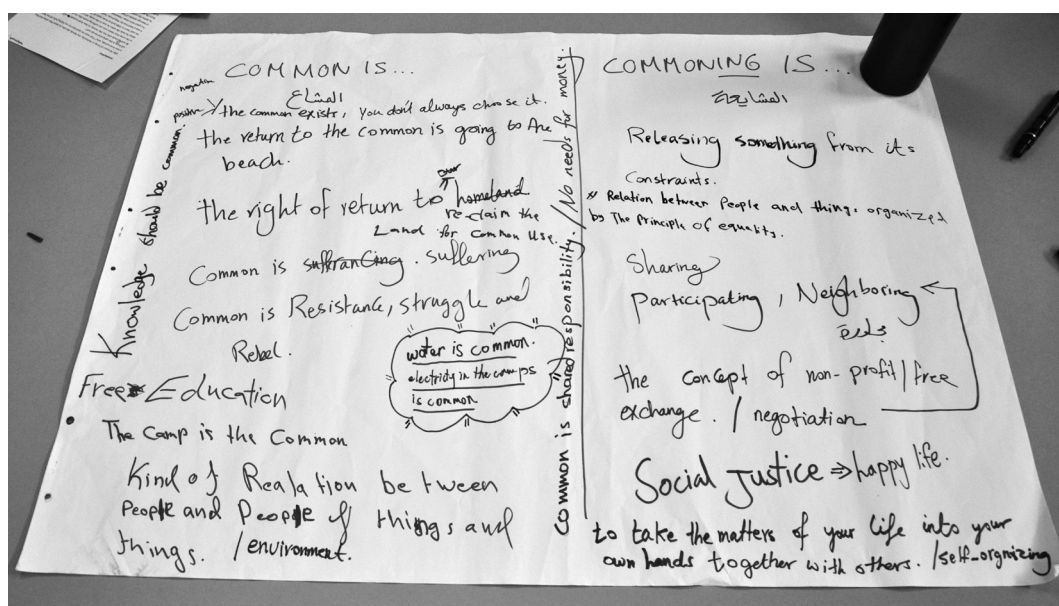
FIGURE 72 *above*   *Commons & Commoning* – the fanzine group sorting out the knowledges gathered through practical and theoretical engagements with the commons, October 2012

FIGURE 73 *below*   *Commons & Commoning* – after months of studying and researching, the participants appreciate the first concrete output of their work: the first issues of their *Collective Dictionary* project, 10 October 2012

New Cross Commoners – commoning in London

In February 2013, after several months of discussion about the politics of the commons with fellow Goldsmiths students Paolo Plotegher, Caterina Giuliani and Orsalia Dimitriou, we collectively initiated an open research group – the New Cross Commoners – that would engage in activities of commoning which existed in New Cross, a relatively deprived neighbourhood within which the college is located and of which we are residents. We began this research group by running almost weekly get-togethers during which we read texts on the commons and discussed them in relation to the neighbourhood, as well as to our lives. We would also visit places of commoning in the area – like the Sanford Housing Co-op and the self-organised local library – and we would invite people dedicated to practices of commoning to share their experiences with our group. Furthermore, we ran workshops to map the resources, desires and needs held by the people involved in the group and to imagine ways in which we could build connections between them.[343]

By now – September 2013 – the New Cross Commoners have developed into a group of people constituted by Goldsmiths students and local activists alike, all of whom are in some form, affected by procedures of precarisation. Following the initial discussions and mappings, the group is now trying to develop ways in which to contribute to everyday life in this local area through de-precarising activities of commoning. The direction we are currently moving towards is taking over a local empty space, to activate it around shared desires and needs with others living locally. For now, two of the greatest needs within the group are supporting our subsistence and connecting with others in the area, especially across lines of race and class.[344]

As part of my practice-based research, the engagement with the New Cross Commoners was an important platform from where to discuss and enact practices of commoning, bridging the gap between theory and practice. Leaving aside academic language, the New Cross Commoners allowed for an examination, as well as a confirmation, of the potential for de-precarisation, social justice and sustainability held by the commons when enacted in everyday live beyond the circumscribed field of a specific profession.[345]

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343   See appendix H for a list of the activities.

344   For the most current, and hopefully by then more concrete, developments of the New Cross Commoners, see: "New Cross Commoners," http://newxcommoners.wordpress.com.

345   For thoughts and approaches developed with the New Cross Commoners, see appendix H for an almost print-ready draft of the fanzine we produced.

FIGURE 74 and 75 Maps of commons in New Cross – the first map (*above*) was drawn during the first meeting of
the New Cross Commoners, 9 February 2013, while the second (*below*) was produced eight months later during a
workshop in Fordham Park, 14 September 2013
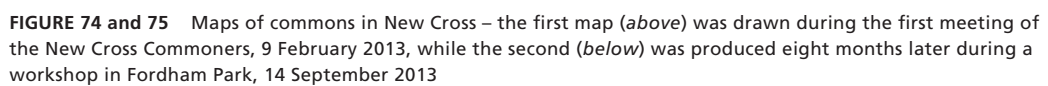
FIGURE 76 *above*   First meeting at the self-organised library New Cross Learning, 9 February 2013

FIGURE 77 *below*   Visit to Sanford Housing Co-op – accompanied by a reading on how housing could be tackled through a commons-approach, 16 February 2013

FIGURE 78 *above* *Circulation of the commons* – workshop on visualising how we could circulate resources between us and the other people living locally, Goldsmiths College, 16 March 2013

FIGURE 79 *below* *Mapping spaces for commons* – workshop to map unused spaces in New Cross, Fordham Park, 16 June 2013

FIGURE 80 *above left*   Visit and gardening at Burgess Park Food Project, 2 March 2013

FIGURE 81 *above right*   Guided visit to the New Cross Cutting, a nature reserve along the railway lines, 11 May 2013

FIGURE 82 *below*   Guided tour to Hackney Wick with Andreas Lang of public works, 19 October 2013

15. DE-PRECARISING VALUE PRACTICES OF THE COMMONS

Having introduced autonomist feminist approaches to the commons, in this last section we elaborate on them further in order to put forward a series of proposals – to be tested in practice – of how designers could transform the currently dominant and – as we have seen – precarising practices of time, innovation and social relation within and beyond their field of profession.

Re-considering practices of time

Refusing to dedicate ourselves to precarising work arrangements is an autonomist strategy we could deploy as design-workers in order to reclaim our time for other things in life. However, such a refusal is a difficult choice for designers to make. This is not only because, in conventionally-structured lives, money (and usually quite a lot of it) needs to come from somewhere, but also because it seems difficult to refuse proposals for design work when doing that kind of work is when the majority of us feel our potential is most realised. Moreover, we might ask if it makes any sense to free our time from (under)paid work to then do (also often precarising) self-initiated projects, which might easily be capitalised on by others? A similar dilemma was encountered by feminists in the 1960s and 1970s around reclaiming their time through the refusal of work: the strategy of refusal made a lot of sense for factory workers, but for women who were bound to reproductive labour in the home, the issues of refusal was less straightforward. How to refuse the work that reproduces those you care about? You might despise the conditions under which you must to do that work, but nevertheless, you care for those your unpaid and unrecognised work reproduces.

To undo the paralysing nature of this dilemma, Federici – along with other feminist Marxists – underline the importance of defining the difference between work that reproduces human beings and work that produces them as docile labour-power.[346] When adopting this approach in all activities in our lives that on a daily basis contribute to reproduce our livelihoods – whether this is designing, researching, caring for others and ourselves –we can then see in all of them the potential for subverting the procedures that precarise ourselves and others. Employing this distinction in our approach to the use of time means that even time spent in more

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346   Federici, "Precarious Labour," p.24.

or less precarious work can be used to feed processes of transformative commoning within and beyond it. It also means we can begin to identify what to do in order to reproduce ourselves, from where we can begin to experiment with ways in which to transform these activities so as to shift power away from capital and onto us. We could, for instance, use our time to experiment with ways to access what we need through collective processes and arrangements rather than by relying on (hard-earned) money. For such experiments to become viable, both in our imagination as well as in practice, it is crucial to reconsider the social and economic value we give to time spent on reproductive work, to break with the worthless framing attributed to it within the capital social relation.[347]

Such a revaluation of time spent on directly reproductive work would, for example, value care over efficiency, but would also remind us, designers, why we sell our time and skills in the first place: to secure our reproduction. So why not value reproductive activities, the social relations as well as the subversive potential that comes with them, in the first place? When, for instance, using our time to experiment together in the creation and maintenance of commons to secure parts of our reproduction outside the market, our potential to create, as well as sustain, them multiplies and with it, our capacity to apply pressure for change onto the current economic system. This experimentation would, then, no longer be about using our time to access, do, or be what we already want, do, or are, but would be about allowing us to experiment more fully "with different kinds of lives, with wanting, doing, and being otherwise."[348]

Reframing practices of innovation

An experimentation with different kinds of life, away from precarising procedures, requires also a reframing of what we perceive as innovation. When we consider innovation from the point of view of the commons (in their antithetical form to capital), we can define it by the extent to which new ways of doing and organising defend existing or create new, commons which in turn support life outside the precarising procedures of the capital social relation. Were innovation valued by capital generally goes hand-in-hand with increasing people's dependence *on* the market,

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347   For a historical overview of the devaluation of reproductive work, see: Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*. For an overview of the marginalisation of "care" as a political concept, see: Tronto, *Moral Boundaries*.

348   Weeks, *Problem with Work*, p.145.

then innovation valued by commons (and commoners) increases people's autonomy *from* the market, and thus from wage-labour. This means that if we define social practices of innovation around the commons, we can evaluate their contribution to society by the extent to which they contribute to granting people autonomy from the precarising forces of the market and to which they support us in undoing the value-practices of capital.

Such a shift in perspective in thinking about innovation allows designers to orient and evaluate their efforts more specifically against their own and other's precariousness, and towards social change more generally. When structuring one's design practice, such a shift in perspective makes it easier to challenge simplistic logics and models of practice within the competitive, yet ultimately precarising, model of entrepreneurship where, in order to make a living, what is most important is the "outperformance of *others*."[349] In having (anti-capitalist) commons and commoning as a point of orientation when constructing support structures that should allow designers to become less market-oriented – and less precarious – what possibilities does this open up, not only for the imagination but for the construction of structures that might enable a less competitive co-production of livelihoods?

By considering not only the activity of design itself as valuable in making a living, but by also valuing other (re)productive activities, it might become possible to construct material and social support structures which depart from specifically personal and/or collective situations. Moreover, to begin to approach working as a designer in this way would mean to contribute to social change not only through the production of designs, but through the working processes and the organisational forms of life that accompany and sustain such practice. Through an experimentation with such multifaceted structures, it might also be possible to experiment with the question of what the role and the potential of the designer is in society today, in relation to strengthening the emergence of alternative economic cultures all around us.[350]

Such an approach to innovation would, then, not only allow for strategic experimentation with the way design practices are run and structured, but it would also

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349   De Angelis, *Beginning of History*, p.5.

350   In the field of architecture, such experimentations with the commons have already been concretely advanced in recent years. See for example, the structures developed by aaa (atelier d'architecture autogérée) in Paris, where they propose to develop architecture along lines that no longer segregate and exclude but that assemble, socialise and eventually politicise: atelier d'architecture autogérée, "R-Urban," http://r-urban.net/en/.

allow for a different approach to what we design for others, such that, for instance, processes of de-precarising commoning could be facilitated across society. If much of today's design of communication, services and products is structured around the value-practices of capital – even when delivered in the form of open or social design simply because the values of capital are taken as the norm – there is enormous potential for dedicating our attention and skills to (re)create such designs through processes of commoning that allow for autonomy from the coercive forces of the market.

In considering how to facilitate processes of commoning, and thus de-precarisation, French philosopher Bernard Stiegler's notion of de-proletarianisation might be a source of inspiration, particularly if considered with a feminist inflection, because it reminds us of the broader condition the design process should contribute to undo. Stiegler describes proletarianisation as the vast process of the destruction of *savoir-faire* that was necessary as a precondition, besides the enclosure of material resources, to actually create a pool of readily-available labour-force who could not survive without wage-labour.[351] In tracing this process of proletarianisation up to the present day, he adds to it a loss of *savoir-vivre* and *savoir-théoriser*, which further exposes people to the precarising forces of the market.[352] It is in his analysis of the contemporary that he also considers the work of designers, in the form of the creative workforce, who he describes as being

> merely creators of that kind of "value" which is *capable of being evaluated on the market ...* but who do not create any works or open up any work [*mais qui n'oeuvrent à rien du tout*].[353]

In many ways this description of creative work reflects the precarising and self-precarising activities of designers that have considered earlier, but it also prompts designers to respond to his analysis through practice by beginning to use more time and skills for opening up movements of de-proletarianisation, i.e. of an innovation of knowledge and skills to create value that goes beyond the market and that contributes to an unhinging of the procedures that render us and others precarious. However, when thinking of innovation as a process of de-proletarianisation,

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351 Bernard Stiegler, *For a New Critique of Political Economy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), p.27.

352 Ibid., p.30.

353 Ibid., p.45-46.

it is also necessary to employ a feminist viewpoint, since proletarianisation implies the creation and perpetuation of a particular type of family, sexuality, and division of labour that guarantees the cheap reproduction of the labour-force. Thus, when considering design towards processes of de-proletarianisation, the values aimed at should take into account how gendered stereotypes of doing might be replaced by ways of structuring our lives according to equality and social justice.

Recomposition of fragmented designers and beyond

What becomes clear when considering how to redirect our time and our movements of innovation is that almost none of it can be done alone without the risk of being ineffectual beyond oneself, without being marginalised, reabsorbed or worn out. In fact, the desire to free our time to experiment with innovative ways to challenge procedures of precarisation, calls for practices of commoning that aim to transform existing practices of fragmentation between people. With regards this transformation of social relations, De Angelis notes that this fragmentation cannot be undone through pure ideological calls for unity or brushed aside by theoretical frameworks, because it is only within our habitual, everyday practices that we reproduce capital's measure and value practices which, in turn, support fragmentation and precarisation. Thus, when we refer to practices of commoning as a means to overcome the fragmentation and precarisation we experience, it is in direct contrast to the divide-and-rule strategies on which a differentiated access to what we need to live is based. In this sense, we can think of the struggle against precariousness not so much as mobilising *for* commons, but *through* commons. Commons not as something to struggle for as a future state of things, but as part of a constituent process that we can actuate in the here and now through value-practices that are not-affirmative of capital, through a collectivisation of reproduction beyond the individual, the nuclear family or public policies.[354]

Consequently, we can confirm that the autonomist feminist discourse of the commons is not only focused on the creation of new subjectivities, but also on the material and social conditions to sustain them. As Dalla Costa points out, we cannot engage in biopolitical production without confronting the reproduction of our

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354   De Angelis, *Beginning of History*, p.238-39.

bodies, as even in the "exodus", we will still have to eat.[355] With this, Dalla Costa reminds us that material commons are key in protecting us from processes of precarisation, as without them, the pressure to fall into practices of fragmentation in order to secure our reproduction through competitive advantage is enormous. So, in our desire to move from a precarious, individualised and fragmented mode of being towards a recomposition, we might experiment with the material structures that support our lives, as well as the social skills that allow us to find what Revel refers to as ways of "being-with-others," ways of constituting a shared space.[356]

Hence, on an affective level, undoing practices of fragmentation also means to not shy away from moments of difficulty in which old modes of being seem a safe haven and alternatively, to walk collectively while asking questions, seems too full of uncertainties. It might also mean to not shy away when an individualised mode of doing appears to be the only rational mode with which to deal with others. It is in these moments that being inventive and trusting is as crucial as drawing on the growing number of shared relational techniques that help us to listen, speak, decide and be with others in respectful, supportive, non-hierarchical ways; in this way we might avoid feeling lost and disempowered in what might seem an overwhelming struggle against precariousness.[357]

Considering de-fragmentation specifically in relation to designers, could we imagine the effects of bringing an engagement with relational techniques of commoning into education, both as a subject as well as in teaching methodologies? For design students, who today are all more or less on a trajectory towards becoming precarious workers, having the time to engage with ways of doing that could support networks of solidarity, mutual aid and commoning could represent a precious resource to strengthen them for their future, to support them in dealing with precariousness and in setting up practices that critically engage – as well as inventively avoid – the pitfalls of reproducing precarising procedures. Moreover, particularly for designers wanting to engage in participatory processes, such an engagement could allow them to go into the world without reproducing, often unconsciously,

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355   With "exodus" Dalla Costa refers to Paolo Virno's terminology regarding the refusal of work. Mariarosa Dalla Costa, "Seven Good Reasons to Say "Locality"," *The Commoner*, no. 6 (2003): p.1.

356   Judith Revel, "Identity, Nature, Life: Three Biopolitical Deconstructions," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 6 (2009): p.48.

357   See for example: Vercautern, *Micropolitiques Des Groupes*. Starhawk, *The Empowerment Manual: A Guide for Collaborative Groups* (Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers, 2011); Marianella Sclavi, *Arte Di Ascoltare E Mondi Possibili: Come Si Esce Dalla Cornici Di Cui Siamo Parte* (Milano: Mondadori, 2003).

the practices of social interaction that either perpetuate fragmentation or, despite
all good intentions, keep people locked into fragmentation.

Besides this engagement with relational techniques of commoning aimed at sup-
porting the creation of equality, social justice and dis-alienation, could we imagine
the recomposition of designers to be supported by introducing them to modes of
collective organising and running of their design practices? Becoming familiar with
practices of horizontality, of dealing with shared authorship, of fair work contracts,
of unionisation and cooperatives, to name only a few, could potentially prepare
students for a way of working that does not accept the industries' demand for docile
creative workers. Moreover, could we imagine those running design schools begin-
ning to engage with the diversity of issues raised by precariousness? Could they,
for instance, intervene in the ways they structure their working contracts or dis-
tribute employment, or could they use their resources to sustain graduates who are
building up practices that are meaningful and politically engaged but perhaps not
necessarily oriented towards the market? Implementing such changes at various
levels within design education could attempt to the address fragmentation among
designers and with it, find a way to support designers interacting meaningfully with
the world.

Circulation of the commons

Most of the people interviewed for this research engage, to varying degrees, in prac-
tices of collective innovation around the commons – even if they do not necessarily
frame it in this way. Artist Kate Rich of Feral Trade experiments with ways in which
the trade of goods could follow the routes of sociality and respond to values of rec-
iprocity; educators and sociologists Katarzyna and Paweł Winiarksi run a common
university in rural Poland that aims at undoing the extreme precariousness and
marginalisation that neoliberal capitalism has created in Poland; the designers and
makers of Serpica Naro challenge the exploitation in the fashion system not only by
attacking it through direct action but also by patiently creating a counter-circuit of
garments; the performance artists who occupy the Teatro Valle in Rome, not only
create room for a politicised culture in the heart of the city, but take on the Ital-
ian legislative system to fight for the right to have the commons written into the
constitution.[358]

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358   See appendix C and Brave New Alps, "Designing Economic Cultures".

In all these cases, innovative movements against precariousness can be read as specific instances of commoning. However, if this commoning would remain limited to these instances, the mechanisms of precariousness could not really be challenged: easily self-organised groups, who, within their own circle, follow values other than those of capital, can also be pitted against each other through a need to secure their reproduction. Therefore, a continuous weaving of connections between different groups and instances of commoning is needed, a weaving together to which the skills of designers could substantially contribute. Taking up autonomist media theorist Nick Dyer-Witheford's concept of the "circulation of the common,"[359] as designers, we might imagine how to fuel the activities of de-precarising commoning by applying our skills to facilitate the planning and coordination of sharing goods, skills, knowledges, time and so on, between groups of commoners, in order to reinforce each singular processes of commoning and to thus reinforce their transformative effect on society at large.[360] To innovate as designers in relation to the circulation of the commons could, then, mean coming up with ways in which to organise resources into (re)productive ensembles that create more shared resources, which in turn might provide the basis for the formation of new commons and processes of commoning that are supportive in constructing ways out of precariousness.

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359   Dyer-Witheford is mainly referring to "the common" as theorised by Negri. For my purpose, however, I will use his concept in the plural "circulation of the commons" as it seems more appropriate in relation to undoing precarisation.

360   Nick Dyer-Witheford, "The Circulation of the Common," in *Immaterial labour, multitudes and new social subjects: class recomposition in cognitive capitalism* (King's College, University of Cambridge2006), p.4.

16. CONCLUSION OF PART 2

In Part 2 of this thesis, we set out to explore the potential inherent in the work of designers to undo procedures of precarisation as theorised by autonomist Marxists: if designers are closely involved in the production of social life itself, then this life could also be produced differently. We explored how energies, synergies and subjectivities can be produced when socially and politically engaged designers are given the space to reflect, research and bond together. However, with the Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative, we also saw the limitations such experiments encounter, especially when they struggle with a lack of material resources. To engage with how this lack could be tackled in innovative, de-precarising ways, we ultimately explored the potential held in the way resources can be shared and reproduced as common goods rather than as private, exclusive property. Considering autonomist feminist notions of the commons in relation to design practice, then, allowed us to propose how practitioners might concretely intervene in the ways time, innovations and social relations exist as structures in our lives in order that they might contribute to procedures of de-precarisation. So, can we from here imagine ways in which we apply our skills in order to bring resources that are private, public or used only by a small circle of people into a circulation that sustains the growth of alternative value-practices? Can we imagine ways in which resources of all kind might be taken out of the circuit of capital accumulation and redirected to create economic cultures that do not rely on precariousness for their functioning?

Having worked through Part 2 along this trajectory, the next step called for is again, almost inevitably, related to practice: How to pull these knowledges and insights together in a further inhabitation and experimentation? How to virtuously embed a further inhabitation in the network of people and practices generated throughout this research? How to bring these ideas for experimentation in de-precarising procedures to other emerging practices in design and beyond? Before enthusiastically setting off into practice to see what can be generated from these questions, it is time to take a breath and to dedicate a conclusion to this three-year period of research: to reconsider the ground covered so far and to evaluate the assembled tool-box in order to be ready for another immersion in the effervescent messiness of practice.

CONCLUSION

Summing up

This research has been animated by a pressing question that has emerged from practice: how to undo the precariousness that often forces designers to give up on social and political engagement in their work in order that they can make a living? To formulate a variety of situated answers to this over-arching question – as well as to the various delineations it has taken throughout the research process – this study has created series of relays between practice and theory aimed at investigating and experimenting with approaches that designers might strategically draw on for un-doing the variety of procedures that precarise them.

The trajectory of this research was marked in Part 1 and the Intermezzo by an outward movement that, starting from the personal experience of precariousness, traced – both through theory as well as practice – connections between the conditions designers experience individually, the precarising dynamics of the creative industries and the values of the capitalist economy that influence how designers work and live. This first trajectory of analysis was largely shaped by the blockages encountered during the inhabitation of *My castle is your castle,* the issues highlighted by *Designers' Inquiry* and the questions raised in discussions throughout the seminar series organised in London and Warsaw. Overall, it could be said that Part 1 and the Intermezzo demystified "doing design" as a creative activity and instead considered it as work, thus positioning this resistance to precarisation within a wider genealogy of workers' struggles. The analytical trajectory of this research was subsequently complemented by a more speculative trajectory in Part 2, exploring the de-precarising potential of noncapitalist concepts, values and strategies developed within autonomist and feminist-autonomist workers' movements. Here again, the relays created between theory and practice through inhabitations, conversations and situated research groups were crucial for giving direction to the investigation. Together with the designers of the Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative, the participants of Campus in Camps and those joining together as the New Cross Commoners, noncapitalist values were explored in practice, pushed at, questioned and enlarged, in order for them to be applicable as tools for the de-precarisation of our practices and lives.

To begin tackling the overall question that practice had set out for this research, the thesis traced how the condition of precariousness is not only restricted to designers who want to question given power relations with their work, but that, contrary to what dominant discourses within the field of design makes us believe, it is a condition that affects all designers. Here we saw how draining the effects of

insecure, contingent, flexible and underpaid work have on the present – as well as future – well-being of many designers. Furthermore, we saw how current levels of precariousness, and the procedures that produce them, have developed over the last 30+ years with the shift from Fordist to post-Fordist systems of production. In this passage, it was revealed how many aspects of the contemporary figure of the designer have emerged from that shift and whilst the professional figure of the designer at first benefitted from the move towards informational, service-based models of individualised entrepreneurship in the global North/West, it did not take long for these benefits to be undone.

From this initial overview, the research moved into an inhabitation of the first practical attempt to consider potential de-precarising strategies through the peer-to-peer sharing of resources. This attempt made use of the material resources Brave New Alps had access to at that point in the research process, i.e. the resources made available through an artist residency in Poland. The experiences and reflections generated through the three-month period of sharing resources within the framework of *My castle is your castle,* as well as the concurrent engagement with other socially and politically engaged practitioners through a series of seminars and conversations, led to the first rupture in the research trajectory. It was made evident through these activities that it was necessary to avoid initially concentrating on "material fixes" to the precariousness of designers, but instead to focus on what processes contribute to make designers' accept precarious working conditions, or even engage in practices of self-precarisation.

Thus, the research moved on to analyse how designers are made creative subjects prone to precariousness. Drawing foremost on the work of Foucault and McRobbie, patterns in design education and in the prevalent discourses of the creative industries were traced, identifying how they contribute to forming designers who are "industry-ready," i.e. ready to docilely, even eagerly, adapt to precarising working and living conditions, accepting these as the norm to which one is urged to conform in order to "make it." From this research, it emerged that in order to equip designers with the tools necessary to create and enact de-precarising socio-economic practices, their tool-box needed to be enriched with elements that allow them to recognise the precarising values, norms and procedures present within a capitalist economy and to see how these influence ways of working and formulating ambitions.

The Intermezzo, then, was dedicated to an exploration of why and how a capitalist economy "produces" precarious working conditions. It introduced Marx's

critique of the political economy and related further Marxist analyses to the working lives and practices of designers. In the first section of the Intermezzo, production and accumulation of value in a capitalist economy were considered from the workers' point of view, exploring how capitalist values play out in definitions of what is perceived as productive labour and how docile workers constantly need to be produced (and reproduced) so that they are functional to capitalist processes of accumulation. After this introductory section, the values and practices of the capital social relation were explored in terms of how they affect the ways in which designers practice time, innovation and social relations. With regards to time, it was suggested that a "use" of it that is based on individualistic rationales is eroding the grounds on which designers could formulate their struggle for better working conditions. With regards to innovation, we saw how crucial the values are with which designers judge the innovative elements of their work and how normalised capitalist values can undermine designers' abilities to really produce positive social change through their work. Finally, with regards to social relations, we saw how the competitive attitudes with which designers are expected to perform contribute to pitting livelihoods against each other, whereby debt becomes a further procedure that exacerbates precarisation through intense processes of individualisation.

As a whole, the Intermezzo allowed for a better understanding of values and process underlying precariousness. It provided the opportunity for a strategic questioning of the values and practices that, in the field of design, are generally taken as the norm. It also introduced a broader sense of the historical development of precarising procedures and with it, the notion that these are procedures that can be struggled against, modified and undone. Here, it became very clear that strategies against precarisation need to take a collective dimension if they are to make a difference to more than just single individuals or privileged groups of designers. Therefore, this Marxist analysis introduced a series of unsettling questions to disrupt the apparent consensus surrounding how designers need to function in order to make a living. This passage, although destabilising the ground on which many designers base their work, equips designers with analytical tools they can draw on so as to avoid unknowingly, and unwillingly, reproducing ways of doing, organising and thinking that ultimately contribute to render people precarious.

However, since the question of this research was not only how designers can begin to see and understand procedures of precarisation, but also how they can undo them through the creation of other economic cultures, the second part of the

thesis explored autonomist- and feminist-autonomist-inspired proposals of how to "resist and produce, to resist through production, to produce while resisting."[361] Taking its lead from the experiences and theoretical relays triggered by *My castle is your castle*, which brought to the fore the extent to which designers take precarising modes of working as the norm, Part 2 engaged in the potential for counter-conduct and other ways of doing as theorised by autonomist thinkers. In the first section, following Autonomist proposals to conceptualise design work as biopolitical labour, the potential for counter-conduct inherent to this kind of activity was teased out by framing it as key to creating cultures that allow for the emergence of subjectivities that refuse individualisation and exploitation. With regards the creation of cultures which foster "rebellious" subjectivities, was that of the common, i.e. of the collective production of languages, codes, knowledges and social life that function according to noncapitalist categories of property and that allow for a substantial "becoming other" to unravel.

The research then traced the development of a second inhabitation, the *Cantiere per pratiche non-affirmative*, which relayed the concept of biopolitical labour and the commons back to practice. It consisted in the living within a support structure for socially and politically engaged designers in the form of a shared residency for eight weeks, grounded in a desire to foster processes of "becoming other" along noncapitalist, and thus potentially de-precarising, values. Reflection on the experience of these two months, as well as its important developments beyond the period in Milan, brought to the fore the extent to which a collective questioning of the market- and work-logic that renders designers precarious – while at the same time attempting to live out other ways of (collective) practicing – is the very activity that creates a common ground between people and constitutes the support structure that allows them to transform their normalised ways of relating, doing and being. However, this inhabitation again brought an acute awareness of the fact that whilst intellectual and affective processes of transformation are empowering for those involved, they do not immediately undo the very material necessity to make a living through work that is still precarious. Despite the social and intellectual common being immensely important, it does not immediately have the ability to sustain the material aspects of everyone's livelihood.

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361   My own translation of „Opporsi e produrre, opporsi producendo, produrre opponendosi (…)", Judith Revel, "Per Una Biopolitica Della Moltitudine," in *Biopolitica Minore*, ed. Paolo Perticari (Roma: manifestolibri, 2003).

Reflection on the strengths and limitations of this second inhabitation prompted further investigation of how designers might use their skills, knowledges and other resources in order to create a common that could simultaneously undo the social and material procedures of precarisation. To develop the designers' toolbox beyond Italian autonomist concepts of the common, the thesis explored how notions of the commons formulated by autonomist feminist activists and theorists are informed by an attention to how social and material resources can be activated in order to undo the continuous pitting of livelihoods against each other. Their reflections, which focus on care, interdependence and the active practice of commoning, were then tested through collective practice-based engagements within the context of the lives of people in the Palestinian refugee camp of Dheisheh and in the London neighbourhood of New Cross, both of which underlined the feasibility and strength of practices of commoning when given the possibility to develop. Taking inspiration from the practice-theory relays created through these collective engagements, the second part of the thesis concluded with a series of proposals of how designers could re-orient their practices of time, innovation and social relation in order to break out of capitalist definitions of which activities are worthy of our time. These proposed a redefinition in noncapitalist terms of what constitutes a valuable design outcome and how to infuse social relations with solidarity and mutuality, rather than with competition and individualisation. Here, the focus was on how design practices could be mobilised along the noncapitalist values of the commons in order to create support structures that allow for de-precarising procedures to be played out at a variety of empowering collective levels. This passage ultimately revealed how, by connecting up a diverse range of practices of commoning and counter-conduct, designers can intervene in generating de-precarising processes, both at the level of access to material resources for reproduction, as well as in the production of subjectivities that refuse to be governed along capitalist values.

Overall concluding thoughts

Given the ground covered by this research, what overall proposition can we draw from it that might effectively support designers to sustain socially and politically engaged practices? The proposition I extract from it is simple in its formulation, but has important practical implications: it is that socially and politically engaged designers not only focus on the content of what they produce, but also on how the

values of that content are synchronised with how one practices and lives. Emerging from the research was a need to generate a de-precarising culture and ethics *among* designers that goes beyond content produced, a need to generate ways of relating to each other that both undo self-precarisation and collectively challenge the exposure to precarisation from multiple directions. Establishing such a culture and an ethics that breaks with the individualisation and competition currently experienced at all levels of a designer's life, would finally indicate that we see ourselves making socially and politically engaged work not *despite* precariousness, but *against* it.

This proposition echoes Foucault's proposal to construct not only one's discourses, but one's way of life as a strategy of resistance: to engage in ways of doing and relating to others that are not immediately subjected to the normative system of institutions and knowledges which have, for centuries, imposed a specific kind of individuality on us.[362] It also echoes Judith Revel's reflections on Foucault's late work on subjectivity and ethics, in which she proposes a strategy of counter-conduct in order to keep discourses and practices tightly knit together, to the extent that one should not simply live according to ideas, but to live the ideas themselves.[363] To propose that designers adapt their ways of life as strategies to resist precarisation, suggests transforming their lives into the very material of politics. For design practice, this implies a shift from merely proliferating signs and artefacts of resistance, to proliferating ways of doing and relating that refuse to be governed at *all* levels by the more – or less subtle – procedures of precarisation.

In this sense, the overall proposition of this thesis is that designers contribute to create "a new economy of power relations,"[364] to begin to experiment in all areas of life with the noncapitalist values explored in this thesis. It encourages designers to activate their de-precarising potential by creating, extending and also defending, collective socio-economic practices that do not constantly reinforce and reproduce precarising procedures. To be clear, this proposal is not intended as a prescription, but it is certainly addressed to all designers. Given the systemic nature of precarising procedures and their current rapid expansion due to (or justified

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362   Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), p.216.

363   "Foucault, le parole e i poteri," lecture by Judith Revel, Department of Philosophy, University of Palermo, 11 March 2013, my translation

364   Foucault, "Subject and Power," p.210.

by) the economic crisis, we cannot imagine undoing them if not through a series of collective and connected multi-faceted experimentations. Whilst the findings of this research are undoubtedly informed by my own situatedness in life and design practice, as well as by the very specific inhabitations, conversations, seminars and workshops that I have participated in over the last three years, I nevertheless intend for the pratico-theoretical tools developed here to find users beyond myself and the collectives I am involved in. I hope that they be mobilised, experimented with and expanded by others, in order to orient their practices more strategically towards the creation and the interlinking of de-precarising economies of support.

Personal (en)closures and openings

Despite my positive attitude towards the overall direction of this research, there are days when I fear that this whole research endeavour might not have any significant impact beyond my own accreditation as a design researcher within a neoliberal university. These are the days when the steps taken over the last three years seem too small and the compromises made along the way seem too big. These are also the days when the design profession seems inevitably lost to any possibility of change and a certain fatigue results from the constant need to justify ways of doing that try to break with the norm. These are the days, when in my various collectives, the pressure to make a living in conventional ways pushes our line between acceptable and unacceptable decisions forcefully towards the latter. I would say that these are the difficult moments that I would like steer clear of at the risk of restricting my imagination. However, I also know that these moments are important because they are a very clear reminder of the obstacles this thesis wants to undo.

Indeed, on the good days, I feel incredibly energised by this research and connected to the people with whom I am undertaking various de-precarising explorations. These are the days when openings are discovered which get me excited about what we could be doing next, when I can look back and see how much of my/our doing and thinking has changed through this research. In these moments, I am unconcerned having to defend our choices and I am not worried about falling, because I am certain that together, we will get up again. These are the days when I can see how supporting the cause of socially and politically engaged designers adds to the bigger picture of radical social change. These are the days when I sit around a table with my fellow conspirators cleaning runner beans for dinner and planning the next steps in turning things upside down.

Then, of course, there are the normal days, when none of the negative or positive thoughts take over. These are the days when I see how this research is one of many efforts across Europe to deal with the proliferation of precarising procedures due to (or justified by) the economic crisis. These are the days when I can weigh the blocking elements against the encouraging ones, when I (or rather I, together with others) can think strategically about how to navigate the complexities of undoing precariousness, when I perceive our de-precarising becoming-other taking place in everyday decisions. These are, then, the days when Fabio and I, but also my fellows of the Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative and the New Cross Commoners, are able to realistically imagine what to do next, when we are able to plan how to mobilise and interconnect the material, immaterial and social resources we have in order to build support structures that allow us to sustain our livelihoods in de-precarising ways whilst producing socially and politically engaged work.

The effects which the practice-theory relays created throughout this research have had on my practice (and life) with Fabio are substantial: we have, for instance, begun to consider how to reconfigure our practice and construct a resisting way of life through a de-precarising economy of support for ourselves, as well as for others, which interconnects the social and material resources we can rely on in the places we come from in the Italian Alps. Could we connect those elements with the knowledges and (real-life) social networks we have created throughout Europe and beyond? Could we connect these elements in ways that foster practices of commoning in the long-term and at multiple levels, locally and trans-locally, among the people with whom we would share a semi-rural space, as well as among our more widely distributed network of socially and politically engaged practitioners? Could we connect them whilst simultaneously nudging at design education by means of becoming a point of reference for diverse, non-normalised ways of working and living as designers? The answers to these questions – as well as the blockages we will undoubtedly encounter in trying to establish and live out such an economy – are a matter we are eager to explore beyond this thesis. In terms of this further exploration, we acknowledge that there is a need to work through further practice-theory relays in order to investigate, for example, the role technology (in its broadest sense) can play in both strengthening and weakening a multi-faceted support structure, or the precarising roles of gender, race and the global division of labour. Therefore, I would like to close by reminding our future selves that when we want to undo a precarising economic system that constantly builds its strength

on dividing people – according to gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, and so on and so forth – then we need to direct our attention and care towards undoing these power differentials in our movements of creation.[365]

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365 Silvia Federici, "Political Work with Women and as Women in the Present Conditions: Interview with Silvia Federici," http://www.reclamationsjournal.org/issue03_silvia_federici.htm.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
DESIGNING ECONOMIC CULTURES SEMINAR SERIES

Between June and November 2011, I organised six seminars at Goldsmiths that revolved around the initial questions of this research: How can designers avoid the conventional choice between either financial stability or critically engaged work? Which work settings may positively affect their abilities to address contested social, political and environmental issues? What alternative economic values and strategies do designers adopt to overcome precariousness? What can be learnt from the experiences of self-organised citizens and workers in other fields?

See the following pages for:
-   posters with topic and guest(s) of each seminar

For the issues that came up during the seminars, see:
www.designingeconomiccultures.net

DESIGNING ECONOMIC CULTURES

SEMINAR SERIES

CREATIVE SURVIVAL

DEALING WITH PRECARIOUS WORKING CONDITIONS

ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR WORKING LIFE AFTER GRADUATION?

IS YOUR FINANCIAL UNCERTAINTY INFLUENCING YOUR PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING?

WHAT SUPPORT STRUCTURES CAN WE IMAGINE IN THE FACE OF THE COMPETITIVE JOB MARKET?

WEDNESDAY, 8 JUNE 2011

5PM

HEXAGON

LOCKWOOD BUILDING

1ST FLOOR

GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE

ALL WELCOME

CAROLINA BANDINELLI, PHD STUDENT IN THE MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT AT GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE, WORKING ON PRECARITY.

BIANCA ELZENBAUMER, PHD STUDENT IN THE DESIGN DEPARTMENT AT GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE, INVESTIGATING THE RELATION BETWEEN PRECARITY, COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE AND THE PRODUCTION OF CRITICALLY ENGAGED WORK. SHE IS PART OF THE DESIGN COLLECTIVE BRAVE NEW ALPS.

PRECARIOUS WORKERS BRIGADE, A UK-BASED GROWING GROUP OF PRECARIOUS WORKERS IN CULTURE & EDUCATION, CALLING OUT IN SOLIDARITY WITH ALL THOSE STRUGGLING TO MAKE A LIVING IN THIS CLIMATE OF INSTABILITY AND ENFORCED AUSTERITY.

KIRSTEN FORKERT, ARTIST, CRITIC, ACTIVIST AND PHD STUDENT IN THE MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT AT GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE. HER RESEARCH IS ABOUT ARTISTIC LABOUR IN RELATION TO POSTINDUSTRIALISM, AS WELL AS LABOUR ORGANISING IN THE ARTS.

VLAD MORARIU, PHILOSOPHER AND PHD STUDENT AT LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY. THERE HE IS AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE POLITICIZED PRACTICE RESEARCH GROUP AND RUNS THE OPEN SEMINAR *ART AND THE ARTIST IN THE AGE OF THE PRECARIAT*.

DESIGNING ECONOMIC CULTURES

SEMINAR SERIES

WEDNESDAY, 15.06.2011

5PM

HEXAGON

LOCKWOOD BUILDING

1ST FLOOR

GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE

ALL WELCOME

THE COUNTER-INTERNSHIP GUIDE

DON'T BE A COMPETITIVE INTERN, BE A COLLECTIVE INTERN AND LEARN

DO YOU FEAR THAT YOU WILL NEED TO WORK FOR FREE AFTER GRADUATION?

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU MAY GET OUT OF WORKING FOR FREE?

HOW CAN WE IMAGINE AN INTERNSHIP OTHERWISE?

THE CARROT WORKERS' COLLECTIVE
A LONDON-BASED GROUP OF EX-INTERNS, STUDENTS, RESEARCHERS AND CULTURAL WORKERS, MAINLY FROM THE CREATIVE AND CULTURAL SECTORS, WHO REGULARLY MEET TO THINK TOGETHER AROUND THE CONDITIONS OF FREE LABOUR IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES.

HATO PRESS
A LONDON-BASED PLATFORM OFFERING AFFORDABLE PRINTING TO DESIGNERS, ARTISTS, ILLUSTRATORS, WRITERS, SCIENTISTS, ETC., THUS GIVING THEM THE POSSIBILITY TO PUBLISH THEIR OWN WORK.

DESIGNING ECONOMIC CULTURES

SEMINAR SERIES

CREATIVE AND PRECARIOUS

EXPLORING DESIGNERLY WORKING CONDITIONS

HOW ARE INSECURE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS IN THE CULTURAL INDUSTRIES THEORISED?

WHAT ARE THE GENERAL SYMPTOMS OF PRECARITY CREATIVES NEED TO DEAL WITH?

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE?

WEDNESDAY, 12.10.2011

5PM

HEXAGON

LOCKWOOD BUILDING

1ST FLOOR

GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE

ALL WELCOME

BRIDGET CONOR
LECTURER AT THE CULTURE, MEDIA AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES DEPARTMENT AT KING'S COLLEGE LONDON. HER RESEARCH INTERESTS ARE AT THE INTERSECTION OF SCREEN PRODUCTION STUDIES AND CRITICAL CREATIVE LABOUR STUDIES. HER DOCTORAL RESEARCH, UNDERTAKEN AT GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE, FOCUSED ON SCREENWRITING AS CREATIVE LABOUR IN THE UK.

DESIGNING ECONOMIC CULTURES

SEMINAR SERIES

A MATTER OF ORGANISATION

WHERE TO SETTLE BETWEEN SELF-MANAGEMENT AND SELF-ORGANISATION?

WHAT INSPIRATION CAN WE DRAW FROM ORGANISATIONAL FORMATS THAT ARE OUT THERE?

HOW CAN WE ORGANISE COLLECTIVELY TO BE MORE RESILIENT?

WEDNESDAY, 26.10.2011

5PM

HEXAGON

LOCKWOOD BUILDING

1ST FLOOR

GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE

ALL WELCOME

VALERIA GRAZIANO IS A PH.D. CANDIDATE AT QUEEN MARY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON, AT THE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT. WITH HER RESEARCH SHE WANTS TO REFRAME THE CONVIVIAL CHARACTER OF ACTION AS A MOMENT OF THE INSTITUENT/INSTITUED CYCLE. USING THE APPROACH OF INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS, SHE EXAMINES THE DEVELOP- MENT OF FORMATS OF ENCOUNTERS IN ARTISTIC PRACTICES, IN PEDAGOGY AND IN POLITICAL ORGANIZING.

DESIGNING ECONOMIC CULTURES

SEMINAR SERIES

WEDNESDAY, 09.11.2011

5PM

HEXAGON

LOCKWOOD BUILDING

1ST FLOOR

GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE

ALL WELCOME

PUBLIC WORKS - EXCHANGING PRACTICES

SPEAKING ABOUT THE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THEIR COLLECTIVE AND PRACTICE

INTRODUCING TWO PROJECTS WITH DIFFERENT ECONOMIES

MAPPING THE GROWING INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF COLLEAGUES, SITES AND WORK

KATHRIN BÖHM
CO-FUNDER OF LONDON BASED ART AND ARCHITECTURE COLLECTIVE PUBLIC WORKS, TOGETHER WITH ANDREAS LANG AND TORANGE KHONSARI. PUBLIC WORKS HAS BEEN GROWING ORGANI- CALLY SINCE 1999 AND TAKES PLACE IN DIFFERENT CONSTELLATIONS OF PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS. ALL PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS TAKE PLACE WITHIN AND WORK TOWARDS PUBLIC SPACE, WORKING FOR A DIVERSE RANGE OF CLIENTS, COMMISSIONERS AND ON SELF-INITIATED PROGRAMMES. HER TEACHING AND RESEARCH WORKS INCLUDES AN AHRC RESEARCH FELLOW- SHIP A THE SCHOOL OF ART AND DESIGN, UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMP- TON AND RUNNING INTER 10 AT THE ARCHITECTURAL ASSOCIATION SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE TOGETHER WITH AN- DREAS LANG.

DESIGNING ECONOMIC CULTURES

THINKING CREATIVELY ABOUT ANTICAPITALISM

SEMINAR SERIES

HOW ARE CITIES BEING ENCLOSED WITHIN THE LOGIC OF NEOLIBERALISM AND CAPITAL ACCUMULATION AND WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES?

WHAT URBAN COMMONS ARE BEING ENCLOSED?

HOW CAN STRUGGLES AGAINST URBAN ENCLOSURE CIRCULATE WITH CREATIVE PROJECTS OF COMMONING?

WEDNESDAY, 23.11.2011

5PM

HEXAGON

LOCKWOOD BUILDING

1ST FLOOR

GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE

ALL WELCOME

STUART HODKINSON, LECTURER IN CRITICAL HUMAN GEOGRAPHY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS, WHOSE MAIN RESEARCH FOCUSES ON THE 'NEW URBAN ENCLOSURES', SPECIFICALLY RE-EXAMINING THE MOTIVATIONS, MECHANISMS AND IMPACTS OF HOUSING PRIVATISATION AND REGENERATION IN BRITAIN.

ANDRE PUSEY IS A PHD STUDENT IN CRITICAL HUMAN GEOGRAPHY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS. HIS RESEARCH IS INTO SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE MYRIAD WAYS IN WHICH THEY PRODUCE COMMONS AS PART OF THEIR ACTIVISM.

TOM GILLESPIE IS A PHD STUDENT IN THE SCHOOL OF GEOGRAPHY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS. HIS RESEARCH CONCERNS URBAN DEVELOPMENT, CLASS STRUGGLE AND THE 'RIGHT TO THE CITY'.

APPENDIX B

***DESIGNERS' INQUIRY* – REPORT**

Between February 2012 and April 2013, together with the Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative, I worked on an inquiry into the socio-economic conditions of designers in Italy.

See the following pages for:
-   the report of the inquiry in English

To download a digital copy of it, or to access the Italian version, visit:
www.pratichenonaffermative.net/inquiry/en

DESIGNERS'

DESIGN INQUIRY

an inquiry
on the
socio-economic
condition of
designers
in Italy

INDEX

INTRODUCTION

Over the last two years, Italy has seen many cultural workers standing on the frontline of the fight against the current management of the economic crisis. The structural precariousness of everyday life, the budget cuts to culture and welfare, the lack of protection and support around work, amongst other social and economic changes, drove workers to mobilise. These experiences of mobilisation were, and still are, based on the refusal of a culture and an education that shape creative subjects as "industry-ready." At the basis of these mobilisations lies the awareness that creative/cognitive work represents a fundamental economic resource of the current economic system and that, therefore, it is necessary to reclaim and redistribute the wealth that has been created through it. In parallel, these mobilisations took on the idea that today everything produced, thanks also to the possibilities of information technology, embodies the autonomy of co-operation and collective intelligence.

How do designers insert themselves into the recent struggles and experiences of self-education? To what extent do they realize that as producers of knowledge and languages, they are an essential dowel of the mechanisms of production and accumulation? How do they deal with a professional world in deep and constant change?

The investigation *Designers' Inquiry* arises from this questioning. It also arises from a number of difficulties and personal experiences which, as designers, led us to long for a radical change in our lives that allows for a constant discussion and re-imagination of the modalities, conditions and objectives of our work. Here, hence, the attempt to create a tool capable of picturing designers' conditions of life and work in Italy, while at the same time being a tool to initiate a dialogue and self-reflection on our profession.

Designers' Inquiry is, therefore, an investigation into the social and economic profile of who today defines him- or herself as "designer," including in this definition a broad range of overlapping competences (graphic, web and product design, animation, fashion, illustration, architecture, design research, etcetera). The project was launched in April 2012 through an anonymous online questionnaire and, within two months, saw the participation of 767 designers. This publication is the account of the data and the testimonies collected.

However, this account should not be considered only as a public condemnation: difficulties encountered by cultural workers have been widely documented by various sociologists and research institutes. *Designers' Inquiry* is rather based on the model of co-research that emerged in the sixties in the context of Italian workerism which, instead of considering the people questioned exclusively as statistics, tries to transform the methods of social science into tools dedicated to class struggle and to the production of new forms of knowledge. It aims therefore, at eliminating the distance between researchers and subjects of research in order to establish a unique subject, which is at the same time participant and leader of the inquiry in progress.

Inspired by this approach, the 78 questions elaborated in the *Designers' Inquiry* made an attempt to get the participants involved in a reflection on their own conditions, thus opening a path, in the context of situations of conflict and unease, for possible co-operations and common struggles. A first "collective step" has been taken in the consecutive phases of the inquiry: the evaluation and conceptual, visual and textual elaboration of the data have been developed publicly through workshop to which various designers with an interest in the project participated. Indeed, the long-term goal of the *Designers' Inquiry* is to keep on producing shared tools for analysis and collective action that aim at intervening in the current state of affairs.

In which direction, therefore, to operate? Considering that in many cases we are our own bosses, how could conditions of work be improved, payments raised, physical and mental health be preserved, without giving up on a critical as well as a qualitative approach to our work? We know we want to defy precariousness, but to focus exclusively on the precarious dimension of the design service itself does not seem to be the ideal strategy. The objective is not (or at least not for everyone), to go back to a single, lifelong and somewhat rigid guaranteed job structure. It rather seems important to reflect on how the ways of producing the world have radically evolved and the extent to which precarious labour can no more be considered a temporary state people pass through before reaching a more traditional and stable professional position.

The questions elaborated in the *Designers' Inquiry* helped us to deconstruct the concept of precariousness in its varied manifestations in the designers' everyday lives: we must now recompose it and, at least as long as models of development do not drastically change, make it bearable, while joining forces to construct and reach common goals. In this complex context, are designers able to become active subjects of social transformation?

Construction site for non-affirmative practice
We are a group of young Italian designers who met in autumn
2011 in Milan, during a collectivized artist residency at Careof,
a non-profit space for contemporary art inside the Fabbrica del
Vapore. Since then, we've been working to pose questions, study
and experiment with support structures for critically engaged
design practices.

As designers, we feel deeply involved not only in the making
of objects, but also in the creation of relations, processes,
languages and collective imaginaries. As a consequence, we
believe that our research should raise questions about what
kind of society we want to contribute to with our work, and to
question the role we play in the economic system we are living in.

The Construction site is a virtual and physical space where
we carry on this research and where we try to translate it into
practice according to modalities that are verified step by step.

Credits and acknowledgements
The realisation of *Designers' Inquiry* would not have been
possible without the people who responded to it and who
helped us to circulate it.

Special thanks to Careof DOCVA as well as FDV Residency
who hosted us for various workshops, Julia Franz and
Isabelle Attali for the translation into English, Bridget Conor for
the proof-reading and Stefano Fiemazzo for the work on the
database.

We would further like to thank everyone who worked with
us on it, in particular, Dario Banfi, Elisabetta Calabritto, Giulia
Ciliberto, Ana Cisneros, Paolo Ciuccarelli, Francesca Depalma,
Angelo Gramegna, Emilio Grazzi, Silvio Lorusso, Cristina
Pasquale, Roberto Picerno, Gianluca Seta, Silvia Sfligiotti, Daria
Tommasi.

Notes
In the following report, the term "designer" will be used many
times. We thus want to specify that the term always refers to
the people who have participated in the inquiry and who thus
constitute our sample. The data and testimonies are hence to
be interpreted considering the original context in which they
have been collected.

The *Designer's Inquiry* was publicly launched on April
17th 2012 during the Milan Design Week at the non profit
organization for the promotion of contemporary artistic research
Careof/DOCVA. For the following two months, everyone
interested in the inquiry had the possibility to complete the
online questionnaire.

Designers' Inquiry is a self-financed project by the
Construction site for non-affirmative practice and does not claim
absolute scientific reliability.

single response

multiple response

open response

WHO PARTICIPATED (1-7)

With a degree and without children

The inquiry mainly involved the participation of designers between the ages of 21 and 35 (with a peak of participation between 26 and 30 years), of Italian nationality, who have completed a university degree.

At the time of participation, the majority of the respondents declared to be working full-time and to not have children.

1. Sex

	count	%
male	404	52,7
female	355	46,3
not responded	8	1,0
total	767	

2. Age

20 or less	3	0,4
21-25	209	27,3
26-30	295	38,5
31-35	122	15,9
36-40	62	8,1
41-45	33	4,3
46-50	17	2,2
51-55	8	1,0
56-60	2	0,3
61-65	3	0,4
66-70	1	0,1
did not respond	12	1,6
	767	

3. Nationality

Italian	737	96,1
other	23	3,0
did not respond	7	1,0
	767	

4. Educational qualification

bachelor degree	257	33,5
MA (2 years)	256	33,3
secondary school	145	18,9
postgraduate certificate	32	4,2
MA (1 year)	25	3,3
academic diploma	11	1,4
professional qualification	11	1,4
MA (2 yrs) + PgCert	9	1,2
PhD	4	0,5
middle school	4	0,5
no title	2	0,3
other	2	0,3
did not respond	9	1,2
	767	

5. Are you currently studying?

no	514	67,0
yes, full-time	128	16,7
yes, part-time	111	14,5
did not respond	14	1,8
	767	

6. Are you currently working?

yes, full-time	389	50,7
yes, part-time	139	18,1
no	135	17,6
other	95	12,4
did not respond	9	1,2
	767	

7. Do you have children?

no	684	89,2
1	46	6,0
2	25	3,3
3	4	0,5
4	1	0,1
more than 4	0	0,0
did not respond	7	0,9
	767	

FAMILY BACKGROUND (8-14)

The family (often) provides the house

The typical designer outlined by the questionnaire comes from a middle class family that is unrelated to the so-called creative industries, and very rarely has a migrant background.

From the listed professional profiles, one can deduce that, in order to progress in their professional career, only a few designers can count on strategic relationships or on tools (such as workshops or studio spaces) deriving from their family background. However, the housing situation of these designers remains rather tied to the conditions of their family of origin or of their partner. If in fact 43% live in rented spaces, 39% live in homes owned by their parents or partners.

8. You are living...

with your partner	248	32,3
with your parent(s)	224	29,2
with friends	156	20,3
on your own	127	16,6
other	5	0,7
did not respond	7	0,9
	767	

9. The house you mainly live in is...

rented	326	42,5
the property of your family/partner	296	38,6
your property	124	16,2
other	13	1,7
did not respond	8	1,0
	767	

10. What is (was) your mother's profession?

housewife	200	26,1
employee	165	21,5
teacher	145	18,9
worker	31	4,0
storekeeper	22	2,9
social worker	19	2,9
seamstress	16	2,5
nurse	16	2,1
self-employed	15	2,1
designer/illustrator	14	2,0
accountant	12	1,8
doctor	11	1,6
craftswoman	10	1,4
sales clerk	10	1,3
manager	10	1,3
physical therapist	9	1,3
professor	8	1,2
entrepreneur	6	1,0
chef	4	0,8
architect	4	0,5
janitor	4	0,5
farmer	3	0,5
pharmacist	3	0,4
lawyer	3	0,4
hotel owner	2	0,4
law enforcement agent	2	0,4
sales representative	2	0,3
tax advisor	2	0,3
other*	14	2,0
not responded	5	0,7
	767	

* other professions specified:
unemployed, municipal police officer, railroad worker, bartender, obstetrician, security guard, toy librarian, nanny, insurance agent, call centre operator, naturalist, engineer, farm hand, agronomist

11. Indicate your mother's educational qualification

secondary school	278	36,2
university degree	167	21,8
middle school	146	19,0
primary school	47	6,1
academic diploma	5	0,7
no title	4	0,5
PhD	1	0,1
other	12	1,6
I don't remember	93	12,1
did not respond	14	1,8
	767	

12. What is (was) your father's profession?

employee	139	18,1
worker	68	8,9
manager	39	5,0
teacher	38	4,9
self-employed	37	4,8
storekeeper	30	3,9
entrepreneur	30	3,9
craftsman	30	3,9
doctor	26	3,4
designer/illustrator	23	3,0
architect	20	2,6
professor	18	2,3
engineer	17	2,2
surveyor	16	2,1
law enforcement agent	16	2,1
sales representative	15	2,0
mechanic	13	1,7
nurse	10	1,3
programmer	10	1,3
railroad worker	10	1,3
truck driver	7	0,9
electrician	7	0,9
farmer	6	0,8
retired	6	0,8
chef	5	0,6
dentist	4	0,5
chemist	4	0,5
janitor/porter	4	0,5
administrator	3	0,4
insurance agent	3	0,4
unemployed	3	0,4
lawyer	3	0,4
consultant	3	0,4
driver	3	0,4
plumber	3	0,4
sound technician	3	0,4
decorator	3	0,4
car electrician	2	0,3
pilot	2	0,3
accountant (tax)	2	0,3
body shop worker	2	0,3
carpenter	2	0,3
butcher	2	0,3
radiologist	2	0,3
other*	59	7,7
did not respond	19	2,5
	767	

* some of the other professions specified:
condominium administrator, agronomist, goldsmith, port worker, public health inspector, optician, lifeguard, bartender, unionist, accountant, administrator, pastry cook, musician, geologist, baker, biologist, economist, hotel owner, herbalist, farm hand, shepherd

13. Indicate your father's educational qualification

secondary school	288	37,5
university degree	184	24,0
middle school	128	16,7
primary school	41	5,3
PhD	5	0,7
academic diploma	2	0,3
no title	2	0,3
other	5	0,7
I don't remember	93	12,1
did not respond	19	2,5
	767	

14. Are your parents or grandparents immigrants?

no	672	87,6
yes	44	5,7
just one of them	35	4,6
other	7	0,9
did not respond	9	1,2
	767	

WORKING CONDITIONS (15-34)

One out of three works more than one job
Among the participants who considers himself/herself as a "designer," the majority manages to work in his/her field of expertise (both as freelancer and employee), but for more than a third it is necessary to supplement their wages by carrying out other jobs. Among secondary jobs and occasional services, designers, after their primary working hours, are employed in a variety of sectors.

The VAT number blackmail
About 40% of designers have registered a VAT number at least once, and among them the percentage is high (33%), of those who registered on a more or less direct request from the studio in which they are working or worked. This data, compared to the percentage related to the types of contracts, shows that in all likelihood, many designers with a VAT number work in a studio according to modalities that are characteristic of people on a stable contract (set hours, scheduled vacations, work on location), but without enjoying the social protection such contracts guarantee (regular wages, maternity/paternity leave, sick leave, etcetera).

A network of contacts is essential
The network of contacts and direct relationships to people seem fundamental to obtain design commissions: in 26% of cases, one obtains such jobs through friendships and in 28% of cases, thanks to previous collaborations. Entrepreneurialism (such as proposing your services to a potential client) and word of mouth seem to be a valid supplementary tools for accessing work.

15. In what area is your main professional occupation?

design	589	76,8
I don't work	90	11,7
other*	81	10,6
did not respond	7	0,9
	767	

* some other areas specified:
catering industry, journalism, construction industry, photography, security/surveillance, retail trade, business development

16. What is your main professional position?

freelancer	317	41,3
employee	169	22,0
studio owner	81	10,6
intern	59	7,7
other	42	5,5
did not respond	99	12,9
	767	

17. Do you have a contract?

no	443	57,8
yes, specify*	216	28,2
did not respond	108	14,0
	767	

*		
Co.co.pro.	53	27,1
open-ended contract	50	25,6
fixed-term contract	25	12,8
apprenticeship	14	7,2
educational placement	11	5,6
occasional collaboration	10	5,1
consultation with VAT	7	3,6
bursary or research fellowships	5	2,6
on-call contract	5	2,6
Co.co.co.	3	1,5
other	12	6,1
total contracts specified	195	

18.1. Do you have a second occupation?

no	386	50,3
yes	279	36,4
did not respond	102	13,3
	767	

18.2. If yes, in what area is your secondary profession?

design	153	54,8
other*	126	45,1
	279	

* some other areas specified:
restoration, teaching, agriculture, photography, copywriting, translation, baby sitting, engineering, catering industry

19. If you have a secondary profession, what is your professional position?

freelancer	171	61,3
employee	27	9,7
studio owner	10	3,6
intern	5	1,8
other	53	19,0
did not respond	13	4,7
	279	

20. If you have a secondary profession, do you have a contract?

no	216	77,4
yes, specify*	56	20,0
did not respond	7	2,5
	279	

*		
Co.co.pro.	11	22,4
occasional collaboration	10	20,4
fixed-term contract	8	16,3
on-call contract	6	12,2
consultation with VAT	4	8,1
open-ended contract	2	4,1
Co.co.co.	2	4,1
research fellowship	1	2,0
educational placement	1	2,0
other	4	8,1
total contracts specified	49	

21. Do you have additional jobs?

no	367	47,8
yes, specify*	297	38,7
did not respond	103	13,4
	767	

*		
graphic designer	31	17,0
teacher/university lecturer	14	7,7
promoter/hostess	10	5,5
waiter	9	4,9
private tutor	8	4,4
web designer	7	3,8
various jobs	7	3,8
musician	6	3,3
baby sitter	5	2,7
consultant	4	2,2
illustrator	4	2,2
rendering and photoshop technician	4	2,2

animator	3	1,6
bartender	3	1,6
interior designer	3	1,6
photographer	3	1,6
journalist	3	1,6
seamstress	2	1,6
warehouse keeper	2	1,1
craftsman	2	1,1
farm hand	2	1,1
events organiser	2	1,1
dealer	2	1,1
receptionist	2	1,1
other	43	23,6
total jobs specified	182	

22. Have you registered a VAT number as a freelance worker?

no	369	48,0
yes	301	39,2
did not respond	97	12,7
	767	

23. If yes, why did you register a VAT number?

personal necessity	200	66,4
on request of the studio	98	32,6
other	3	1,0
	301	

24. How are you usually accessing commissioned work?

people I already worked with	437	27,8
friends	409	26,0
public tender or pitches	184	11,7
relatives	125	8,0
networking events	97	6,2
I don't work on commission	77	4,9
ads	74	4,7
proposing collaborations	12	0,8
word of mouth	12	0,8
contacted by the client	9	0,6
personal website	8	0,5
social networks	7	0,4
thanks to past work	4	0,3
other	7	0,4
did not respond	110	7,0
	1572	

IT HAPPENS
THAT I MAKE UP
MY INCOME AS
A BARTENDER,
DECORATOR,
SOCIAL WORKER,
NIGHT GUARDIAN,
WAREHOUSE KEEPER.

"Junior" salaries for ever?

Most participants work on average between 35 and 55 hours a week, in other words from 7 to 11 hours per day, within a hypothetical "5-day working week."

The designer's average net salary tends to be lower than the national average: if an Italian worker monthly makes about 1,300 /month (data: Istat 2011), the majority of designers earn less than 1,000 €/month.

However, it is necessary to note that (again according to Istat data) in the first two years of work, juniors or new recruits generally receive wages clearly inferior to their older fellow workers, equivalent to about 900 €/month. Considering the relatively young age of the participants to this inquiry, they could be included in the last income bracket mentioned, but even in that case the question remains: for how long are designers paid as "juniors" or "new recruits" within the context of the creative industries?

Unpaid overtime and irregular income

Most designers are paid monthly or at the end of the project but often with a delay. This fact allows us to deduce that for freelancers or designers on project-related contracts, this results in the difficulty of maintaining steady earnings inasmuch as payments vary according to the client's schedule and obviously, on the duration of the project. In 56% of cases, overtime does not get paid or is paid only occasionally; when paid, a standard rate is most often applied, and not an overtime rate, or work is traded with " favours and flexibility on leave and being late, concert tickets or free time."

The monetary value of one's work is determined in a rather confused way according to the circumstances: the most widespread modality is a calculation relative to the type of project (for 30 %), followed by the effective working time (for 23 %) and on a pre-set budget basis (for 21%). Very few people follow scales of fees, a tool which could, if up-dated and flexible, be an efficient strategy to fight the market logic, which aims at depressing fees. The German association of communication designers BDG (Berufsverband der Deutschen Kommunikationsdesigner) for instance, created for its members an online instrument to calculate a hypothetical fee for each project, adding up more entries at the same time (hours and kind of work, needed overtime, material cost, etcetera).

25. How many hours are you working on average in a week?

less than 10 hours	38	5,0
between 19 and 15 hours	25	3,3
between 15 and 25 hours	35	4,6
between 25 and 35 hours	68	8,9
between 35 and 45 hours	173	22,6
between 45 and 55 hours	159	20,7
between 55 and 60 hours	82	10,7
between 60 and 65 hours	42	5,5
between 65 and 75 hours	23	3,0
more than 75 hours	21	2,7
did not respond	101	13,2
	767	

26. What is your annual average net income? (€)

0	42	5,5
less than 1.000	61	8,0
between 1.000 and 5.000	129	16,8
between 5.000 and 10.000	93	12,1
between 10.000 and 15.000	131	17,1
between 15.000 and 20.000	81	10,6
between 20.000 and 25.000	46	6,0
between 25.000 and 30.000	44	5,7
between 30.000 and 35.000	13	1,7
between 35.000 and 45.000	14	1,8
between 45.000 and 55.000	7	0,9
between 55.000 and 75.000	4	0,5
between 75.000 and 100.000	1	0,1
more than 150.000	1	0,1
did not respond	100	13,0
	767	

27. Your salary/compensation is paid...

monthly	248	27,7
at the end of the project and with a delay	229	25,6
at the end of the project	175	19,6
monthly and with a delay	71	7,9
other	68	7,6
did not respond	104	11,6
	895	

IF I WASN'T SUPPORTED BY MY PARENTS, I'D HAVE TO QUIT STUDYING, AND WOULD NEED TO STOP WORKING IN THE FIELD OF DESIGN INASMUCH AS THE FIRST EXPERIENCES NEVER GET PAID ENOUGH TO MAKE AN AUTONOMOUS LIVING.

28. Are you paid for your overtime?

no	428	55,8
not always	160	20,9
yes	58	7,6
did not respond	121	15,8
	767	

29. If you are paid your overtime, you are paid...

a regular rate	121	55,5
overtime rate	47	21,6
other*	29	13,3
did not respond	21	9,6
	218	

* some of the other recompensation specified:
favours and flexibility on leave and being late, concert tickets, agreed remuneration, medium-low rate, fixed payment

30. How do you determine the monetary value of your work?

according to the typology of work	394	29,7
according to the hours of work	301	22,7
according to a prearranged budget	275	20,7
according to an approximation	136	10,2
according to a scale of fees other	79	5,9
other	33	2,5
did not respond	110	8,2
	1328	

31. If you are defining the monetary value of your work based on a scale of fees, which are you using?

AIAP	41	56,9
professional association	14	19,4
ADI	7	9,7
scale of fees shared online	4	5,5
scale of fees of other countries	2	2,7
TAU Visual	2	2,7
Associazione Illustratori	1	1,4
ADEGRAF	1	1,4
total scales of fees specified	72	

Key:
AIAP – Associazione Italiana Design della Comunicazione Visiva
ADI – Associazione per il Disegno Industriale
TAU Visual – Associazione Nazionale Fotografi Professionisti
ADEGRAF – Associação dos Designers Gráficos do Distrito Federal

Autonomy? Still a mirage

A third of the designers declared that they rely on the help of their family circle and friends in order to make it to the end of the month, specifying that this support has been or still is essential to continue studying and to not abandon this profession. Another third is composed of those who barely square the balance sheet, who have debts or took out a bank loan, and who have to use personal savings to make a living. So on the whole, only 16 % of designers are able to count on an autonomous, "well-off" economic situation, managing to accumulate savings.

32. What is your overall financial situation at the moment?

I'm receiving help from relatives/friends	366	34,2
I'm just about squaring the books	201	18.8
I have to use my savings	160	14,9
I'm able to save a little	145	13,5
I have debts	76	7,0
I have a mortgage	70	6,5
I'm able to save a fair bit	25	2,3
I'm able to save a lot	5	0,5
other	4	0,4
did not respond	19	1,8
	1071	

33. Did you incur debt for financing your studies?

no	666	86,8
yes	79	10,3
other	7	0,9
did not respond	15	2,0
	767	

34. If you could not count on the help of anyone, what would your financial condition look be like?

I would have debts	248	32,3
I would just square the books	125	16,3
I would need to use my savings	108	14,0
I would need to get a loan	45	5,9
I would be able to save a little	22	2,9
I would be able to save a fair bit	7	0,9
I would be able to save a lot	1	0,1
other	47	6,1
did not respond	164	21,4
	767	

INTERNSHIPS (35-43)

Who can afford it?

70 % of participants carried out at least one internship in their life, a great majority of which were unpaid.

The collected answers underline that, in the case of internships without payment or with minimum payment, young designers often face two options: relying on family and friends who are able to help them economically (41% of cases), or work before/during the internship, in order to be able to carry out the internship itself (25 % of cases). Considering that many choose a big city for their first work experience (Milan being the first choice), the required investment to undertake an internship turns out to be high, both on an economic level (rent, transportation, basic needs) and on a personal level (energy and commitment). At this point, it seems crucial to ask: are the expectations that justify such an onerous investment satisfied in terms of acquired experiences and working perspectives?

35. Did you ever do an internship? Why?*

yes	533	69,5
no	225	29,4
did not respond	9	1,2
	767	

* Some of the motivations specified:

Yes. After just having finished my studies, it was the only way to approach the world of work.

Yes. Compulsory internship during my BA.

Yes. I believed it to be useful to enrich my knowledge, to fill gaps and to get to know the foreign market.

Yes. Because it was the only way to work.

No. Because no opportunity arose.

No. I don't trust this kind of formula much. Furthermore, I chose to live out of town and to work on my own, I could however consider it if it truly were significant for my formation and development.

No. Why work for free?

No. After my studies, I immediately started to work.

36. How many internships did you do?

1	267	50,1
2	173	32,5
3	57	10,7
4	16	3,0
more than 4	16	3,0
did not respond	4	0,8
	533	

37. For every internship you did, please specify the duration, city, area, pay and the educational qualification you held when applying for the internship. (semantic categories drawn from open answers)

City

Milan	256	33,3
Rome	46	5,0
Treviso	30	3,9
Turin	30	3,9
Florence	18	2,3
Venice	17	2,2
Naples	17	2,2
Bologna	16	2,0
London	12	1,6
Udine	11	1,4
Palermo	11	1,4
Bozen/Bolzano	9	1,2
Genoa	9	1,2
Padua	8	1,0
Bari	7	0,9
Paris	6	0,8
Amsterdam	6	0,8
Trieste	5	0,7
Caserta	5	0,7
Bergamo	5	0,7
Vicenza	5	0,7
Munich	5	0,7
Varese	4	0,5
Perugia	4	0,5
Verona	4	0,5
Siena	4	0,5
Forlì	4	0,5
Berlin	3	0,4
Ancona	3	0,4
Salerno	3	0,4
Macerata	3	0,4
other	203	26,4
total cities specified	769	

Duration

up to 3 months	454	63,0
3-6 months	210	29,1
6-12 months	47	6,5
more than 12 months	10	1,4
total durations specified	721	

Area

visual communication	339	44,5
architecture	111	14,6
design (not specified)	97	12,7
product design	46	6,0
interior/exhibit design	44	5,8
fashion and accessories	21	2,8
art	17	2,2
photography	10	1,3
craft	9	1,2
nonprofit organisation	6	0,8
service design	6	0,8
university/research	4	0,5
interaction design	3	0,4
other	49	
total areas specified	762	

Pay (€)

0	410	55,6
up to 200	82	11,1
from 200 to 500	154	20,9
from 500 to 1.000	61	8,3
more than 1.000	8	1,1
expenses refund	16	2,2
other	7	0,9
total pay specified	738	

Educational qualification

BA	333	46,9
secondary school	213	30,0
MA	111	15,6
postgraduate certificate	24	3,4
middle school	12	1,7
academic diploma	6	0,8
other	11	1,5
total qualifications specified	710	

Working relations: a distorted picture

Many young designers regard internships as the only viable option for finding work. Still, this opinion does not seem to be justified by facts: a mere 32% of internships lead to a contract with the same employer, where 'contract' stands for both hiring or collaborating with the former intern on a fixed term basis, the latter being much more frequent.

When confronted with the question "Did you feel exploited?" opinions diverge. Those who answer with a yes (47%), consider themselves as victims of exploitation, due to poor compensation for their work, regardless of the type of task performed. Those who answer "no" (48%) advance different types of reasons: passion (I like what I do), lack of preparation (I am not sufficiently skilled to be paid), a priori agreement (I can't complain since I agreed on these terms in the first place), obligation (it's part of my study curriculum, so it's ok not to get paid for it). These answers outline a distorted picture of a working relation in which interns feel like a burden to the employers and have to be thankful for any type of working condition offered. Consequently, asking for fair compensation is often accompanied by a sense of shame and shyness.

Among those criticizing various forms of unpaid work, the approach of the Carrotworkers' Collective, a group of workers, students and interns of the cultural sector based in London, is particularly interesting: along with educational activities in universities, the collective has published a *Counter-Internship-Guide*, an anti-exploitation manual for interns, that is available for free download on their website.

38. Has one of your internships ever been followed by some form of employment/contract?

no	360	67,5
yes, specify*	169	31,7
did not respond	4	0,8
	533	

*

project collaboration (Co.co.pro.)	70	45,2
occasional collaboration	30	19,3
open-ended contract	18	11,6
collaboration with VAT number	15	9,7
fixed-term contract	9	5,8
apprenticeship	7	4,5
extension of the internship	2	1,3
shareholder	1	0,6
other	3	1,9
total contractual forms specified	155	

39. In case of an unpaid (or underpaid) internship, how did you sustain your living costs?

help from parents/friends	365	40,6
I used my savings	117	13,0
I earned money from another job	84	9,4
I had a bursary	35	3,9
I asked for a bank loan	4	0,4
other	9	1,0
did not respond	284	31,6
	898	

40. Do you think you have been exploited? Explain*

yes	261	49,0
no	248	46,5
in part	19	3,6
did not respond	5	0,9
	533	

* Some original comments:

With my employer I worked on several project as a peer collaborator and we discussed a lot. One of the graphic design commissions started during the internship has been handed over to me and I'm still continuing to work on it.

I finished a few projects that the studio has been carrying on for months without ever completing them, which resulted in profits of several thousand Euro.

Yes, but it was a necessary sacrifice for my growth.

It's just a phase in my life, that is, just before I graduate from my MA, when I need to gather more experience and get to know the world of work. It is my very first working experience, remuneration plays a secondary role.

No, because I really liked what they had me doing. That is most likely the only reason why I didn't feel exploited.

Very low remuneration for the responsibilities I was in charge of. It wasn't about making coffee and taking photocopies, but actual responsibilities. In the end, they did not teach me a thing, which I think is wrong: an internship ought to be a formative experience, whereas today trainees are treated like cheap manual workers.

41. Following your first internship, did you feel ready to enter the world of work? Explain*

no	192	36,0
yes	145	27,2
in part	62	11,6
other	58	10,9
did not respond	76	14,3
	533	

* Some original comments:

Yes, I have learned a lot about how to handle clients, manage a design studio and prepare presentations. In seven months' time, I really had learned a lot.

Not at all. During my internship, I have learned very little. They didn't bother teaching me and had me doing things I already knew how to do (graphic labour).

It depends on which type of employment you are talking about. As an employee, maybe, as self-employed probably not.

I was ready long before the internships. Internships were more like a way of taking advantage of my skills and didn't have any teaching purpose. Internships played down the importance of my potentialities and deprived me of the desire to put myself on the line in the world of work.

The internship I took helped me figure out what may await me in real life and made me aware of the difficulties and responsibilities of a graphic designer, but also of the choices and opportunities I may encounter.

42. Did you ever have any interns?

no	619	80,7
yes	138	18,0
did not respond	10	1,3
	767	

43. How did you compensate them and follow their learning process?

Some original comments:

Varying remuneration depending on the companies that took on trainees.

Usually I entrust them with tasks I get to follow step by step, without overloading them with responsibilities. I think they ought to learn on the job and I try to make them choose their own area of interest.

Remunerated according to the project, they get a chance to be completely immersed in the designing process.

With cash in hand, they are entitled to one third of the profit, plus board and lodging.

I pay them when there's extra money, they are constantly involved in my job.

Since I couldn't afford to pay them (the profit margins of my projects weren't sufficient), I've tried to get them to work on pro bono jobs. Still, I've tried to see about them constantly.

AFTER MY INTERNSHIP I WAS READY TO ENTER A CONTEXT WHERE THE JOB OF THE DESIGNER IS MERELY AN EXECUTIVE ONE. IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE A DIFFERENT APPROACH, WHERE THE FOCUS WOULD BE ON THE PROJECT'S METHODOLOGY, I WOULD HAVE HAD TO START ALL OVER. THIS SPECIFIC CONTEXT SHOULD HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED EARLIER, THOUGH.

SATISFACTION (44-48)

A crowd of enthusiasts

Almost all designers are extremely fond of their work, even though few of them experience fulfilment in regards to their initial ambitions. However, the satisfaction in regards to the goals, procedures and working conditions is medium-high.

Interest and enthusiasm appear to be the main motivations of the profession: 61% of designers would not change their study curriculum, even though their education is thought to be only partially useful in regards to professional goals and despite the precarious working conditions provided by the market.

44. Are you satisfied with your work in relation to...

its aim

very much	126	16,4
much	221	28,8
sufficiently	234	30,5
little	98	12,8
not at all	21	2,7
N/A	38	5,0
did not respond	29	3,8
	767	

the workign conditions

very much	58	7,6
much	121	15,8
sufficiently	232	30,3
little	203	26,5
not at all	81	10,6
N/A	42	5,4
did not respond	30	3,9
	767	

the modalities of executing work

very much	57	7,4
much	159	20,7
sufficiently	292	38,1
little	153	19,9
not at all	39	5,1
N/A	36	4,7
did not respond	31	4,0
	767	

the passion you have for your work

very much	375	48,9
much	200	26,0
sufficiently	84	11,0
little	26	3,9
not at all	13	1,7
N/A	32	4,2
did not respond	37	4,8
	767	

45. How rewarded do you feel in relation to your ambitions?

very much	13	1,7
much	90	11,7
sufficiently	276	36,0
little	265	34,6
not at all	83	10,8
N/A	26	3,4
did not respond	14	1,9
	767	

46. Has your education been useful for the kind of work you are currently carrying out?

very much	100	13,0
much	209	27,3
sufficiently	240	31,3
little	116	15,1
not at all	45	5,9
N/A	32	4,2
did not respond	25	3,3
	767	

WHO AM I?
WHERE AM I DIRECTED?
WHAT DO I DO?
UNIVERSITY DIDN'T GIVE ME A CLUE!

47. If you could, would you change your choice of studies?

no	467	60,9
yes, explain*	265	34,6
did not respond	35	4,6
	767	

* Some original comments:

I lack the theoretical knowledge (I'm more of an autodidact here) and the network of acquaintances that is generated during university.

I'm afraid I only lost time with a not so trustworthy degree.

I would start with something more specific, maybe abroad.

It's a question I ask myself constantly. The work of a designer is a hard and underpaid one (at least at the beginning and in these times). In addition, it is very hard to enter the world of work, especially right after graduation. I really love this work, but it doesn't provide any economic stability and involves lots of stress. I don't know what I would have done alternatively… I am trying to figure out how to make the most of my degree in order to find a well-paid job that I like.

I'd take on something more practical and manual, most likely I wouldn't go to university.

I would try to integrate a few more humanistic subjects in my curriculum.

48. Would you like to change your current occupational condition?

continuing the work I do but improve my conditions	305	39,8
opening a studio or another activity	146	19,0
yes, finding work	108	14,0
I'm still studying	74	9,6
changing my profession	35	4,6
moving from being employed to freelance	33	4,3
moving from being freelance to employed	24	3,1
no, continuing the work I do until I retire	8	1,0
closing my studio	4	0,5
other	15	2,0
did not respond	15	2,0
	767	

WORKING ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH (49-66)

Modalities to re-evaluate

The majority of participant designers live in a large city in the North of Italy. For 44% of them, the work place (or the place where one would like to find a job) does not coincide with the place one would like to live.

The inquiry shows that 55% of designers work from a study or an office, a third of them takes work back home with them to do at night or during the weekend. The working environment appears to greatly influence the quality of life of designers and to work from home is considered by many to be claustrophobic and non-stimulating. Nevertheless, co-working (a style of work that allows designers to share working space, expenses, competences, relations and both financial and social counselling) does not have a high degree of diffusion.

49.1. Where do you work?

in Italy	667	87,0
abroad	67	8,7
did not respond	33	4,3
	767	

49.2. In Italy, you work...

in the North	502	66,2
Center	131	17,3
South	70	9,2
Islands	22	2,9
did not respond	33	4,4
	758	

50. The Italian city you mainly work in is...

small	181	23,6
medium	187	24,4
big	323	42,1
did not respond	76	10,0
	767	

51. All'estero, lavori...

in una metropoli	61	40,9
in una città grande	51	34,2
in una città media	24	16,1
in una città piccola	13	8,7
	149	

52. Does the city you are working in (or where you think you will find work) correspond to the place where you would like to live?

no	338	44,1
yes	326	42,5
other	66	8,6
did not respond	37	4,8
	767	

53. You are mainly working from

home and office	275	35,9
office/studio	146	19,0
home	141	18,3
co-working space	63	8,2
studio of the client	12	1,6
bar	6	0,8
home of collaborators	5	0,7
library	5	0,7
workshop	5	0,7
train	4	0,5
public spaces	3	0,4
studio of friends	2	0,3
museum	1	0,1
shop	1	0,1
did not respond	98	12,8
	767	

54. What influence does your working environment have on you? (semantic categories drawn from open answers)

a lot of influence	468	61,0
medium influence	45	5,9
little/no influence	47	6,1
it depends	7	0,9
other	17	2,2
did not respond	183	23,9
	767	

Tireless designers
Flexibility is the current catchphrase of Italian designers: working hours and styles are adapted to the contingent necessities. A third of the participants eat while sitting at the computer, while half of them keep work late quite often. 45% of participants go on holiday only once a year.

Backache, prescription glasses and stress
Well over half the participants complain about work-related physical problems, mainly connected with computer use and a sedentary lifestyle (backache, visual disturbances). Among the psychological problems stress, anxiety, depression and sleeping disorders are prevailing.

A fair percentage of designers declare a patterned use of substances to improve their performance at work.

55. Does it happen that you eat while you work?

always	30	3,9
very often	95	12,4
often	101	13,2
sometimes	220	28,7
rarely	164	21,4
never	127	16,6
did not respond	30	
	767	

56. Does it happen that you work until late at night?

always	41	5,4
very often	143	18,6
often	147	19,2
sometimes	240	31,3
rarely	123	16,0
never	42	5,5
did not respond	31	4,0
	767	

57. How often are you going on holidays during a year?

never	79	10,3
once	343	44,7
twice	199	26,0
three times	59	7,7
more than three times	58	7,6
did not respond	29	3,8
	767	

58. For how long are you going on holidays?

two weeks	149	19,4
one week	114	14,9
ten days	89	11,6
some days	67	8,7
three weeks	60	7,8
one month	59	7,7
more than one month	33	4,3
it depends	25	3,3
other	25	3,3
never	4	0,5
did not respond	142	18,5
	767	

59. Do you have physical problems related to your work?

yes, specify*	404	52,7
no	335	43,7
did not respond	28	3,7
	767	

* Semantic categories drawn from open answers:

back pain	264	38,6
problems with eyesight	181	26,5
joints	135	19,7
headache	45	6,6
digestive problems	14	2,0
posture issues	5	0,7
circulation problems	5	0,7
problems related to sedentary work	5	0,7
limbs: inflammation and pain	4	0,6
tiredness	4	0,6
cutaneous conditions and dermatitis	3	0,4
other	19	2,8
total problems specified	684	

Some of the problems specified:
colitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, lack of muscle tone, arthritis of the hands, dizziness, psoriasis, tennis elbow, sciatica, low back pain, tinnitus, gastric reflux, gastritis, cervical osteoarthritis, stress-related dermatitis, low immune system, stomach ache, spinal disc herniation, haemorrhoids, muscle fatigue

HAVING YOUR STUDIO AT HOME OFTEN MAKES ONE FEEL CLAUSTROPHOBIC. ONE RISKS BEING TRAPPED INSIDE FOR DAYS. IN ADDITION, I OFTEN WORK LATE OR SKIP LUNCH. HAVING A SEPARATE AND DEDICATED WORKING SPACE ALLOWS A HEALTHIER DAILY LIFE AND A WORKING ROUTINE, STILL, IT IS UNECONOMIC FOR FREELANCERS: WHY PAY DOUBLE RENT AND DOUBLE INTERNET CONNECTIONS?

60. Do you have psychological problems related to your work?

no	409	53,3
yes, specify*	324	42,2
did not respond	34	4,4
	767	

* Semantic categories drawn from open answers:

stress	266	44,3
anxiety and panic attacks	183	30,4
depression	73	12,1
sleeping disorders	17	2,8
nervousness and impatience	14	2,3
dissatisfaction	10	1,7
frustration and anger	7	1,2
tiredness	5	0,8
unstable mood	4	0,7
sadness and solitude	3	0,5
a sense of inadequacy and confusion	3	0,5
fear and worry	3	0,5
low self-esteem and insecurity	2	0,3
apathy and alienation	2	0,3
other	9	1,5
total problems specified	601	

Some of the problems specified:
tic, fit of tears, irritability, agressivness, neurosis, memory issues, bipolar disorder, low sexual desire, sense of emptiness, restlessness, angst, lack of appetite, discouragement, I only think of work, chronic irritability

61. Did you go through a period of psychological unease after having graduated?

no	532	69,4
yes, why?*	190	24,8
did not respond	45	5,9
	767	

* Semantic categories drawn from open answers:

difficulty of finding work	28	17,8
disorientation/insecurity of how to go about things	22	14,0
dissatisfaction regarding the job I found	16	10,2
insecuirty of being able to find a job	16	10,2
anxiety about the future	11	7,0
lack of preparation at university level regarding the world of work	8	5,1
difficulty of finding work appropriate for my degree of education	8	5,1
doubts on the appropriateness of my studies	8	5,1
contrast between life at university and at work	7	4,5
identity crisis	7	4,5
reduction of the pressure to work	3	1,9
other	23	14,6
total motivations specified	157	

Some original comments:

Stress due to precarious work and lack of a fixed income with related debt accumulation.

I felt lost and confused. I didn't know what I wanted, but I think it is very common to feel a bit lost at the end of your time at university. Back then, I often found myself questioning myself, if I really wanted to work in the field of communication.

Anxiety of not being able to live up to the requirements of the world of work.

I didn't have a clue what to do, where to look, that's why I opted for a masters' degree instead.

Slightly unsatisfied with my years at university.

Little hope for the future.

62. Are you making use of substances to improve your performance at work?

no	438	57,1
yes, specify*	303	39,5
did not respond	26	3,4
	767	
*		
coffee	267	66,3
energy drink	30	7,4
nutritional supplements	22	5,5
cannabis	19	4,7
alcohol	18	4,5
tobacco	16	4,0
tea	12	3,0
non specified drugs	4	1,0
painkillers	3	0,7
non specified medicine	3	0,7
antidepressants	1	0,2
cocaine	1	0,2
performance-enhancing drug	1	0,2
Ritalin	1	0,2
other	5	1,2
total substances specified	403	

Mum or designer?

22% of Italian designers say they feel discriminated against at work, mainly related to gender, geographic provenance, personality and lack of strategic social relations. Gender-related discrimination doesn't affect male participants, while it affects a third of females.

Having children emerges as the main obstacle between young female designers and professional fulfilment. Comments show how childbirth has very different consequences for males and females working in the same occupation. While designer-mothers feel less competitive on the market, not being able to feed as much energy and time into projects as before, the fathers among our participants feel that they were able to regain a healthy work-life balance thanks to their children, even though many complain about the fact that they don't get to spend enough time with them.

Among the childless, half declare they just couldn't afford having children in their current working situation. In this case too, women seem to express the most difficulties.

⊠ ✎

63. Within the world of design, did you ever feel discriminated against?

no	568	74,1
yes, specify*	170	22,2
did not respond	29	3,8
	767	

* Semantic categories drawn from open answers:

female:

gender	42	29,8
social contacts	22	15,6
character	14	9,9
geographical origin	10	7,1
education and competences	8	5,7
opinion	5	3,5
age	5	3,5
sexual orientation	4	2,8
having children	4	2,8
social background	3	2,1
economic condition	3	2,1
disability and illness	2	1,4
professional position	2	1,4
religious orientation	2	1,4
look and outfit	1	0,7
linguistic competences	1	0,7
political orientation	1	0,7
kind of design produced	1	0,7
other	11	7,8
total motivations specified	141	

male:

social contacts	17	23,9
character	11	15,5
geographical origin	7	9,9
social background	5	7,0
professional position	4	5,6
look and outfit	4	5,6
education and competences	3	4,2
opinion	2	2,8
having children	1	1,4
disability and illness	1	1,4
age	1	1,4
gender	1	1,4
political orientation	1	1,4
sexual orientation	1	1,4
religious orientation	1	1,4
kind of design produced	1	1,4
linguistic competences	0	0
economic condition	0	0
other	7	9,9
total motivations specified	71	

GENDER-RELATED DISCRIMINATION: I CAN'T RECALL ANY INTERVIEW DURING WHICH I HAVEN'T BEEN PUT UNDER PRESSURE IN RELATION TO A POSSIBLE FUTURE PREGNANCY, EVEN AT THE DESIGN STUDIO WHERE I WORK NOW, LED BY TWO WOMEN.

64. Do you know people that dropped out of the design profession?

yes, do you know why?*	391	51,0
no	352	46,0
did not respond	24	3,1
	767	

* Semantic categories drawn from open answers:

economic difficulties and precariousness	93	32,0
difficulty in entering the labour market	67	23,0
to much stress, competition and anxiety	38	13,0
to start another activity/other plans	19	6,5
disappointment and dissatisfaction	16	5,5
ceased loving this profession	12	4,1
for a more balanced live or for having a family	11	3,8
impossibility of professional/ economic development	9	3,0
negative working environment and stressful working patterns	6	2,0
inability to face a situation of difficulty	4	1,4
ethics: to avoid commercial compromises	3	1,0
other	13	4,5
total motivations specified	291	

Some original comments:

Because of the job insecurity, shameless exploitation and creative stress.

Mainly women: they just couldn't keep up with work because they had a family to take care of.

90% of my fellow students. There's not enough room for everyone, even more so when the new generations excel in their technical skills (but not in the creative ones).

Because they didn't love their work as much as before: having to talk to the marketing department instead of the client, contracts being awarded on the basis of personal relations, directors being less competent than employees.

65. If you have children, how does this influence your working life? (semantic categories drawn from open answers)

difficulty of reconciling work and family	22	28,9
positive influence	17	22,4
little influence	11	14,5
sacrifices: money and time-wise	4	5,3
my role has been reduced	2	2,6
I lost my job	1	1,3
other	19	25,0
total influences specified	76	

Some original comments – female voices

Extremely hard to handle during the first 15 years, then there is an improvement.

No maternity leave for me, I had to work full hours even after giving birth, I only took a break between three and six months after birth, after that I hired a nanny before finally signing up my child for a costly nursery.

Some original comments – male voices

I'd love to be able to spend more time with my daughter, it's just not possible if I want to make ends meet.

I have a seven-months-old, for now, aside from some tiredness, which is largely outbalanced by joy, and happiness, having kids didn't influence my working routine.

66. Do you think your working conditions would allow you to have children?

not now, but maybe in the future	306	39,9
absolutely not	154	20,1
yes, with some compromises	101	13,7
yes, with huge compromises	96	12,5
yes, no problem	38	5,0
other	36	4,7
did not respond	36	4,7
	767	

Some original comments:

Not more than one, I think. I've one already and it's really hard.

My income is still too low to afford a family. When I'll be "rich", that is, when my personal income will guarantee some financial security, we might reconsider.

No, but I can't wait for a whole life.

FIGURE OF THE DESIGNER (67-69)

I think there should be days of confrontation and open debate to deliver the message about what we really do and establish a dialogue with other realities and professions. That would be awesome.
We build imaginaries.

Designers who are conscious of the incomprehension of their role tend to perform at their best when they keep to themselves, without trying to approach people in the street. These works, which are noticeable, result in an act of self-celebration, and act against the principle of design for all, which should be our purpose.

I believe that the role of the designer is not a univocal one. The differences in the resulting approaches and practices depend on the grade of self-consciousness of each one of us in our daily life and in our connection with society.

People have their own approach, I am not questioning that. Generally speaking, I think that the more designers get involved with society, the better the chances that, in the future, society will start taking an interest in the role of the designer.

Lamentably, there has been a lot of confusion about the role of designers within popular imagination. Most people think that being able to use Photoshop on a computer makes you a designer.

A sense of incomprehension

Designers feel like their role isn't sufficiently acknowledged within the context they live and operate in. This is further outlined by some adjectives they use when describing someone else's opinion of their profession, like "fun" and "indefinable."
In their answers to the open-ended questions, a fair number of designers interrogate themselves about the chances offered by design as critical instrument. Self-reflection on their own profession and role appears to be rather frequent.

69. With what adjectives would your family/friends describe your work? (semantic categories drawn from open answers)

creative	259	41,1
graphic designer/architect/artist	88	13,0
enjoyable/a game/easy	62	9,8
they don't know how to define it	60	9,5
interesting	51	8,0
paid little/precarious	45	7,1
useless/superfluous	36	5,7
demanding	15	2,4
strange	14	2,2
total adjectives specified	630	

67. Do you think in society the figure and role of the

very much	4	0,5
much	15	1,9
sufficiently	59	7,7
little	372	48,5
not at all	235	30,6
I don't know	77	10,0
did not respond	5	0,7
	767	

Some original comments:

Often, the whole creative process isn't even taken into consideration, just because this part of the work isn't as tangible as the labour of a factory worker.

I believe people don't have the slightest idea of what a designer does and for which necessities he or she caters.

Way too often we get treated as the bottom of the heap. The designers' role isn't considered to be an essential element in the task.

Some of the adjectives specified:
different, eccentric, imaginative, cool, frivolous, brilliant, futuristic, tiring, uncertain, messy, incomprehensible, inconsistent, innovative, light, marginal, modern, multimedial, nerdy, boring, incredible, little profitable, polyhedric, exploitative, stylish, stressful, utopian, visionary

68. Do you have any thoughts on the ways designers relate to society?

Some original comments:

My aim is to bring critical thinking into my work. Sometimes, though, I fail, which makes me look like that type of designer I personally despise, but that I occasionally turn into. Every time I succeed in stepping away from this specific way of doing my work by challenging the hurdles of the market and choosing the less trodden path, I get the feeling of truly moving forward along the path of my profession.

IN 90% OF CASES, THE ROLE OF THE DESIGNER IS COMPLETELY STEREOTYPED AND CONNECTED WITH THE FAMOUS DESIGNERS OF THE FIFTIES OR THE DESIGN OF LUXURY OBJECTS AND FASHION.

ORGANIZATION (70-77)

Uninformed, divided and vulnerable

Among designers competition is seen as a rather noticeable factor and the struggles around work suffer from it: almost no designer knows about cases of strike or sabotage within the profession. On the other hand, how to refuse a service or resortto sabotage, when, as in the case of freelancers, we are entrepreneurs of the self?

At the same time, university often neglects the importance of informing students about legal and practical aspects involved in their future profession. The result of this is that a majority of designers aren't informed about their rights and don't participate in organizations for cultural workers, which are, by the way, extremely rare to be found in Italy. ACTA (Associazione Consulenti Terziario Avanzato, Association of consultants of the advanced tertiary sector), just to name one, is a voluntary, non profit organization with the aim of defending and endorsing especially those freelance professional services which are non-regulated, through counselling, education and peer support. Drawing inspiration from this, could we start conceiving of new types of self-administered and inclusive groups, which are able to protect precarious workers and freelancers in the creative and knowledge sectors?

70. Do you think that there is competition between

much	305	39,8
quite some	286	37,3
depends on the situation	105	13,7
little	43	5,6
not at all	5	0,7
other	4	0,5
did not respond	19	2,5
	767	
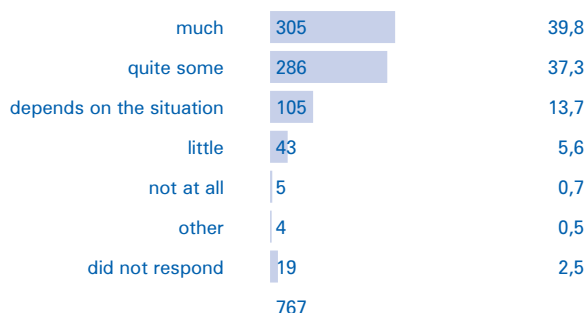
Some original comments:

Competition is determined by both study and work environments: when people avoid cooperation, instead of aiming at it; when you are immersed in a climate of terror; when you fear you will get the sack because someone else is replacing you.

Competition arises when there is little work and working conditions are unstable. This is why we often end up fighting one against the other, despite the fact that we are all in the same sinking boat and that there are far better ways of obtaining more.

71. Can you tell us the name of an organization/group/union that protects the rights of designers?

no	523	68,2
yes, specify*	227	29,6
did not respond	17	2,2
	767	

*

AIAP	129	45,1
ADI	103	36,0
ACTA	10	3,5
ADCI	7	2,4
AIGA (USA)	4	1,4
AIPI	3	1,0
AGI	3	1,0
ICOGRADA	3	1,0
Associazione Illustratori	3	1,0
SLC-CGIL	2	0,7
BEDA (EU)	2	0,7
ADG (USA)	1	0,3
ADEGRAF (BRA)	1	0,3
Serpica Naro	1	0,3
Quinto Stato	1	0,3
Maison des Artistes (FR)	1	0,3
ADIQ (CA)	1	0,3
Anonima Fumetti	1	0,3
Assografici	1	0,3
BDG (DE)	1	0,3
designaustria (AT)	1	0,3
TARGET (South Tyrol)	1	0,3
BNO (NL)	1	0,3
Design Council (UK)	1	0,3
Creative Commons	1	0,3
Ordine degli Architetti	1	0,3
Associazione TP	1	0,3
others	1	0,3
total organizations specified	286	

Key
AIAP – Associazione Italiana Design della Comunicazione Visiva
ADI – Associazione per il Disegno Industriale
ACTA – Associazione Consulenti Terziario Avanzato
ADCI – Art Directors Club Italiano
AIGA – American Institute of Graphic Arts
AIPI – Associazione Italiana Progettisti d'Interni
AGI – Agenzia Giornalistica Italia
ICOGRADA – International Council of Graphic Design Associations
SLC-CGIL – Sindacato Lavoratori Comunicazione
BEDA – Bureau of European Design Associations
ADG – Art Directors Guild
ADEGRAF – Associação dos Designers Gráficos do Distrito Federal
ADIQ – Association des Designers Industriels du Québec
BDG – Berufsverband der Deutschen Kommunikationsdesigner
BNO – Beroepsorganisatie Nederlandse Ontwerpers
Associazione TP – Associazione Italiana Pubblicitari Professionisti

THE ONLY STRIKE I HAVE EVER HEARD OF IS MY OWN: A FEW COLLEAGUES AND I DECIDED TO STRIKE AND ASK FOR A BETTER DEFINITION OF OUR RIGHTS DURING PREGNANCY, ACCIDENT OR SICK LEAVE.

72. Are you part of an organization/group/union that protects the rights of designers?

no	690	90,0
yes, specify*	57	7,4
did not respond	20	2,6
	767	

*		
AIAP	30	57,7
ADI	6	11,5
Ordine degli Architetti	6	11,5
ACTA	3	5,8
Sindacato Verdi	1	1,9
BNO	1	1,9
CISL	1	1,9
Serpica Naro	1	1,9
San Precario	1	1,9
ADCI	1	1,9
other	1	1,9
total organizations specified	52	
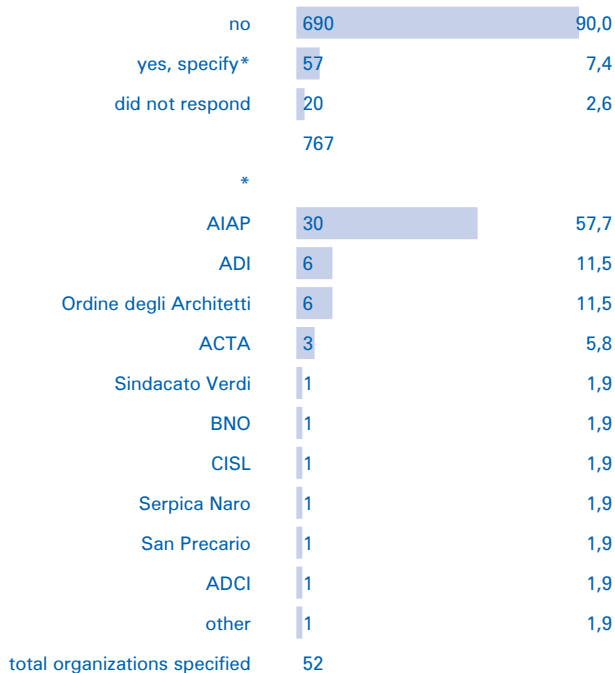
73. How informed are you of your rights as a worker?

much	26	3,4
quite much	168	21,9
little	423	55,2
not at all	139	18,1
did not respond	11	1,4
	767	
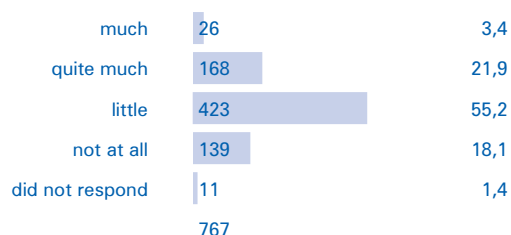
74. Are you part of a pension scheme?

no	418	54,5
yes	332	43,3
did not respond	17	2,2
	767	
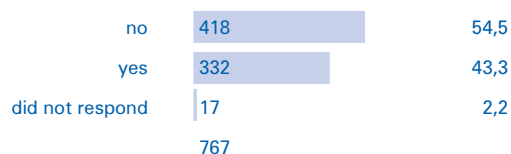
75. In case of an illness, accident or pregnancy etc., would you be entitled to some sort of remuneration?

no	538	70,1
yes	181	23,6
did not respond	48	6,3
	767	
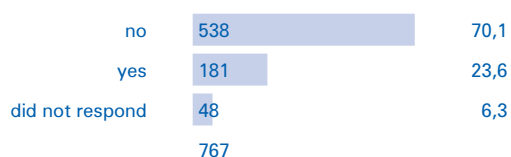
76. Do you know of any cases of workers' strikes within the field of design?

no	734	95,7
yes, specify*	18	2,4
did not respond	15	2,0
	767	
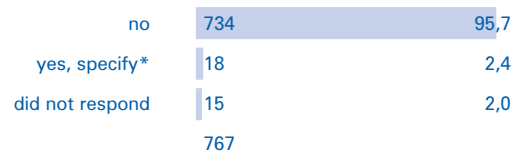
* Strikes cited:

Design No Stop was an alternative form of protest by design students and professors at the Politecnico of Milan against the proposed decree law by Minister Gelmini. The protest was aimed at making proposals for the Faculty's future.

Four years ago, while I was working at a design studio, I stopped showing up at work because our wages weren't being paid.

77. Do you know of any cases of sabotage by designers at their workplace?

no	720	93,9
yes, specify*	28	3,7
did not respond	19	2,5
	767	
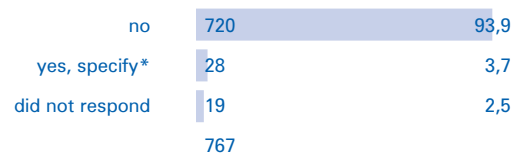
* Cases of sabotage cited:

Employees contacted the employer's clients privately in order to "steal" jobs from the design studio they worked at.

Stealing of corporate material, including clients' contacts.

Slowing down of workflow or quality reduction of own work in response to anti-unionist behaviour of the employer.

78. What question did you miss? Do you have any other comments?

Some original comments:

Do your clients sign a contract when they hire you? If so, who helped you draw it up?

Did you ever agree to work for free even full-time?

Do you work for cash in hand?

What could be done to improve designers' working conditions?

How much does your degree really count when it comes to enter the world of work?

What does it mean to succeed in your work?

What is the first thing that crosses your mind when you wake up?

Do you deem it discriminating not to own a studio?

What role does the computer play in your work? How much do you use it? In which ways does it influence you?

Do you think you will be able to stay and work in Italy? Are you considering emigration?

What can designers offer to our society?

Why do you think our work is not thought of as real or legitimate?

What is your opinion about design education in Italy?

Do clients acknowledge the creative thinking and research involved in a designer's work?

Why do you keep working as a designer?

Do you feel the need to be part of an organization which protects your rights?

Are you aware of the fact that if everyone refused to work for free, things would change?

I HOPE ALL THIS WILL CHANGE, THAT PEOPLE WILL TALK LESS MARKETING AND SALES AND THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO BRING BACK THE MAGIC OF THIS PROFESSION.

APPENDIX C

NINE EDITED CONVERSATIONS

Since the inception of this research, Fabio and I have had a series of conversations with socially and politically engaged practitioners about what modes of organising they adopt in order to keep their practices afloat.

See the following pages for:

-   nine edited conversations

For more conversations, see: www.designingeconomiccultures.net

TECHNOLOGIES AND
ORGANISATIONAL
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RELATION TO NATURE

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MENTAL
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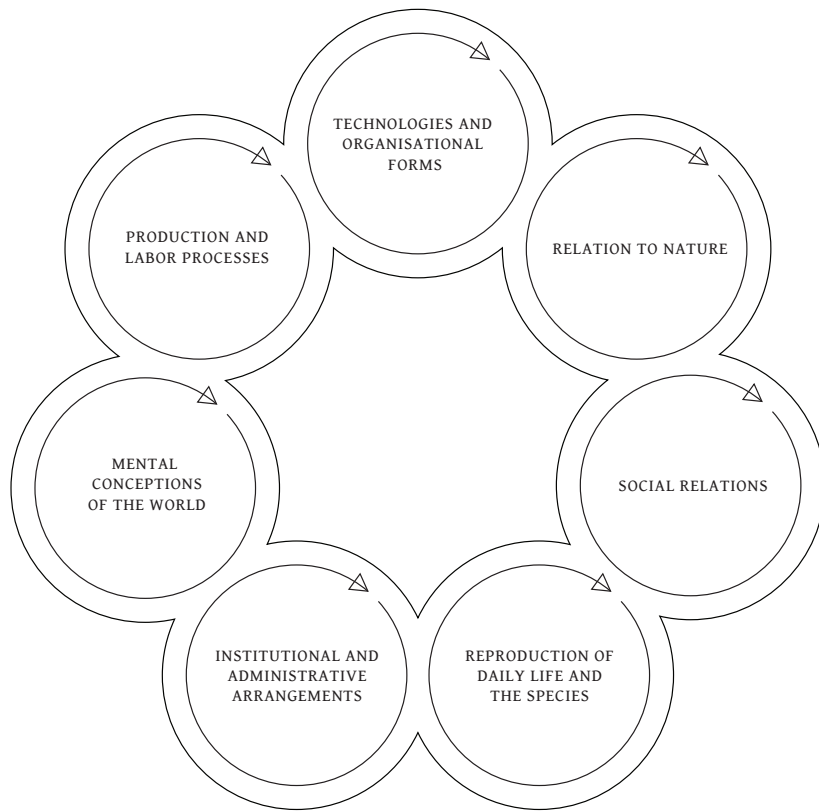
DAVID HARVEY, *THE ENIGMA OF CAPITAL*, P. 119-139: *CAPITAL EVOLVES.*
THE 7 DISTINCTIVE BUT INTER-RELATED 'ACTIVITY SPHERES' THROUGH
WHICH CAPITAL REVOLVES IN SEARCH FOR PROFIT →

DESIGNING ECONOMIC CULTURES

CONVERSATIONS MARCH 2011—FEBRUARY 2012

Designing Economic Cultures is a three year long research project by design duo Brave New Alps that sets out to investigate the relationship between socio-economic precarity and the production of socially and politically engaged design projects.

The fundamental question that the project poses at its outset is: *how can designers, who through their work want to question and challenge the prevalent economic system, gain a satisfying degree of social and economic security without having to submit themselves to the commercial pressures of the market?*

Designing Economic Cultures is an attempt to articulate, develop and share a wide range of tactics and strategies that allow designers to produce work that contributes to the development of a more autonomous, demo-cratic and heterogeneous society.

The following interviews explore the support structures that different practitioners rely on in order to sustain their politically engaged practices. They were conducted between March 2011 and February 2012.

These conversations are a relatively small yet fundamental component of the wider research project. More information on *Designing Economic Cultures* is available at:

www.designingeconomiccultures.net

No one of the spheres dominates even as none of them are independent of the others. But nor is any one of them determined even collectively by all the others.

Each sphere evolves on its own account but always in dynamic interaction with the others.

The complex flows of influence that move between the spheres are perpetually reshaping all of them.

Capital cannot circulate or accumulate without touching upon each and all of these activity spheres in some way—by hook or by crook, capital must somehow organise the seven spheres to conform to the 3 per cent rule.

— / —

A revolutionary anti-capitalist movement can start anywhere and everywhere as long as it does not stay where it starts from!

The revolution has to be a movement *in every sense of that word. If it cannot move within, across and through the different spheres then it will ultimately go nowhere at all.*

CONWAY + YOUNG

BACKGROUND

Conway + Young are a collaborative design practice based in Leeds whose practice inhabits the intersection between design, education, art and community work. Their work is driven and shaped by the social, political and environmental conditions they live in and they often work with limited means and an inventive resourcefulness. This low-key approach is not motivated by the search for a particular style but by the wish to engage with their local environment and to contribute to the society within which they live.

AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT

Conway + Young's engagement with urban spaces and developments runs through most of the work they produce. It is through walking that they seek access to stories and political questions embedded in the urban fabric of a place. When something attracts their attention, they will produce work in response to it, either as a commission or as their own practice.

Graphic design commissions are a carefully considered part of Conway + Young's practice; the content and mode of production always reflecting their way of thinking about design.

Teaching Graphic Arts and Design at Leeds Metropolitan University currently accompanies their practice. Here, Conway + Young encourage students to produce work not only within the confined walls of the university but to reach out into the city. They often take students out of the university, adopting new learning environments within the city in order to make connections with the wider social geography of their place of study.

'The Unredeemed Pledge' is a residency program for artists and designers that Conway + Young run in their own home. The program started in a cupboard under the stairs in their former Bristol home, where people were invited to stay for two days and one night and to make work in response to their experience. The residency program continues, moving with the designers from house to house.

FUNDING

Part-time lecturers in Graphic Arts and Design at Leeds Metropolitan University; commissions by art institutions and artists.

DEVELOPMENT

Working together since 2005
Based in Leeds since 2008

LOCATION

Leeds, UK, 770,800 inhabitants

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CONVERSATION

This conversation was held at Leeds Metropolitan University in May 2011.

Bianca Elzenbaumer: You seem to be a very close collaboration, bound together in your practice by a common belief in the role of designers in society. Could you tell me how your collaboration came about and how your design views have developed over time?

Jen Conway: We met at the University of the West of England where we studied Graphic Design. Our collaboration started very informally, we would help each other out with projects and with aspects of our work that we found difficult individually. Because of the university environment we were in and the lack of reference points for this way of working, we didn't really recognise it as 'collaboration'.

Jessie Young: Back then, collaboration was not really a word in our vocabulary. We weren't given any examples of collaborative practices and collaborative briefs were rare. We didn't really know what 'a collaboration' was until we went to Rotterdam for an Erasmus exchange program.

Jen: So our collaboration was this thing that happened but that was never spoken about or formalised, because it didn't have to be.

Jessie: It was actually probably others who recognised before we did that we collaborate unofficially on most things. People like our tutor Colum Leith, who—when we came back from Rotterdam to study our final year of the BA—recognised that our work was particularly interesting when we worked together and encouraged us to continue to work in this way.

Jen: During our studies, we spent almost all our time together. We had similar interests, which meant that we not only would be in the same studio at universi-

ty, but that we would also share activities outside the university. We talked a lot about the role of design in society and our collaboration simply developed out of these critical discussions. There was a constant exchange happening between the two of us and the whole thing developed very organically because of the circumstances we were in.

Jessie: In our third year, we still did some projects separately. So, when we graduated, we had both separate and collaborative identities as designers. But as soon as we were out of university there was no need for this separation and neither of us cared about ownership. For us, it doesn't matter who completes what part of a project and so we decided to do all of our work together.

We made this decision also partly because of the protection it offered us: in our experience when you first graduate you have a lot of pressure coming from people saying 'do this' or 'do that', 'work in this way', 'live here', 'what are you doing?', but if there is more than one of you, you have a bit of 'strength in numbers' to repel that pressure, to work out—through discussion—what it is you want to do and to encourage each other.

Jen: At that time, we started writing quite a lot about the decisions we had made since graduating. We would write these manifestos saying how we would like to work and who we would like to work with. We articulated our thinking by speaking, but we would then also have this piece of print to support what we intended to do, which was really useful.

Jessie: In fact, it feels like we have done most of the writing and thinking about our practice since we graduated. During our time in university, we were just making and not reflecting as much. It has been very useful to have this archive of writing about our work.

Jen: We would often refer back to it in moments when we weren't sure what we were doing, or when we felt like we were losing perspective. The writing helped us to decide whether a project fitted with what we wanted to do and, having published all these principles, we felt we had to stick by them in order to be coherent.

Bianca: It seems that writing manifestos is something many designers do, but then sticking to these principles is a completely different question. How did you manage to do so without giving in to the pressure put on you both by others, as well as by the simple necessities of life?

Jessie: During the two years after graduation, we got a lot of offers of work which we really should have taken because we could hardly pay our rent, but which we turned down. Instead of taking on projects we didn't believe in, we thought it was better to just take more shifts making sandwiches or work more late nights in a bar. Working together just gave us that motivation and extra confidence to stand by our principles.

Jen: Another factor that helped at the time was that we were living very cheaply in Bristol. We would, for example, make our own entertainment in the old shop that we lived in; we used that space as our house, our studio and a gallery space, but also as a place to screen films with our housemate's projector and to have discussion nights, communal meals and short exhibitions. Instead of paying for entertainment, we organised our own.

Jessie: We didn't have much extra money to travel to other cities, or for buying books or newspapers, so we set up an artists' residency in our under-stairs cupboard, which allowed us to regularly meet interesting people. We treated our house like it was this big gallery and we produced an identity and publicity for it; we talked about it like it was more than just the front room of our house.

Jen: We used the skills we gained in our degree to make the things we did not only more accessible, but also more formal.

Jessie: We would produce print pieces that people could pick up outside the front of the house that explained what we were doing. We would also write press releases and invite local councillors to our openings.

Jen: This focus allowed us not to be pulled into other things. It gave us reasons to stay in Bristol and motivation to do enough casual work to pay our rent.

After university you lose a structure that allows you to discuss work, to criticise work, and even sometimes the freedom to have strong opinions about what you are doing. Working together, we believe, has allowed us to protect these elements in our work.

As long as we work together, we will always have critical discussions about what we are doing because we don't always agree. We have different backgrounds, we have different opinions, different interests within the subject, but there are also enough similarities that keep us working together. This means that there is this friction between us that allows for a critical reflection about the things we do.

Bianca: This sounds like you have been constantly looking for a balance between your creative work and the necessity for covering your more material needs in life. Did you ever get to a moment where that balance was about to collapse?

Jen: Before we got permanent positions as lecturers on the BA in Graphic Arts and Design course at Leeds Metropolitan University, we were at a very difficult point. We were doing some teaching in Bristol, but it was not regular enough to rely on. Living that precariously is very stressful and not an easy situation in which to make work.

But we were applying for a lot of jobs and one of those was for the two positions at Leeds Metropolitan University. I think we were quite an unusual appointment in terms of taking us on as an existing collaborative team, and as young and relatively inexperienced lecturers.

Jessie: But we were fortunate that they recognised the value of our kind of working and a different type of design experience.

Jen: Since we have taken up our teaching position here, our collaboration has developed. We work at Leeds Metropolitan three days a week and this makes our other days for our own practice very precious. We have two days of a working week for our own practice and we have to plan our time very carefully. We probably work much more intensely now then we ever did before. But we are also lucky that we can bring our own practice into our teaching, and vice versa.

Bianca: Some of the projects you present on your website are done in collaboration with your students and teaching seems to also give you the financial support for sustaining your personal design projects. How do you feel about the place teaching takes in your practice?

Jessie: It's very hard to judge because we started teaching so soon—the September after we graduated, we started to do some teaching as part of a teaching fellowship on the course we had been studying on. So we've never had one without the other; our practice and teaching have both evolved alongside each other and in response to each other.

Even as students, we were interested in pedagogy. In our final year, we would run workshops and project spaces that were concerned with how people learn. Education has always been something that we investigate as part of our work.

Jen: We have always tried to keep an outward-looking approach, constantly thinking of how we could apply things we learned—and now teach—to what is happening outside the four walls of the university.

Jessie: Conceptually, teaching allows us to have interesting conversations with students and with staff. Talking three days a week to students is a positive experience. You are asking questions with them and alongside them and you are thinking about things in ways that you couldn't without them. Teaching also gives us the possibility to attend interesting lectures and to invite people in ourselves. This gives us constant stimuli. Through the university, we also find out about things in the city, as universities tend to be involved in things and are always getting informed. Outside the institution, we would find it a lot harder to access this kind of information.

Jen: Being part of the university also opened up our discussions: we are now part of a team of staff of 18 people and we have about 350 students. We often have heated debates with other members of staff about what we do—these are almost like crits with our colleagues. This way, we carry on developing our work.

We recognise that we are in a very privileged position. By teaching three days a week, we have two days a week to do our own work. We tend to reinvest money from our lecturing into our own work. It allows us to self-publish things and to choose who we work with. The regular income avoids us making difficult decisions about where we work.

Bianca: It is interesting to hear how crucial the support by an institutional structure can be in keeping a critical design practice going. What dynamics are developing between your practice and your involvement with the university?

Jessie: Working for a university makes it easier to meet a range of people. Although we are conscious of keeping as much autonomy for our own practice, it is occasionally useful to be associated with a trusted institution. This often speeds up the process of gaining trust when dealing with people in our own work. Before our identity as lecturers is known, however, it is often assumed we are students and this can also work

to our advantage, allowing us more freedom to investigate without professional expectations. It is, therefore, interesting to float between roles and between other people's images of us.

Jen: As well as being happy with our association with the University, we want to maintain some autonomy when carrying out our own work. We could be considered double agents, working as Conway + Young but also as lecturers, and often keeping these identities separate.

Jessie: At other times our roles combine and compliment each other. Our project at Leeds Kirkgate market used a stall (Stall 133-134) as a teaching space and allowed us to make work and to teach within the market.

Bianca: Your practice developed outside London, which seems to be this big centre of attraction for designers all over Europe and beyond. How do you feel about being in Bristol or Leeds versus being in a place like London for advancing your work?

Jen: I have never lived in London and when we finished our BA, we made a conscious decision that we wouldn't go there. This choice between working in 'the periphery' rather then in 'the centre' is something we talk a lot about with our students, because many of them want to go to London as soon as they graduate.

Jessie: Almost everyone we knew who graduated with us has moved to London. Initially, we found ourselves under quite a lot of pressure to move to London, but more than anything our decisions have been based on wanting to live in other, less obvious places.

We decided to stay in Bristol and to use the support system we had created while being undergraduates and to make something from that. The longer we managed to do that, the more interesting we found the idea of finding out who else had decided not to go to London, because they couldn't afford it or because it was not even an option. Money was also a consideration for us: living in London would have required a financial support system that we did not have and getting a well-paid, full-time job may have involved sidelining our own practice.

Jen: After graduating, we spent 2 years in Bristol, 3 months in Nottingham and have since been in Leeds for 3 years. It has taken us a while to get used to being here and, as a city, Leeds is culturally different to

Bristol. But, for us, it is a great place to be for many reasons: rent is cheap, the area we live in is particularly affordable and the city has a thriving DIY culture, which facilitates our self-initiated practice. The affordability of Leeds allows us to save money and to put it back into the production of projects. And with less financial worry, we feel more able to daydream, mess around and to think about our projects and practice.

Jessie: The London experience of people we know has involved working very long hours, commuting and high living costs and we do not see these conditions as supportive of a critical, independent practise.

We strongly believe the work we do is better when we live in the community we make work for and when we give critical ideas time to develop. So commuting or visiting a place to make work is not our ideal way of working.

We prefer to make site-specific work about the places we know, responding to an area or a group of people. It is really important for us that we understand the area that we are responding too. A lot of that comes from walking, using local services, pubs, cafés and hairdressers in order to get a sense of the place we live in.

We are wary of the kind of work some London/metropolitan studios seem to do, projects that involves parachuting into a council estate in a town for a couple of days in a different part of the country and then going back to a studio in an affluent area of London to work on the design that is then implemented in that community. We have strong reservations about how effective or sensitive this type of work is.

Bianca: Besides being rooted in a place and building up strong connections to the community, also the production of 'inclusive' projects seems to be something you feel strongly about. Could you expand on how you go about this in your design practice?

Jessie: We spend a lot of time thinking about how we can be as open as possible, how we can listen, emphasise and encourage dialogue. We also think about how we can share things, experiences and resources. A lot of the time, this just means considering very simple things like invitations or encouragements, printed invitations, verbal invitations, signage and a consideration of the language we use and how we present ideas and situations.

A lot of the workshops we organise happen outside of institutions—for example, the unit we occupied in Kirkgate Market from where we would run crits and

events. We purposefully did not label that space as a Leeds Met teaching space, because the name of a university can be excluding as well as including. In this case, we thought it would be the former.

Without labels or closed doors, members of the public could very easily become part of the sessions we ran with students, so over the period of time we worked there, many different people engaged with the work in some way.

We are keen for people to see that much of the work we do at university is accessible and participatory.

It is important, as designers and as students, to make attempts to understand different types of people and to create opportunities for others to understand you. This is something which is still very much a developing part of our practice—thinking about the different ways in which people communicate (not just verbally) and considering how different contexts affect the way our work is understood.

Jen: In terms of our work, nothing we produce is copyrighted—if they wanted to, other people could reuse it—content and design. An example of this happening was when a survey we produced of empty shops in Leeds city centre was used by the organisation 'Art in Unusual Spaces'. A combination of a photo survey and maps helped them negotiate empty shops for artist projects. That information was also used by Leeds City Council.

A lot of the work we produce is also self-published. This means we have methods of working that other people can adopt. We run workshops outside the university to show people the processes we use that allow us to produce work cheaply and quickly on limited resources. Processes like book-binding, paper folding, stamp making, zine making—really simple techniques that don't rely on lots of resources.

Jessie: I think our work looks a certain way because of the way we work and because of our idea of design. We like that people can look at the work and see how it was made. It's usually been made very simply and that DIY look is obvious.

We don't work with vast sums of money and it doesn't feel right to spend a lot of money on printing or production. We want the focus to be on the content and the people that were involved in the project, not on the printing technique used.

Jen: Yes, the aesthetic of our work is based on the economy of space in relation to content. A lot of the

original content gets edited in order for us to work within our means; the result is usually a concise and simple outcome.

Jessie: We are very practiced in producing work with hardly any money. We enjoy trying to make something from nothing (or very little). For example, we screen-print with a hand-built vacuum screen-printing bed so that we can print from home, we source paper from scrap stores or samples, that kind of thing.

Bianca: You have built up your own, very specific economic structures to support your design practice. Do you take on interns to share and introduce others to your approach?

Jen: At this point, we have not taken on interns. We have had requests in the past, but, because we don't have a formal structure to the way we work, we have decided not to take people on. We also wouldn't feel comfortable with working with someone and not paying them.

Jessie: We are not sure if internships are the best way for designers to work out how they want to work. The current intern system within the British design world seems quite unfair and disempowering to students and graduates—that students should be expected to work for little or no money for months at a time to learn about an industry that they are part of. We don't like the position this leaves financially unstable designers in, or the hierarchical nature of the exchange. More students should be encouraged and supported by universities, colleges and other designers to start their own organisations, to develop independent strategies for learning about industry or to shape their own route.

Jen: When we receive requests for internships, we prefer to meet up with them for a discussion about their practice and goals, or invite them to do our residency, This normally develops into a continual and equal relationship based on an exchange of support, interests and recommendations.

Bianca: The way you work is very ingrained in the present and you invest a lot of resources in shaping your surroundings. Are you also considering how your life and your practice might evolve in the future?

Jen: We think a lot about the developments in the fu-

ture. Maybe, in ten years, we won't want to do this anymore. You see this happen to people—they are able to work independently when they are fairly un-tied by mortgages and family, but, past a certain point, it becomes much harder to sustain.

Jessie: We dream about living communally; sharing land and working spaces, finding a way to integrate the way we work even better into the way we live.

Jen: The main thing seems to be having a supportive community in which to work, surrounding ourselves with other people who want to work in non-standard ways and finding ways to think about the world critically.

Jessie: Our recent visit to the community of Arden, Delaware (http://arden.delaware.gov) was important; reading about and observing the principles upon which the community was founded was inspiring. Part of our practice is looking for other interesting ways of living and working. We want to continue making work with families and to still be active as very old women, to always be close to other critical artists, designers, writers, musicians, playwrights, sociologists, geographers and so on, because other people are the encouragement and support that keep us going.

www.conwayandyoung.com

We thank Conway + Young for the conversation and Polly Hunter for proof-reading the edited text.

CUP

BACKGROUND

The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) is a New York City-based non-profit organisation that uses design and art to increase the impact of public participation in shaping the city. They inscribe their work in the tradition of community design centers in the U.S., which work with communities in order to raise debates and engage in discussion about urban planning. CUP develops this tradition further by taking an approach of 'popular education', in which they use design tools to further their mission of improving public participation in shaping the places where we all live.

To do so, they bring together art and design professionals—artists, graphic designers, architects, urban planners—with community-based advocates and researchers—organisers, government officials, academics, service-providers and policymakers—to work on communication projects. The aim of these projects is to break down the complex systems that shape urban life and to create educational tools that help to make these systems understandable to more people.

CUP's engagement in making the world around us more legible is driven by the belief in the practice of democracy: citizens should be involved in imagining their surroundings. Learning how to investigate enables citizens to interact with and change what they see.

AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT

Currently, the organisation works in two program areas: Community Education and Youth Education. Both aim at making important policy issues accessible for the people who need to know.

Under Community Education, the Envisioning Development Toolkits are projects that teach people about basic land-use terms and concepts in order to enable them to participate meaningfully in neighborhood change. These toolkits are developed over long periods of researching and testing to make sure they really facilitate the access to the processes of urban planning.

Also under Community Education, the Making Policy Public series facilitates close collaboration between policy experts and design professionals to produce fold-out posters that make complex policy issues accessible and appealing.

In its Youth Education programs, CUP partners with schools and afterschool programs to produce experiential, project-based curricula that get students out of the classroom to investigate the city and the people. The most in-depth projects in collaboration with the students are generally developed by working with them an average of 3 hours a week over the period of 15 weeks.

FUNDING

The work of CUP in its current form is funded through grants from foundations invested in youth development, community development, civic engagement, and art and design, as well as contracts for specific projects as well as through the support of private donors. Private donations, small and big, are crucial for keeping the organisation running by covering its bread-and-butter activities.

DEVELOPMENT

1997: first project
2001: registers as a non-profit organisation
2005: hires its first fulltime staff member
2011: 4 full-time staff members; $500,000 budget

LOCATION

New York, 8,175,133 inhabitants

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CONVERSATION

This conversation with Damon Rich, the founder of CUP and Chair of the Board of Directors, has been held in April 2011 via phone following up his presentation at the Architecture Foundation (London) in February 2011.

Bianca Elzenbaumer: When you started out in 1997 with what would become CUP, you had no clients built into your projects. How did you finance the projects back then and how did you make your own ends meet?

Damon Rich: Starting out in the early days, there was the wish to design things for which there wasn't a ready market, but I didn't want to be put off by the lack of it. Back then some of my collaborators were still in school, some people had jobs, and we would do a big project every year. In this sense, it really started out with what were more like the normal projects that young designers would do on their own: a competition entry, a little publication or something like that.

So very much all the early projects that led into CUP where these self-initiated, personal enrichment things, which you do because you want to make things that you think are interesting.

In terms of how I made ends meet, the answer is simply 'other jobs'. I was doing freelance teaching for another organisation and was working in a couple of different architecture offices. So there certainly was a long transition from that precarious economic model to actually being paid by CUP. And even when I was able to work more full-time on CUP, I still had to have some other jobs to get along well.

Bianca: As the coming into being of CUP as a non-profit organisation has been a long transition, could you trace this development for us?

Damon: For a long time after we started, we did not have any overhead and all our work was project-based: whatever money we could get for a project, we would spend it on that project. But we also found workarounds to support our practice, I set up our first studio space for free by doing a private architectural project for someone in exchange for a space in their warehouse. This way of operating allowed CUP not to face monthly bills for $10,000 for paying staff and office space and it gave us a lot of freedom to experiment as well as to make slower changes.

As CUP grew, the question came up of what the model for this practice should be. Should it be more like a firm, where there is me and people who work for me, where it is my design vision and everything looks the same? Being the main designer for it all was fine for a lot of years, but at some point it made sense that the model for this practice should be a non-profit, with a core staff and all other people who plug into it in different ways.

Besides this structural decision, surely one of the biggest changes in the model for CUP was beginning to have clients as part of the projects from the very beginning—which is something that happened around 2003/2004. And I guess that this is where I would like to respond to people who tell you that 'you need to comply with the market', that there are many markets. Certainly, you need a financial plan for something to be sustainable but that doesn't mean that just because you are an architect you need to go out there and to find rich people to design their houses. Today for instance we have more schools coming to us than we are actually able to service. We have more community-based organisation coming to us that we are able to deal with.

This current overload of requests means that we are now needing to start up a long-term planning process in which the biggest question to be addressed for the future is if we are actually trying to address the demand that we now see in terms of people coming to us saying 'we would love to have you for this or that'. What is our answer to this question? At the moment we don't really have one.

Bianca: In your talk at the Architecture Foundation, you mentioned that the budget of CUP has been growing very slowly and that at the beginning you went through the very time consuming process of seeking support for individual projects, until you developed a more sustainable strategy that secures funding for project programs that serve as an umbrella under which single initiatives can fit. Could you tell us more about this evolution in funding that you went through?

Damon: In terms of budget we have been continuously growing at a rate of about 30-40% every year. In the early years we also had periods when the budget would double from $60,000 to $120,000. This year we have 500,000$ in terms of money that goes to CUP, which makes us really proud. This slow rate of growth has been a real luxury for the organisation, because with a fast rate of growth comes the risk of making bad decisions.

The fact that in the early years everyone involved had their jobs and that no one was depending on CUP to pay their rent gave us the possibility of growing slowly and being quite thoughtful about how things went. Today it is of course a little bit different, we have four people working full-time, who fully depend on the organisation and we have a lot more overhead in terms of rent, salaries for freelance collaborators and things like that. If something went wrong at the beginning, we said "oh, whatever, it did not work out", but now it has major impacts on people's lives.

Since then things have changed, although our staff is still paid less then what they should be for the things they do—but they are paid much more reasonable salaries now then ever before and have their health insurance covered by CUP, which is really great—but it also means that we need to have many more financial mechanisms in place in terms of monitoring and reporting, because there is more money coming through and there are more people involved.

Even though there were certain benefits to having low overhead for so long, the fact is that if our mission really is to get a lot of people involved, then doing this in a situation where you are paying people a reasonable amount leads not only to better work, but is also necessary to make the organisation sustainable. As much as we might think—and this is just my opinion—

that people's good intentions, extra time and volunteering time can make all kinds of good things happen, the fact is that institutions can stand up for decades and decades because people are getting paid, it is their real job. This was the reason for which we felt strongly about moving away from the low overhead model.

Bianca: You underline the importance of CUP being a non-profit organisation. Could you tell us more what the implications of this form of organisation are?

Damon: As a non-profit organisation, the bottom line is that you have a board of directors, who don't get paid but who are ultimately responsible for the well-being of the organisation. Being a 'Nonprofit' also means that the organisation has a mission—and some people say that the mission of the organisation is really its owner—because the primary responsibility of the board of directors is to make sure that the organisation sticks to its mission. So when people come to us with a project proposal, we have a checklist with questions we ask about each project to figure out if it indeed fits our mission.

Now, of course sometimes you might have ten projects that meet your mission, but only two that are fun and then it is a question of prioritising. But generally the biggest question is 'is this project really furthering our mission?'.

The board of directors meets four times a year and its members sit on smaller meetings more frequently. The fact that a board of directors is all volunteer and not in an organisation's office every day can create tension between staff members and the board dynamics—which luckily is not our case—where the main staff can understandably say "who are these board people? Why are they having so much authority? They are not here everyday. We are here every day." I have come to appreciate only recently the inbuilt check and balance that comes with this model: the board really has to look at the big picture, has to think in the 'long-term' and needs to keep this on the forefront, while the staff are usually worried about the deadline that is tomorrow, getting through a project and daily admin. This inbuilt difference of perspective helps to make the organisation healthier.

Bianca: So it is really the mission statement as well as the structure of the non-profit that is keeping you on track, making sure you are not taking on projects just for the money or the fame involved?

Damon: Yes, and it has been a very long time to develop that. When you say mission, this all becomes very much consultant speech, but generally first you have a vision of how you would like the world to be different: at CUP we would like everyone to have access to the tools to engage with real estate developers, architects and other policy makers about the decisions that affect their neighbourhood.

This vision is usually bigger than what you can really do in a short time, but ideally—if for instance everything goes right with our organisation—in 50 years New York City will be very different in the way it makes decisions around development.

The importance of the vision also means that when a project is done we need to evaluate it, in order to see if it has brought us closer to our goal or if that project was a failure and we should avoid doing something similar again.

Bianca: By now you have accompanied CUP for 14 years. What influence did the organisation have on your social life and your own design practice?

Damon: In the early years it was very difficult to separate my work from my social life. As the founder my life was fully intertwined with the life of the organisation. Reconsidering my situation now—if I would need to do it all over again—I might try to keep more of a separation between my work for exhibitions as a designer and the work I did with CUP, as today people don't think of me as the designer of all that 'stuff', but as running an organisation. I am happy about that, but what I love in the world is designing. For better or for worse, and again I don't have any real complaints, a lot of my early work was labelled as CUP in an anonymous way—however that's just what it is.

In the end, to detach the work of CUP from any specific personality was part of the reason for making it a non-profit—to make it something that could get up and walk on its own. Sometimes I certainly have mixed feelings about that, because when you are a designer you have a feeling that certain things should be done in certain ways, so when different people get involved and they have different ideas, you first can think "ugh, this is ruining everything." In the end, I'm really happy with the way it has gone and the way CUP challenges the idea of individual authorship held by the design world.

Pulling back from an organisation you have set up can be very difficult, but there comes the moment that you might not be the right person for the job any longer. After the early deep involvement of the founder, that

person can find it difficult to step away, can keep on micro-managing, and will eventually hurt the organisation. In our case we are trying to avoid this 'founderitis' by my gradually shifting roles with CUP, which I think is working well as with the help of others I am able to extricate myself from my own deep involvement.

Bianca: Now that you are pulling back somewhat from CUP and have taken on the position of Urban Designer for the City of Newark, New Jersey, what are the new challenges you embrace?

Damon: My personal story is that CUP was really fantastic and I got to do and learn many things, but even though at CUP we are immensely proud of having a $500,000 budget, it is still very small. It is micro.

In this sense, what was exciting to me about coming to Newark as its first urban designer was the possibility to test out the things I learned at CUP on a bigger scale. Some things have gone pretty well on a small scale, so now what can survive at a bigger scale? That is my current experiment.

www.welcometocup.org

We thank Damon Rich for the conversation and for proof-reading the edited text.

EMMA HOSTEL

BACKGROUND

Emma Hostel is a cooperative initiative run by six friends in Warsaw who offer a convenient, family-like and environmentally-friendly place to stay overnight. Its organizational structure is horizontal, whereby all members of the co-op have the same rights and the same duties and all decisions are made on the basis of consensus.

AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT

Emma Hostel was conceived by friends with activist backgrounds, who wanted to put some of their ideals into practice by setting up Emma. The ideas that inspire the team behind Emma Hostel can best be understood through the stories behind the names of the hostel and its eleven rooms: the hostel is named after Emma Goldman, a socio-political, anarcha-feminist activist (1869-1940), and the rooms are named after Maria Orsetti and Jan Wolski, two Polish cooperative and anarcha-cooperative activists active before and after World War II; Carlo Giuliani, anti-globalist activist shot dead by police during demonstrations against the 2001 G8 summit in Genoa; Rosa Parks, African-American symbol of the fight against racial segregation in 20th century America; Susan B. Anthony, who fought for women's suffrage in the United States in the 19th century; Rudi Dutschke, the most prominent spokesperson of the German student movement of the '60s; Dian Fossey, American zoologist who studied gorilla groups over a period of 18 years and who was murdered by poachers in Rwanda in 1985; Rafal Gorski (1973-2010), prolific activist within the Polish anarchist and union movements; Buenaventura Durruti, Spanish anarchist and activist during the Spanish Civil War, and finally Margaret Sanger, American sex educator, nurse and birth control activist.

DEVELOPMENT

17th January 2011: Emma opens with 14 beds
July 2011: another 24 beds are added on the third floor

FUNDING

40,000 złoty (about €9,000) funding from the jobcentre; Income from renting hostel beds

LOCATION

Warsaw, PL, 1,716,855 inhabitants

CONVERSATION

This conversation, between Lukasz Wójcicki, Bianca Elzenbaumer and Fabio Franz, was held in the kitchen of Emma Hostel in Warsaw in July 2011.

Bianca Elzenbaumer: Could you give us an introduction to the Emma Hostel and how it all started?

Lukasz Wójcicki: We were five people setting up Emma Hostel as a social cooperative. Social co-ops in Poland are a way to help variously excluded people get back into the labour market—in our case, this exclusion had been related to long-time unemployment. But most importantly, we are all rooted in different anarchist collectives, so when we began to think about setting up our own business, it was natural to us to opt for the co-op model because of its ingrained horizontal structure.

In order to start out, we got support from the job centre—the place where you register as unemployed. For every disadvantaged person involved in the setting up of a social co-operative, you get a certain amount of money in support—for us, it was about 40,000 złoty (about €9,000). Of course, this was not enough. We had to put more money into these flats just to adapt them to our needs. Some of the furniture and other items you see are gifts from friends, or stuff we were able to gather in other ways. Of course, a few things we had to buy, but a lot of the furniture is made by a friend out of recycled wood. However, we did get the chairs from Ikea, simply because stuff there is cheap. As for the rest, we try to avoid buying corporate stuff, but rather to buy ecologically-sound and from small companies, and also from our friend who is running an agrotourism place.

Bianca: What response do you get from guests to the way you are running Emma Hostel?

Lukasz: The reactions are quite different, but most of our guests are interested in the idea behind the hostel. They usually have read on our website about how we work and are interested in it, but others are simply looking for a cheap place to stay and don't care. It is easy to feel the difference between these people. It is obvious when someone is only interested in a cheap place to stay because when you are trying to speak about the idea, they just want to know where their bed is, that's it. Then we know it does not make sense to persist.

Fabio: How cheap is it to stay with you compared to other places?

Lukasz: It is actually quite cheap. Right now, we just reduced the prices because we have very few people booking—maybe because it is July. Now it is 35 złoty for one bed. Normally, the prices are a bit higher because all this ecological stuff is quite expensive in Poland—fair trade tea and coffee from the Zapatistas, etc., is relatively rather expensive. We try to explain to people why it is expensive—that it is not because we are capitalists and want money. It's just the cost of running this hostel. If you come here, you should understand what you are paying for. There are some people who are coming here for the idea. Very often, we are telling people the story of the place—not like we are trying to convince them of something—we simply tell them that it is a co-op, that we have social and environmental aims, that we are supporting some organisations and so on. Sometimes people get really excited about it, and they want to come back for these reasons.

Bianca: You mention that you are supporting organisations through Emma Hostel. What does that mean?

Lukasz: Sometimes, we cooperate with associations that work with refugees and migrants, for whom we host people here. Very often, these people stay together with the guests and then we try to explain in what sense they are different. It is not always easy when we have refugees here—not easy for us, not easy for guests. So, we always try to explain why we are having them staying in the hostel and, usually, people's reactions are very friendly. Last week, for example, we had eight people from Romania who had been forced to work and to beg in the streets here in Poland. They lived here for a few days. They were very engaging and very nice. They talked to other guests a lot, trying to form very close relationships with them. This was difficult and we had to talk to them about this, to explain that this was not the way they should behave with guests: this is a commercial place, not a detention centre or something—it is simply the only commercial place in Warsaw that is willing to host migrants waiting for deportation. Sometimes, it is not easy to deal with such things, but usually it is OK. So, we always say, if we have space, it is absolutely no problem to host them. And they always receive a discount on their bed and, sometimes, when they don't have any money, we just say that is OK and let them stay for free.

Bianca: So things are going well on the business side for now?

Lukasz: Actually, right now we don't have much money—we have been open since February and have worked for free ever since. So, for us, it is not so easy not earning money right now; we are working here almost every day, if not on the reception, then doing stuff around. Right now, we are six and because it is quite difficult, we just need to do shifts in pairs to make things easier. So of the six, Anna and Kasia also have a different job, Piotrek works only here but his wife works somewhere else, and me and Gosia work only here, so, for us, it is really difficult to survive sometimes. None of us are living in the hostel, we are all renting flats—except Jacek who lives in a squat just across the road. So, from time to time, we have to do different jobs in order to survive.

When you run your own business, it is really tough at the beginning. So, right now, we are trying to borrow money from an organisation that helps out social enterprises. This means lots of paperwork. We are not business people; we are very often just learning how to do business. Fortunately, there are a few people that help us with business advice. Probably, without this help, we would not be here. We did some free workshops on managing a business and accounting, but basically we just learn by doing. We seem to make mistakes, all the time, on every step. But we have spent a lot of time and effort on this place, so to quit right now would be too much. We couldn't do that. Maybe in two, three or four months time, something will move. We've invested a lot in this place and also, we have a five-year lease. Moreover, the money we got to form the institution is linked to an obligation to run the business until December this year. If we fail, we need to give back the money. This is ridiculous because when your business is going down, it means you don't have money. So how can you pay this money back? It is ridiculous. And the people from the job centre don't realise that getting us off the list of the unemployed with a salary of 100 złoty per month, does not really allow us to survive. They just care about their statistics. They don't realise that this is volunteering and that it is really hard for us. Last month, we made just enough to pay the rent—10,000 złoty—but there are still taxes and bills to cover. Before we started, we made a business plan and calculated that with a 50% occupation rate, we could survive. Right now, it is less. April, May and June were very good months—we easily had enough for our bills, rent, everything—not for the salary, but for the rest. This month—shit.

Fabio: So how do you deal with things when problems like this come up, but also how do you take decisions more generally?

Lukasz: Of course, it is not so easy to manage a place with a non-hierarchical structure. In theory, it is easy—horizontal, common responsibility, but sometimes, it could be that someone was responsible for something, someone else didn't know—very basic problems with communication. We are also trying to rotate duties—sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. The level of engagement in the cooperative varies between the six of us. Sometimes, this creates a problem, but, in general, we believe that this horizontal approach is a very good way of managing. We have meetings and we discuss what to do and what needs to be done, who is responsible for what. Sometimes, it is very difficult to get things done without authority—someone takes on a task, but it simply doesn't get done. When this happens, things are difficult and we need a lot of talking to resolve the issue. Maybe it is also complicated because we don't earn money. Probably things are different when you take money for your job. There is a different kind of responsibility, no?

Bianca: How do you feel about the horizontal aspect of the co-op, is it something that you manage to achieve quite easily?

Lukasz: We really need to be careful not to build an unofficial, invisible hierarchy, but of course, you can't avoid this. It is tough: I might have my own initiative all the time, but I can understand that someone else might not, that someone might simply be waiting for instructions. So, we have to understand all these differences and the need to deal with them, the need to spend time to sit down and discuss. At least we have past experiences with collectives, because for someone who doesn't have experience in this collective work, I think it is extremely difficult. People just seem to need someone in power, to know what to do exactly. So it is a long-term process just to learn this way of operating horizontally.

Fabio: How do you see this place and your collective develop in the future?

Lukasz: In the future, I imagine the development of a huge network of cooperatives that support each other and draw on each other's skills. So, this is why we are always very happy when we have guests that are in-terested in this idea and we can spread it. But, on the other hand, it's not like we are doing this just to promote some idea, we also want to make a living from it. Before Emma Hostel, we were all doing different political and social things with different collectives and initiatives. Compared to that, the socio-political stuff here in Emma is only a small part and it is fine like this as we can still do polemical, political stuff outside. Within Emma, the idea for the future would be to set up a kind of fund to support some social and political actions for which there is always money lacking.

www.emmahostel.pl

We thank Lukasz Wójcicki for the conversation and Polly Hunter for proof-reading the edited text.

FERAL TRADE

BACKGROUND

Feral Trade, by the artist Kate Rich, is a public experiment in trading goods through active social networks. The word 'feral' describes a process which is wilfully wild (like a pigeon) as opposed to romantically or rural-wild (wolf). In this process, goods are passed from hand to hand, travelling between diverse social settings determined by the routes individuals can potentially travel. The products are traded in the UK and worldwide through social, cultural and occupational networks, harnessing the surplus freight potential of recreational, commuter and cultural travel for the practical circulation of goods. New products are chosen for their portability, shelf-life and capacity for sociability: Feral Trade goods in recent circulation include coffee from El Salvador, grappa from Croatia, tea from Bangladesh and sweets from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT

The main activity of Feral Trade is the trade of groceries via the agency of people that the artist or her friends know. This trade can either take the form of direct transactions or in the form of the Feral Trade Café, where the produce is prepared and served to the public. The design and production of product packaging documenting the process is also an integral part of Feral Trade, with a view to rendering details of source, shipping and handling with the micro-attention that ingredient listing labels normally receive.

FUNDING

Through trade, talks and workshops, social networks

DEVELOPMENT

Started in 2003

LOCATION

Bristol, UK, 587,400 inhabitants

CONVERSATION

This conversation with Kate Rich was held in June 2011 in her kitchen, waiting for a delivery of coffee beans fresh from the roaster.

Bianca Elzenbaumer: What sort of work were you doing before starting Feral Trade? How did your paths through life lead you to start such a long-term project?

Kate Rich: In the '90s, I was living in California and working with Natalie Jeremijenko as the Bureau of Inverse Technology. The Bureau was formed as an anonymous group, a kind of guerilla intervention into some of the massive changes we were witnessing at that time, triggered by the emergent techniques and technologies of the Information Age. We were trying to make sense of this social and technological change, and also make out where it was coming from. Computers were beginning to mediate every aspect of life, but there was no clear authorship of that technology. It was just all there, forming tools that did not have any apparent history, geography, ideology or any legible accountability to them. So that was the logic around us as the Bureau, forming a similarly unreadable, unaccountable, un-authored, mysteriously-numbered group in order just to try to process this new information and work out how to respond to it.

We started out in Melbourne, but then moved to California because it was the place where a lot of this stuff was being produced, where this immaterial new tech was being materially constructed. We were there for about four years and produced several iconic pieces of artwork: we flew a miniature drone over Silicon Valley to bring back an aerial image of the Information Age. In range of the Golden Gate Bridge, a tourist icon but also less well-known as a suicide icon—people travel there from all over the US to jump off—we infamously set up a suicide detection camera. We did an unauthorised install of an information system, a vertical motion-triggered camera that would capture an image when something vertical passed through the frame, producing a continuous image-stream of all falls from the bridge. Officially, information about the suicides was still gathered in the age-old manner of counting the bodies the coastguard fished out of the water, while at the same time, in other areas, financial market indexes for example, information was becoming increasingly segmented, made live, monitored, fractionally updated. So the Bureau was trying to apply the logic of information-gathering that was happening in economically profitable areas to the social world.

Around the turn of the century, I felt a real urgency to back away from producing work on computers and at that time I moved from California to Bristol in England. I got a job as volunteer bar manager at the Cube

Cinema, which is a volunteer-run, unfunded cinema, music and art venue. It was here, through running the bar and the very practical necessity of sourcing bar supplies, especially coffee, that I became a trader. At that point, in early 2001, I had come to Bristol with no backing, no connections. I knew only one person in Bristol, Heath Bunting, who invited me to come down to the Cube and only through that did I meet more people. My capital at this point was actually the social networks I brought with me, from a decade of living and travelling as a media artist—I saw these as "computer-formed" social networks, which was the big change that had happened in the '90s: you could really form and maintain social networks basically through e-mail. So I decided to combine those two things, my own network capital and my job at the Cube, by trying to secure a supply of coffee for the bar using just my social networks. Also at that time—there were the anti-globalisation protests going off in Seattle and London and Genoa—I had the suspicion that global trade wasn't this terrible thing, that it can't be all exploitation and problematics: this is political, but there are many versions of trade.

Bianca: Did you have some experience in trading before you started Feral Trade or was this something completely new you started?

Kate: No, not really. I had just been in the media art world, which means that you are never paid anything but you get flown around all the time. There was this whole circuit of symposia and exhibitions with always just enough money in them for an airfare, a hotel room and food. You could see how the funding would ultimately go into the airlines and the business sector. So at that time, I was travelling a lot at other peoples' expense and I would go grocery shopping and bring things back as gifts for friends. That was a normal social instinct. So in a sense, that was the level I began trading from.

With the import of the coffee for the Cube Bar, my friend, artist Amy Balkin, had recently brought me some coffee from El Salvador, where her sister was working in the US Peace Corps. That is where it started: I began to wonder if I could trade the world number one commodity—after oil—simply through my social connections. So I e-mailed Amy, who e-mailed her sister, who put me in touch with a Peace Corps worker in the village of San Pedro Nonualco and I persuaded him to mediate between me and the local coffee co-op. I hadn't imported anything before and the co-op nor-

mally sold their green beans directly on the national market and hadn't ever exported roasted coffee. So, we had to figure out how to do it at both ends. In the end, they drove to their nearest airport, I drove to my nearest airport and the first shipment of 25kg coffee was successfully delivered by air freight. From then on, I sold self-imported coffee at the Cube and also to a network of friends and acquaintances. From there, it has evolved very naturally into a project because I realized it focused a lot of my interests. I've expanded the product line to include seasonal, temporary and more perilous products, such as fresh sweets from Iran, couscous from Morocco, carp from Montenegro—all sourced through either people I know personally or through someone I know who knows someone. So the producers are somehow arrived at entirely through social connections and all my customers also turn up via extended social networks. Not Facebook, but actual, physical social networks—I certainly don't know everyone personally that I buy from or sell to, but it is always the case that someone I know does know these people personally. This could sound like a closed system, but actually, if you think of social networks, you go one hop away from yourself and it is completely different: my friend was trading the coffee with his bank manager and I was using it to pay my mechanic. People's parents are often involved and it is actually simultaneously a very loose and a very strong social grouping. And, by the way, people's parents make great couriers, they are quite dedicated because their offspring are involved. So they are very fast and reliable. (laughs)

Bianca: So how can I imagine the flows of your trade? Does all the produce flow through your flat?

Kate: Yes, it more or less does now. I was using the Cube as a base for a long time, but, for the last two years, this is the space I use. Occasionally things don't actually come here—I can coordinate a shipment that will go directly from the source to the destination, perhaps via other places, but generally this involves a lot of warehousing. It is "Not-In-Time Shipping", which is as reliable as DHL, which means that I'll reliably get things there eventually. Today is, for instance, the second day I am waiting at home for a Parcel Force courier delivery, so that is exactly what I mean by "reliable".

Bianca: When this question of reliability comes in, how do you deal with money and risk in your project?

Kate: I pay up front so, for me, it is all risk. With everything, I pay up front, so I have no guarantee that anything will arrive and I can't be sure of the quality until I get it. I do everything I can to assure good quality because, in a case like mine, the trader becomes the quality control. As an independent trader, it is you who needs to maintain the value because if a thing isn't good or if it isn't there, I can't sell it. However, certain defects can add value to my shipment. For example, if the coffee has been knifed open by the customs agents, it adds a little caché to it and people like that. The border authority do this because if it is a small amount, you are immediately under the commercial threshold of credibility, whereas if you are shipping thousand of tons, no one touches it. It is all my own money I'm gambling. A lot of the trade process is about finding couriers and finding warehouses for transhipment, as shipments don't always go from A to B directly—they go via wherever someone is travelling. The best 'warehouses' are small cultural organisations where people work with some kind of public interface, like a small gallery or a magazine-editing office. There, they are used to people turning up all the time. I wouldn't normally send someone to someone else's private home if they don't know each other. Going to these slightly public spaces is also about the added value for the participants. You get more: you get a social interaction, you get some kind of rendezvous. So that is what the network is designed around—connections between nodes—and I map all these in my database, which archives every shipment.

Bianca: Did you create and use that database from the beginning, already having certain aims in mind?

Kate: At the beginning, I was writing everything down on pieces of paper and it got really chaotic, to the point where I thought, I should just get software. Looking at commercial inventory software, I realised it didn't have fields for courier reports and all the other data that I was interested in. This meant that I had to write my own software, which brought me back to what I was trying to get away from: computers and the internet. So, I've built my own database in a way that means it could handle the information and also work as the public interface for the project. Online, people basically see my inventory—that's the whole website. There's one 'About' page and then a live inventory. It is like going on DHL but here you can track everybody's shipments. In a way, this is a kind of restructuring

of information which is similar to what we were doing with the Bureau. And the database also generates maps. I can, for instance, ask the database to output a map of everywhere the sweets have travelled. So you start seeing the social connections behind the project.

What I want to do next is to train the database to make this info more interesting, so I could map all the airports used in Feral Trade routes, or any shipments that involved a parent-child relationship, for example. What I have is eight years of data—it's all in there, I just need to figure out how to query it. Again, this is capital. It is also why a long-term project is really important, so that you get the depth of time coming through it. In the art cycle, you are supposed to make something and show it for a year or two and then everyone is saying, "What is your new project?". I actually put myself in a difficult position by only focusing on Feral Trade. People always want to hear about your new project, but what I try to do is increase the granularity, the research, the products and the relationships. So I am actually much more a trader than an artist because this is what you do in business: you don't develop a brand-new business every time, cutting the connections to your previous one—you improve your existing business.

With these maps, I'm trying to prove and demonstrate a form of social networking that is not the Facebook story. What I maintain is that this data is not harvestable in any valid way. For a start, it is not scalable—this is not multipliable by 20,000. The social networks I have experienced clearly demonstrate that they don't scale up: I have more or less the same number of social connections all the time. People come and go. Sometimes my mules overlap with my strong friendship groups, sometimes they don't. I have a couple of hundred people in my database, but the number of active ones stays about the same. Social networks depend on actual social relationships: physical, load-bearing, actuated social networks. Every shipment on my maps has happened—it is not some speculative idea. Stuff has been carried in bags, through airports, not dropped, not lost—scaling this up materially is satisfyingly impossible. It is not a model based on stripped-down efficiency. Sometimes, one bag of coffee will travel in a bag on a plane to Australia, so of course there is a whole flight for that one bag of coffee. But in actual fact, there are other people on the plane, I'm going for other reasons, there are other things in my bag, so it's loading. It is a rich-shipping medium, not a stripped-down one. I'm working on a model of commerce that has a completely different value-set to

efficiency-based, competitive capitalism. I'm still barely into articulating what that is exactly, but this is the work I'm trying to do. I'm not inventing anything, I'm simply articulating it in a particular context and trying to understand it.

Bianca: Does Feral Trade then also work out for you financially?

Kate: No, but as a business I'm doing really well. I'm not in debt, like most businesses. So I'm actually successful with the business, in that I make a mark-up on everything. This is a reasonable business model, except that I don't have the scale and still make a lot more money talking about the project than selling things. I prefer the money from the trade, but actually I'm making money talking. Again, I can't do this massive, petrochemical injection of scale into it because it is always based on real social networks. For example, I got this coffee from the farmers in El Salvador. I bought their whole 2010 harvest for 2,000 British Pounds and this was all the coffee they had. I could sell more coffee than I can get at the moment. But I'm just letting it happen at its own pace. When you don't exploit your vendors or your customers, the ways in which you can leverage your income are limited. That's out of balance with the economy we live in.

Bianca: From time to time, you also set up the Feral Trade Café in cultural venues. How does that work and how does it fit into the project?

Kate: To date, I have installed the Feral Trade Café three times in galleries and I think it actually doesn't work there. People don't go to galleries. People could come in from the street and buy a coffee, but they don't. I think it did work for the staff, and people used it as a meeting space, but it needs to be a slightly more commercial or more public context for there to be enough of an atmosphere to make it work. In a gallery, you just feel awkward, you are in visual mode and it feels strange. The café I did that I found was really successful was the one in Newcastle at the AV Festival. They invited me to do the coffee and food, so I took over a cinema bar which normally serves Coca-Cola and popcorn. They got a food license for the ten days and their staff worked for me for that time. I stripped out all the stock and replaced it with my stock and we were making green toasted wheat, couscous porridge, Mexican tortillas, rose water drinks. I spent the previous month amassing produce—having the deliveries coinciding in time and in space was a real challenge but I had a budget and was able to dedicate my work to bringing things in. That café ran for ten days and it was the main meeting place of the festival. I fed everyone: the visitors, the festival staff, the other artists and the general public. It was the perfect interface because I would have people who would come in deliberately and other people who would come in and ask for a Coke and have to deal with the change of menu. I made a decent amount of money running that as a food venue. When you are selling something by the bag, you don't make much markup. If you sell it by the cup—that's with coffee—you make a fortune, everyone does. With these public interfaces, you can actually make a living out of them and also transmit the work, if you set them up right.

Bianca: When Fabio and me first met you at the Alternative Schools Symposium in Liverpool in 2010, we found it great how in your talk, you openly addressed the issue of financing your life. Is this something you usually do in your presentations?

Kate: The question about money is somehow the number one question I get when I go and talk in an art school: how do you survive? In a way, my project is all about that—all my finances are online. You can see everything that I did in the invoice column. If you read it for that, you can see the financial structures behind it—you can actually see when the money goes into hotels and travels. The database is showing all that. And supposedly it is not a subject you should be talking about, but I just always found that really fascinating and haven't had any problem with it. It is like health. Health is a very key part of the public individual and, generally, it is not acceptable to discuss it in your public life. Generally, someone with a health problem will just retire from public life for the duration and then appear again. The same with economic issues, and this just seems meaningless to me because it is just absolutely part of the context. I've always found it bizarre that you go to these conferences on alternatives, open source and this or that, and then there is the coffee break and you are drinking and eating corporate catering, sandwiches and crisps served to you by a middle-aged women who has absolutely no social connection to the event and who is not invited. Everyone looks straight through her, like she is not there. This discontinuity between content and context I've always found supremely irritating, so I sort of force my way into that gap by offering to do both the presenting and the catering. Which is hard work.

Bianca: In Liverpool, the catering you did consisted in serving home-made Cube-Cola. Could you tell me more what is behind that product?

Kate: Cube-Cola is a collaboration with Kayle Brandon, who is a Bristol-based artist. It is one of the products I trade in Feral Trade and I just happen to also be one of the people to make it. Cube-Cola began in 2004, when we were both managing the bar at the Cube and, again, it came out of a very simple bar stock issue. There was always this argument at the Cube, even before our time there: should we serve Coca-Cola at a DIY-culture, independently-run arts venue? So we bought Virigin Cola but politically this makes no difference. At various times we tried not to have cola at all, but we serve the public and when people come in to see a film or a band, they want a Coke. Having to say no all the time was really stressful for everyone. So it was just one of these pragmatic, socialized decisions. We had been running an open-source computer network at the Cube, and online, I came across an open-source cola recipe and wanted to give it a go. Kayle joined me, we tried the online recipe and our first batch kind of worked, but took a whole day to make. Then we tried again and again, for in fact three years, but the emulsion of the water and the essential oils—the flavour oils—kept on failing. In the end, after having asked lots of people for advice, a friend's cousin—high-level food scientist from India—came to the UK and we had a meeting with him. This was extremely illuminating and we finally broke through the knowledge barrier and started being able to produce Cube-Cola on demand. Every month or two, Kayle and I meet and make a batch of cola concentrate, something like 300ml. This is very concentrated so is enough to make about 120 litres of cola. It's the reverse-engineering of a major commodity. It has been a really instructive project for us, and every now and then we are invited somewhere to do it as a workshop to take people through the process with us. With this project, we've been turning over just enough to pay for our ingredients, but for 2012, we're planning to gear our distribution up a bit, expand the business experiment and become more like a small, hand-managed cola factory. We are not proposing that you go home and make everything in your house on your own, but it is a hopeful tunnel to another world.

Bianca: So is Feral Trade, with all the trading, talking and exhibiting involved, sustaining your life or do you need to do other work for a living?

Kate: At the Cube, I now volunteer to do the accounts, from my interest in money and systems. I do a bit of paid IT work, but generally I string it together out of artist talks and occasional commissions and royalties. Somehow, incoherently, that holds things together, but everything is tightening up at the moment so it always feels like, now the money is run out, and then it isn't quite, but I'm braced for change over the next few years. Academic money from talks is a serious part of my income. I don't do that many, but I also don't need that much money to survive, but with academia cut savagely in so many countries, that will significantly hit my type of economy. But I'm ready for change. The Feral Trade project is also a sort of training system for working without expected infrastructure, working with whatever infrastructure is there. In a sense, I am trying to build up the kinds of networks that will move with change.

Bianca: Is there some fear about the future involved in living this way?

Kate: In the last few years, I've had a lot of health issues and my insurance against that is living in a country that has got national health system. That is why I would never move back to the United States. I am not waiting for retirement to do the fine things in life, like travelling. I am doing that all my life, integrating travel and how to really live and having direct experiences in my life so that I don't have this kind of expectation to do it at the end. There are so many sad stories where someone saves up and gets struck down by terrible illness one year after retirement and dies. So, as I don't store possible experiences up for the future, I can't imagine my life changing a lot when I get older. I will still be concentrating on how to subsist well, personally and socially. My ability to work will not change very much until I hit about 80 and, at that point, I think that my interest will be in good socialised, collectivised methods of suicide, rather than to worry about which care home I am going to get banked in. For me, it is really all about housing security and having the right not to move. I was living in a truck on a public street for the first eight years in Bristol which allowed me to save money to buy this housing association flat, so in that respect, I should be safe now. It is also about health security. I have friends in the States who spend as much on their health insurance as on their rent because they are forced to—not out of choice. One friend just had a baby and, despite being on the highest level of health insurance, got charged $3,500 for having the

baby. Not living in those conditions is pretty important. Most of my economy is really gathered from other social resources. At the Cube, while no-one gets paid to work there, we have a cinema, a music auditorium and a public programme which are extraordinary assets; there is the computer network, office resources and we share a car, plus there is the network of other people and their skills which is an inestimable asset. I could do a budget of my life where most of my income is actually externalities like the Cube, my own social networks, the Avon Gorge—which runs through Bristol and where I spend as much time as possible—and the National Health Service. You could probably add that up to, say, £36,000 a year, together with my other income. I'm not interested in going through the conversion to cash though, but just actually working out how to be able to access resources directly.

www.feraltrade.org
www.ptechnic.org/cola/cola-lab.html

GOLDEX POLDEX

BACKGROUND

Goldex Poldex is an experimental project space in Kraków, Poland, that is run by four friends: Janek Sowa, Janek Simon, Kuba de Barbaro and Agnieszka Klepacka. In its programming, the space combines art, theory and design. It is independent and 100% self funded (no external public or private sponsoring).

FUNDING

Privately funded by the three founding members.

DEVELOPMENT

2006/2007: the idea of running an independent project space comes up
2008: Goldex Poldex comes to life

LOCATION

Kraków, PL, 756,267 inhabitants

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CONVERSATION

This conversation was held in a beer garden in Kraków in May 2011.

Fabio Franz: To begin with, how did Goldex Poldex come about as a project space?

Janek Sowa: The project started as a sort of joke proposed by Janek Simon, an artist friend of mine. At the time, he was doing a project in Madagascar where he organised a 'Polish Year' as a sort of mockery of these international 'Polish cultural seasons' in Britain, Germany, France and so on. When he returned to Poland after one month, he told us, very excitedly, that there is a gold rush in Madagascar! Basically at that time, in 2006/2007, a lot of people were looking for gold as it was the time when gold prices were going up because of wars and the economic situation. So, jokingly, we thought, 'OK, let's try to open a gold mine in Madagascar!' Well, really he convinced us—he proposed that we could each invest the equivalent of €1,000 in order to open a gold mine. It seemed like such a great idea and then we thought, 'OK, we have the gold mine, what will we do with the money we earn from it?' And so we found it would be interesting to actually use this money to do some sort of activity in Poland and that this

would maybe help us to be 'independent'. At that time, we had a lot of discussions about what it meant to be independent; we were constantly questioning in which situations we are independent. Is it possible to be independent? We thought that this source of money could make us really independent: we would not have to work, the gold mine would just run there and we would just get the money. We then started looking for a place to actually do something cultural in Kraków and we thought, 'Let's first rent and set up a place here. Once we had done that, we would go to Madagascar, get the gold mine and then the money will flow and fuel the place.' So we did find a place in Kraków, but also, in the meantime, we met a geologist who was doing proper research in Madagascar. He was not looking for gold but for some sort of precious stones—not diamonds since they are monopolised by the Russians, but rubies, beryl, etc. He persuaded us that actually the gold mine could be a difficult endeavour and that it would be a bigger investment than we thought, with a high risk of not finding anything. After that, for a brief time, we had the idea of buying an abandoned gold mine and putting some people to work there—becoming capitalists—but then it turned out that that is not such a great business either. So eventually, it turned out that the gold mine was not going to work, but we already had this space in Kraków and we had got so involved in running it that we thought we could still do something without a gold mine. It also turned out that the place we found was cheap, so we only had to change our lifestyle a little bit to save enough money for the rent of this place. But the name remained: 'Goldex Poldex', the Polish gold mine. The '-ex' was actually added because in the '90s there were a lot of small companies mushrooming in Poland and, at that time, for everything you were doing, it seemed you would just add an '-ex' to it to make it sound more international.

Fabio: When you realised that the gold mine might not be happening, what other idea did you form as to how the space might be run independently?

Janek: I had a vision that the place would develop, that there would actually be more people wanting to join and that it would multiply: imagine twenty people putting the same small amount of money into the project! You would already have considerable potential and it's not unfeasible—I know twenty people personally who are doing some kind of cultural activity and that could easily spare the money that we would need to spend. By investing it in Goldex Poldex, we could effectively

operate as a cooperative—a benevolent association of an unlimited number of people. For me, that is the power of the multitude: you have a lot of people and together you can do things which you cannot do on your own. It is basically the old-school idea of a cooperative; we simply tried to apply this thinking to the field of cultural production. We really hoped it would become something like a cultural co-op and actually my biggest disappointment is that it has not in fact evolved this way.

You don't see so many people willing to do this kind of stuff—they think it is your project and that they can only get involved in specific proposals. This does not really lead anywhere, but the idea of doing things together as twenty people where everybody puts €100 into the pot every month—that would be something quite different. With €2,000 a month, you already have quite some possibilities—you can do a bigger exhibition, publish a book, invite someone from anywhere in the world—if you plan it in advance. And if this person is happy to come without charging a big fee, €2,000 would allow you to really do something. But this hasn't happened.

I think that a lot of people are still thinking about cultural production solely in the frame of animator-audience situation, where we are there to provide the program for an an audience. People who have skill and will to organise things just go on with their lives, following individual career options that are open to them rather than continuing to work associatively. It is a certain type of subjectivity: the way they are shaped as subjects, so they don't really consider this co-operation as a real possibility. I think this is because of the way the general social landscape is structured, so that in general people think 'Why would I do this without earning any money and even having to put in my own money, when instead I could set up an NGO and apply for a grant?' The system is like those photographs where you have an empty head where you can insert your face: this represents an NGO having lots of money from the Norway Fund, the European Union or any other of these funders—'I put my face in there and I'm gonna become a cultural entrepreneur.' This kind of attitude is also being actively promoted as the right way of action with the so called "civil society".

Many people are thinking in terms of the 'cultural entrepreneur', which is horrible. In relation to this approach, I had this very funny experience. I was invited by the British Council to take part in an international meeting of young publishers in London and I thought 'This is sort of strange—why would the British Council invest money in inviting people from Poland, India, Argentina and so on, to bring them to London for a free two-week program?'. In the end, it turned out that this whole endeavour was all about finding a good business opportunity for the British book industry! All they wanted to do is to gain knowledge about our local markets. They were asking us what kind of books are best sellers and all the seminars were about sucking knowledge from us. They also continuously repeated that we had to become 'cultural entrepreneurs'. This 'creative industries' thing is disgusting.

Fabio: When you imagined that twenty people could be involved, how did you see this collective functioning? What ways did you imagine these people would deal with shared authorship?

Janek: Running such a project together is yet another problem that is definitely linked to the model of subjectivity. People want to sign their name on everything they are doing. They want to see their name in the media, they want to be shining. Another issue is how to decide what to do in practice—this is definitely something to experiment with. I think this kind of issues can only be sorted out by practice—by trying different types of organization, discussing it, arguing maybe even quarrelling over how do we act together. You cannot figure it out in a purely speculative way. So I haven't had any sort of preconception, how it could in practice run.

Fabio: So how is Goldex organised at the moment? How are you taking decisions and how are you making your projects happen?

Janek: Everyone involved in Goldex has his or her own specialisation: I'm a theorist, Kuba is a graphic designer and Janek is an artist. Consequently, most of the time we are proposing things that are linked to our own fields of activity. The only person who actively joined Goldex since its creation—Agnieszka Klepacka, who is also Janek Simon's girlfriend—has done film studies and she has been running a sort of film club in Goldex. The rule is that we only do things that we all agree on. Each person has the right to veto a proposed idea. We don't have to actively support the carrying out of a decision, but everyone has a right to say 'no' and in this case, we don't do it. This is basically our only rule.

We try not to do too many things that are proposed from the outside, because then it is too easy to become

a service provider. We are happy to collaborate and we do some things with other institutions, but we prefer to realise our own ideas. When we agree to produce something, then we are producing it. We try to be as self-sufficient as possible, but sometimes we borrow stuff from our friends—someone always has a projector, a TV—or we bring our own things. We take care ourselves of our guests—picking them up from the airport or the train station, hosting them in our places or renting a place for them. But, of course, there is a limit; the most costly thing we've have done was maybe €500. There are many things we have done with €50, which essentially pays for one person's train journey from Warsaw to give a lecture here. We could not really go beyond the €500, which is a shame in a way, but good in another: I don't like spectacular culture and so a limited budget actually prevents us from becoming spectacular. Even if we had a spectacular idea, if we ever were that mentally ill to be wanting to do a laser show, for example, we simply couldn't do it because we don't have the resources. In this sense, we're in a safe position.

Bianca Elzenbaumer: Of course there are also freedoms connected to the way you operate—how would you describe these factors that give you a certain degree of independence?

Janek: We certainly don't have to worry so much about offending anyone with the things we do, since we don't depend on some funders' benevolence. Moreover, since you are free to do things the way you want, you don't have to worry about getting an invoice and all the other bureaucratic stuff. This is surely the freedom you get. I think that the bottom line is a lot about whether you need to make a living with what you are doing or not. If running an NGO is your job and you have to earn a living from it, you are obliged to do one thing after another, since that is the only way to sustain getting money. Goldex Poldex is definitely only possible because we have a sort of privileged personal situation. It is a luxury that we can actually 'waste' this money. Of course, personally I don't think it is wasted, but from the point of view of the rest of our economic situation—paying for a flat, a car—it is 'wasted' as you don't get anything practical in return. I have always considered Goldex Poldex to be a hobby and I know I'm only going to do it as long as I have enough money to spare for this hobby. So this project is only possible because the three of us have professional lives outside of the project. Of course, there is always a sort of benefit we have, like being invited to speak at a conference be-

cause we run Goldex Poldex, and being paid a fee for this—but this is rather a collateral effect than what we aim at. You could say that this money was earned because of Goldex Poldex, but this is a sort of unintentional and, since it only happens once in a while, can never be considered a regular income.

Bianca: Do you think that teaching theory is also feeding back into the way you run Goldex?

Janek: The problem of how to run and maintain the project is definitely fed by our relation to theory. For instance, we reflect quite a bit on the theory of forms of capital by Pierre Bourdieu. He says that it is not only material capital that is productive, but that you have different forms of capital—cultural, symbolic and social capital. Cultural capital is the education you get from your home: you know how to speak and how to be polite, for example. Let's say if you are looking for a business partner, you have more chances of convincing someone to work with you if you have a high cultural capital. So it is ultimately productive in an economic way, since you can potentially earn more when having a good cultural capital. The same is true for your symbolic and your social capital—the people you know. Goldex Poldex is certainly based on convertibility of these capitals. We have little material capital, but we have considerable social capital, which means we know people because we have collaborated with them in different circumstances. These people see that what we are doing is not commercial, so they are ready to participate under different conditions than they would expect when working with a public or private institution. People are willing to do something with us, even if they only get refunded for their travel costs and a place in our house in Krakow, because they know that we don't earn—but rather lose—money in this. They also accept the invitation because they know us personally, they know what we are doing, they like it, they trust us in the sense of the quality of the outcome. They want to participate. This allows us to convert social capital into practical solutions. Without this social capital, we could not do anything. Again—it's a privileged situation. Social capital, like all other forms of capital, is not equally distributed. So in fact, it is not a universal solution. We cannot just suggest anyone to run their own Goldex Poldex just because we are able to run it. We are, in a way, privileged.

Fabio: Do you also feel that Goldex is only possible

because you are economically privileged or does that not really matter?

Janek: It matters quite a lot. We are not rich by any standard, but our material situation is somehow secure. For instance all of us get some support from our families: for example a help in getting, an apartment. Otherwise—especially with the prices in Krakow—I could never ever be able to afford my own flat. The maximum credit I could get would allow me to buy a 35m² flat and I would have to pay half of my monthly salary for the next thirty years. I'd have no surplus to put into projects like Goldex. So we are privileged because we are not really economically precarious. Janek is not employed but he is economically stable, since he has a good reputation as an artist and he also got a family flat. Of course, everything could change, the state could go bankrupt and I could lose my job, or the economic crisis could slow down art funding. In that way, we are precarious to some degree, but not as precarious as some people.

Fabio: After having run Goldex Poldex for a while now, how do you see its future development?

Janek: I think that, after these three years, our activities are becoming repetitive and I feel that we might end up doing more of the same, also because of the budget constraints. It has been fun, a great experiment, we tested certain things and did some interesting stuff, but I have the sense of hitting the wall. To continue, it will have to function in a completely different way. Maybe if we had some sort of business downstairs and a project space upstairs, then the business would fund the place and we could work with a different budget. But I don't want to go into the NGO sector with Goldex. I'm already in the NGO sector with my publishing house Korporacja Ha!art, so I want to do something different with Goldex.

Fabio: And how do Janek and Kuba see this situation? What do they imagine?

Janek: Personally, I am running out of money and maybe I'm gonna have to stop, but I think Janek enjoys it the most out of us three. In part, this is because he's found a niche—a small, independent gallery with a really ambitious program that he can realise because he has friends in the art world who are willing to come and contribute. I actually think Goldex works in the gallery mode, but for me it was more of a social ex-

periment, with the aim of trying to build it into something bigger. In this sense, it is not so attractive for me now because organising lectures is what I do for a living anyway. Also, somehow, I think this kind of place cannot be permanent in the way a public institution is. Recently, I have also been thinking that in fact many people that would like to do something in a social or political dimension tend not to like art because they see the art circle as posh and egotistic, that everybody has to be trendy and look nice. So I think the fact that Goldex is also a gallery and art place discourages many people who would rather be involved in a purely social or political project. This is my recent intuition—I have this feeling that socially-engaged art tends to attract certain kinds of people, who are not necessarily people who like to be social and political activists. So I am becoming sceptical about running a place that intends to be socially and politically active whilst at the same time operating within the art world. That is my own sense of what is going on with Goldex.

www.goldexpoldex.pl

IMAGE-SHIFT

WWW.IMAGE-SHIFT.NET

BACKGROUND

image-shift (formerly also known as bildwechsel) is a graphic design studio based in Berlin, dedicated to cultural, social and political graphic and communication design in print and other media. The studio was founded by Sandy Kaltenborn in 1999, later joined by Pierre Maite in 2004. The duo prefer to base their work on companionship rather than on the conventional client-designer relationship as determined by the ideologies of the service industries. This way, they approach projects collaboratively with questions around the social, cultural and political relations of what they are about to produce. This allows them to produce design and content that they are interested in, rather than limiting themselves to the wrapping and styling of content that society does not need. Aware of the specific responsibility of visual producers as those who have the power to shape a certain discourse, image-shift are working for society and not for the market.

AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT

image-shift work with cultural institutions such as museums, artist-run spaces and other exhibition spaces, for small and big foundations (cultural and political), for socially-engaged associations and political activist groups and for publishers, as well as teaching and lecturing occasionally at universities (national and international). Examples of image-shift clients include The German Federal Cultural Foundation, The House of World Cultures (HKW) in Berlin, Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (RLS), The New Society of Art (NGBK), documenta 13 (d13), Anne Frank Center in Berlin, bbooks publishers, Fels (activist group).

FUNDING

Funded through the work the studio does for paying clients and through collaborations with other groups. Additionally: autonomous fund-raising for self-initiated projects.

DEVELOPMENT

1999: Sandy Kaltenborn sets up the studio
2004: Pierre Maite joins the studio

LOCATION

Berlin, DE, 3,490,445 inhabitants

CONVERSATION

This conversation with Pierre Maite was held in July 2011 in image-shift's new studio space in Kreuzberg, Berlin.

Bianca: How did you and Sandy start to work together?

Pierre Maite: While I was still a student in a small city south of Paris, I was working with a political group outside the art school called "alternative libertaire", but I was slightly frustrated with what they were doing and how they understood visual communication at that time. So I was interested in meeting other people whose work I liked. Out of these people, Gerard Paris Clavel from Ne Pas Plier was the most interesting one to me, because he was not afraid to put his cards on the table, to speak freely about the economy and the politics of his practice. He recounted the story of Grapus [a famous French graphic design collective which evolved out of the '68 student rebellion in France], how it grew up, about '68 and how, back then, they could rely on an economic basis of mostly state founding. He also spoke about his living situation in the suburb of Paris where he has his atelier, which is provided by the city and without which he would not be able to support his practice financially speaking.

It was quite good to hear all this as a student, because the main political design I knew from places like the Chaumont Poster Festival always leaves you with the question of why these posters are never in the street. In these places, there is no contextualisation of the work, so you just have nice images in a book, but then, that's it. The whole context of production and distribution is really important and sometimes a xeroxed A3 poster has much more meaning in the social context it comes from than an A0 silk-screened one with 10 colours.

Most of the work we did as students was really decontextualised; we were just in production mode for the school or the teachers. Even when some of us would take work outside, for example in the form of street art, there was no back-and-forth of ideas between the "inside" and the "outside".

So, Gerard told me about some other people that I could meet and one of them was Sandy, who at the time had been running his studio for something like four or five years. So, I just came here to Berlin and we discussed that I could do an internship with him for three months, which, in the end, I extended to six months.

But, after that, I went back to France because I had to pay back my student debts. Back in France, I worked in a print shop making advertising for six months. Once the money was paid back, I met with Sandy again and we decided to continue to work together.

Bianca: How did image-shift change when it became a collaborative practice and how did your background play into that change?

Pierre: Developing a studio from one into two people does change a lot, of course: the structure changes and we also bring in interests from different fields. We both studied graphic design, but the school where I studied was like a mixture between art and graphic design. I never learnt about fonts or design programs; you learnt whatever you wanted to. The diploma was very arty and there was no real framing. So, I never really learned graphic design, but I was interested in it and we learned more or less through doing and through making mistakes. It was not the classical school where one learns about fonts and relationships with clients. The problem with this kind of art school is that you are pretty much isolated—you never work with other fields. It was a closed world. The engagement was just between students and professors talking about nice images, but not about the social usage of them. Images can have a really strong social impact and it is not just about making something nice or technical.

Fabio: On our BA, we were encouraged to go out and research, to bring our own interests into the projects. But what I missed from that school was a preparation for the "real world". What do you do with all these nice, social and political ideas? People end up going into some standard design agency because they don't know how to carry on their practice in a more sustainable way.

Pierre: That is the problem when you are in a sort of cocoon with no interconnection with the outside. This interconnectedness is something we try to bring into schools when we do workshops. Right at the beginning of the economic crisis, we ran a workshop in Stuttgart where we asked people to observe how the crisis was touching them, their neighbours and their surroundings. We just threw them into the city to make interviews, to go to their baker or to their neighbour, to find out what this crisis had to do with them. In the end, they produced a kind of newspaper, which they took back outside in order to get some feedback, to get reac-

tions and to see how effective the work that they were producing was. This was not about making a fantastic graphic design product, this was about having a process, which is going outside an institution and coming back inside. But it was also a collective process. Often, in art schools, you get people working alone, so we try to bring with us this idea of people working together, and students are not really used to that. However, the reality is not that you just sit on the computer and think, "Yes, this could be a nice image", but that you are talking with friends, you have some people bring a project to you, or you are taking about a project to other people. So, it is a continuous back-and-forth between people. You discuss images with other people. This is quite important—taking the responsibility to talk about images, to contextualise them. Therefore, when doing workshops, we try to create this kind of structure, where students make images together, where they have to talk about them and where they also share images, in order not to sacralise them as belonging to people individually. Ultimately, we shouldn't think we are the owners of our images because as part of a collective project, we are just part of a process.

Bianca: How does this approach to collaboration translate in your practice?

Pierre: The way we process information and ideas between the two of us is a bit chaotic. (laughs) The format of the process is changing all the time. We used to always have a ping-pong process: one of us starting with an idea and handing it to the other one, then we would talk about it and so it would go back and forth until we found something interesting. But now, we also work separately and then just exchange our point of view. And then we also talk with the other people involved in the project about our proposals. Sometimes, we can spend weeks and fight about how things could be. In the end, there is not one clear process and we are constantly learning from each other. Also, we are producing text and concepts. The so-called "creative work" is actually only 30% of our work, the rest is discussion, organisation, cleaning up, bookkeeping, etc. We are doing everything: yesterday, for example, we spent the day building a shelf for the new studio space and this is as much part of our work as everything else.

Most of the time, when people bring projects to us, they already know what we do and how we work. They know that if they come to us, it is not like a service where they come and say, "We want a poster with this image", etc. Most of the time, the people who come

to us know that it will be a discussion and they are expecting us to also work on the concept. It is more like, "We have this project, we would like it to speak to the outside, what do you think?". The way the process takes place is that we try to meet the people we are working for many times, in order to have a lot of talk and discussion. We don't feel like we have the answer or the truth; we make proposals that are to be discussed. Often, the people in the project don't have much knowledge about communication, but they understand the background of the project and therefore these intense discussions are quite important.

For example, there is this job centre project we are currently involved in. The leading group of activists working on it already spent more than a year there and they are not approaching it conventionally—"We know what you need and the flyers are already printed: I want one Euro more a month." Instead, they go there and conduct interviews with people. They started from the fact that, in this neighbourhood, at least 30% of the population have something to do with the job centre. This is a big amount, but nobody is really talking about it, about the whole situation, the whole pain and the whole trouble with precarity. So, the idea is to give visibility to all this. The activists we work with went to the job centre and organised a breakfast in order to talk to the people. With this project, the idea is to create a space for communication and to give visibility to struggle, hope and things like that. This means, of course, that they need to deal with one of the problems of capitalism, neoliberalism, and advertising: the capacity for designers to overtake the critique, to digest it and to construct a kind of false image of it that ends up in a campaign with peoples' faces and 'nice' words. But this campaign can be completely different if the words on the posters are coming from the people themselves. I think it's Gerard Paris Clavel who said that, often, answers are given to people who didn't ask anything. Here, the point is less that we are interested in speaking ourselves, but that we want to create spaces where the relevant people have the opportunity to speak.

As for an example of a self-initiated project, last year, we made an event about collectively-organised structures in Berlin—cafes, printing shops and other places run in a co-operative way. I think that today, there is a bigger responsibility for left, radical movements to not only critique capitalism, but to show that there are alternative ways of working and getting organised. And so, this is one of the things we found interesting: there are a lot of structures that are working without a hierarchy. They are not only about making work for money,

but they are also trying to get engaged socially. So, we organised an event with friends which was a series of lectures, discussions, meetings and also parties. Around that event, we made a card game that could be distributed, where people could see which kinds of collectives there were in Berlin. This is an on-going project where we are working with journalists and some other friends who are working in the theoretical world. This about practice and discourse.

Fabio: So how did you finance this self-initiated project?

Pierre: This was financed via some parties we organised, and every collective involved also contributed in order to be able to generate all this. From the money generated from the parties, we were also able to establish a collective pot from which we could finance the other things we wanted to add to the project, like the website with interviews and also a bit more theory about the collectives, some history and some daily practice, so we could address questions like: "Why are you doing a collective?", "What is the collective for you?", "Why do you think it is important as a political practice?", "What are the problems?". And also the parts that might be more technical: how to start a collective, what the funding possibilities are, etc. This is what we are able to finance from this collective pot. What is also interesting is that you can see that between the collectives, there is a lot of support and solidarity.

Next year, we would like to organise a long 'day of the collective': to make a map with every collective and to tour the city to give visibility to that, trying to show the transversality of it all: organising a lecture in the printing factory, having a café who organises a breakfast in the metal workshop and things like that.

Fabio: Do you see that in your case, life and work are completely overlapping and there is no real separation between your activities?

Pierre: I don't think of "life" and "work" as separate things. Maybe it is a failure. And a big part of our so-called 'life outside of studio' is coming into it. We like to share project with friends and people we like. We also both have "projects" outside the studio. Even if, a lot of the time, sooner or later, they might become a "studio project" as well. For example, I'm living in a house project located in Kinzigstraße 9 in Berlin Friedrischain [K9, www.kinzig9.de]. It is a chance to live with a lot of different people [35], where we share a whole house

that includes a silkscreen atelier and a bar where we can organise parties, show movies, organise discussions—and everything is self-organised. The space is open to other groups and once a year, we organise an open day where people can visit the house and get information about the house's history, its structure, etc.

Bianca: Are there many places like this in Berlin or are you actually living an exception?

Pierre: There are other places like this, but there are fewer and fewer. Nearly every project that did not manage to buy its house got kicked out. We are not the owners of our house, there is a collective structure from the '70s/'80s in place, which buys the houses and when you live in such a house, you are part of the decision-making process for everything. This means that we pay a kind of rent into this structure, which is in turn paying back the credit for buying the house, plus its future renovation.

Bianca: In terms of this kind of structure, does it reduce your expenses in comparison to living in other places?

Pierre: I pay €240, all inclusive. At the beginning, this was average in relation to other flats in Berlin, but now, it is really cheap compared to the rest. The idea was also to try to keep the rent affordable, so that nearly everybody could live in there. But then, every house has a different structure internally: some houses have only one kitchen and the inhabitants are sharing everything. I know, for example, that the WG [*Wohngemeinschaft,* a shared flat] where I'm living used to have a collective financial pot: all the inhabitants used to put all the money they earned into it and then they would just share it evenly. This does not exist anymore in my house, but it is still talked about and at least there is a common pot for the food. This means that there is a balance between people that earn a bit more money and the ones earning a bit less, giving our structure solidarity.

Fabio: You mentioned that you are 35 people living in this house. Is everyone active in the cultural field or are the backgrounds very different?

Pierre: We are all very different. The oldest is about 63. He comes from a radical left movement from the '60s/'70s and is still politically active, while the youngest are children. There are students, but people are doing a lot of different jobs. And in fact, there aren't so many people who are working in the cultural field. It is just really diverse and this is what I really enjoy there.

Fabio: To what extent do you think that it is actually the particularity of a city like Berlin to allow your design practice and life to evolve the way it does? And what other daily practices, apart from living in this housing project, do you feel permit you to carry on your creative practice the way you do?

Pierre: When I'm talking to friends who are in different cities, but who have the same kind of practice, I can see that we are at quite an advantage in being in Berlin: prices are not yet so high and so we can still manage. We don't have to run so fiercely after the funding in order to be able to do our kind of work on a full-time basis. Moreover, what gives us the possibility to do all this relates to the whole movement of free spaces from the '70s and '80s. People are used to get a bit more organised. From what I know about Paris, for example, is that there are just a few of these social/self-organised projects and that they are really struggling. Here, there are still these housing projects that allow people to self-organise activities. In places like Paris, you get kicked out really fast and then it gets very difficult. In that sense, we are quite lucky and what I really appreciate here is that you don't only get discourse, but you get practice, too. I know that in Paris, people talk about how things could be different, but here, with all these collectives, we see discourse put into practice, like, for instance, regarding the need to deal with hierarchies in groups. The social political practice is a step further, because it does not stop at talking about possibilities, but you are testing them in practice; you are facing the problems and then having to change and think about the structure, consider what can be different. So this is quite interesting.

Fabio: Besides these collective support structures, what other structures and resources do you dip into? Are there some things in the back of your mind that give you security?

Pierre: Basically, we are financed indirectly by state funding through groups and institutions we work with. We are pretty much dependent on all this activism and projects taking place around us. About 80% of the time, it is people bringing projects to us and they usually come with a clear financial plan. They come to us with the project and the funding, and say, "Look, this is

the project we have, are you interested?". It's not like they come and say, "We have x amount of money for posters." We are also very interested in the financial part of a project—what does the budget look like, does everyone get something? It often happens that people find money to finance a campaign, but they all do that for free—a lot of the time, we also do that for free. How to break the cycle of continued self-exploitation? Sometimes, people don't want to get money from the outside, because you can become kind of dependent. But funding also gives us some freedom. It is important that no one in the process is exploited or exploits her/himself. Often, you can just do things on your own, but we try to organise from the beginning: what could be interesting to produce, how much work will that be, how can we manage to pay everybody involved? This is what is interesting in this in-between: often activism is done by students, doing things in their spare time, but with these more professional collectives, you see that they have a different relationship towards the economy. But, of course, we are quite precarious, because we own nothing and we don't have rich parents. So, if stuff collapses, then it collapses. If state funding is cut, then we get directly hit. Somehow, you get used to this situation and that is just the way it is. When I was working in an advertising agency in France, I realised that I could not continue to do that sort of work. In general, I think that all of my friends, everyone I know, can make it at the moment, but if, tomorrow, the social or cultural funding gets cut, we are all fucked.

Bianca: You say that you invest 80% of your time in work you do with groups and organisations and that in the remaining 20% you do self-initiated projects. How are you organising the funding for these self-initiated projects?

Pierre: All the time, we are trying to get a balance between those projects we do for free, those we do for a low fee and those that are better paid. We treat them on the same level: we just try to make projects we are interested in. So, there are months where it is OK money-wise and months were it is shit. We constantly need to figure out when and where to be careful in order to keep the balance.

It is important not to lie about the finances—my experience as a student is that no one really wants to talk about their economic situation. Maybe some schools are pushing the more classic entrepreneurial approach, saying that you have to be able to fight, and in some other schools—like the one where I was—it is

completely taboo to speak about anything outside the institution: the outside is evil. You would want to get a kind of mix, but more in the sense that you have to be aware of the reality of the situation. Therefore, it is important to see how other studios are working, what finance, daily life and social structure they have.

Fabio: Are you sometimes bringing interns into your practice? How do you deal with the labour they provide?

Pierre: We have, from time to time, had interns but there is no standard procedure—we just try to see what finance they can get from somewhere else and what finance they can get from here. This means that some of them come here already being fully funded, let's say from Leonardo or similar programs, or sometimes we pay them completely, or it is a mixture. This is part of the deal we are making with them. In general, I would say the economic aspect is not the most important one, because you can manage somehow. More important is that we try to have an appropriate project, which might fit the person coming in. This means that sometimes, people ask us if they can come for a certain period of time and we say, "Yes, come, but maybe in 6 months", because we might have an appropriate project. We find it difficult for interns to work on projects that are super stressful, where you just got a few days or weeks to make the stuff. So, when people come in, we think it is also really important that they can spend some time looking into house projects, visiting collectives, getting lost, going to parties, making friends, and so on. For interns, we try to get projects which are not too stressful and then we let them take a large amount of responsibility for this project. Sometimes, we just share the work on the same level as the intern. This means that when they come here, we are not only offering an internship but they really have a strong responsibility too. This means they don't just do executive work, but we are all participating at the meetings, we all discuss the content, the concept, the budget and they have a decision-making capacity. And sometimes it can be that they really carry one or two projects, and we are just supporting them.

Bianca: For how long do you have interns working in your studio?

Pierre: At least three months, sometimes it is six months. The problem for us is to be able to really plan far ahead. For now, we have an idea about how the

next three months might be, but then we don't really know. This makes it difficult to plan for internships in the longer term.

Bianca: Does the fact that you cannot plan ahead longer than three to six months affect you psychologically?

Pierre: Sure. But there are periods where you don't care and there are periods where it is annoying. Right now for us, with the whole moving and renovation here, money is going out and it takes us a lot of time away from work, so we feel a lot of pressure. Of course, the economy and the precarious situation is stressful. We try to give as little psychological space as possible to the economic problem, but it is there. For us, it's also really important to manage not to work too much and to be able to take some distance from what we are doing. Just because otherwise, you are this productive machine that is doing stuff and you just get blind. But there are so many interesting projects; it is sometimes difficult to say no.

Bianca: For your practice, your life in general, where would you wish it could go in the future?

Pierre: I think that our wishes are less around the studio itself, but more about society and political changes.

www.image-shift.net

We thank Pierre Maite for the conversation and Polly Hunter for proof-reading the edited text.

ISLINGTON MILL

BACKGROUND

Islington Mill is a cultural space in Salford with over 50 artists' studios, two art galleries, a recording studio and a club space. The space hosting all these facilities is a former cotton spinning mill, which, unlike much of Manchester's industrial heritage close by, has not been converted into loft apartments.

AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT

Letting of 50 studio spaces for artists, designers and other creatives. All the studio spaces are self-contained, lockable as well as heatable and still possessing much of the character of the original building with their whitewashed brick walls, quarry tiled floors, iron columns and vaulted ceilings. The spaces vary in size from small studios of 3x3m to big studios of 6x6m.

Besides the studios, there are numerous other spaces around the building which are used for one-off events, photo shoots, rehearsals, exhibitions and filming.

A Bed & Breakfast is located in the Engine House and can accommodate ten people in two double bedrooms and a dormitory. The B&B predominantly hosts bands and artists visiting the city, but is open to everyone. Housed in the midst of Islington Mill artists' studios, the B&B provides a lively and alternative introduction to the city and with its central dining table offers the opportunity for lively conversations between the hosts and their guests. Recent guests have included artists Billy Childish, David Medalla and Roger Cardinal and bands Earth, Salem and Group Doueh.

The Islington Mill Reference Library is an arts resource comprised of artists monographs, exhibition catalogues and survey publications as well as cultural theory ranging from philosophy to art. The library is a free and publicly available resource whose content is accumulated on a donations basis, with over 300 publications received from the initial call. One of the long-term goals of the library is to develop a specific section on publications exclusively from/on locally-based artists. Use of the library is by appointment and a comfortable and warm study area is also provided with tea-making facilities and a microwave.

The Islington Mill Arts Club is located on the ground floor of the building, hosting concerts and including a bar, a small restaurant and a gallery space.

The Islington Mill Art Academy was started by a group of Art Foundation students keen on exploring alternatives to a university-based education for artists. On the fourth floor of the Mill, the Academy was set up to experiment with what an education in art could be, where it could take place and how it could be paid for. It is a place for people with a tremendous and unstoppable will to make art, who have chosen to direct and organise their own education. Since 2007, the Academy has worked with artists from the UK and beyond, its members have exhibited in various galleries in the UK and participated in residencies across Europe.

FUNDING

Letting of studio spaces; organisation of events; B&B

DEVELOPMENT

1994: Bill Campbell returns to Salford after studying Fashion at Central St. Martins in London
1997-2001: Bill Campbell gets interested in the abandoned Mill and tries to secure funding to buy the place
2001: Bill Campbell buys the place and organises site-specific shows
2003: The Engine House at Islington Mill is transformed into a home
2005: Islington Mill Arts Club launches, hosting concerts and events
2006: Fifty studio spaces are ready to be let
2007: Launch of Islington Mill Art Academy
2010: Further re-generation of the building, opening of a gallery space, improved bar and toilet facilities run by the Islington Mill Arts Club
2011: Opening of a B&B in The Engine House
2011: Autumn residency program starts

LOCATION

Salford, UK, 218,000 inhabitants. Salford is near to Manchester City Centre, Manchester has 464,200 inhabitants.

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CONVERSATION

This conversation was held with Bill Campbell, the owner of the Mill, and Maurice Carlin, who runs the B&B, in the kitchen of The Engine House in May 2011.

Bianca Elzenbaumer: Islington Mill is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year. How did it come about that you decided to buy this massive old mill with its two adjacent buildings?

Bill Campbell: When I returned from London with a

degree in Fashion Design, I knew that I did not want to take up that profession. At that time, I was living opposite this abandoned mill and felt strongly inspired by the potential for creative activity that the building already held at that time. Originally, it was not just me aiming to buy this whole thing. There were four of us, two of whom had strong visions for an artist studio, possibly following that 1980s/'90s co-operative model. The others involved in the initial plan of buying the mill had more experience of funding than I did and we spent three years trying to speak to local authorities and the Arts Council, trying to engage them in the idea of an art centre in Salford in a building like this. When it became clear that none of these stakeholders had the money for or an interest in this project, the other artists dropped out. They couldn't see how to make it what they thought it could be, whereas I was probably a little more fluid in the potential of what I imagined it could be: if it didn't become strictly a visual arts artists' studio, that was fine by me.

In order to advance the plans for the mill on my own, I needed to get residential planning permission for the building—not because of my ambition to make it into a block of flats but because of the needs of a financial safety net, i.e. to create added value. The ambition was clearly to make it everything but a block of flats. That kind of business plan had to be established enough in order to get the planning permission and to engage the banks in the early days.

I was twenty-three when I decided to buy the building and first began renting it out when I was twenty-six. Back then it was maybe naïve to buy it.

Maurice Carlin: Definitely naivety could play a part. You wouldn't do it now when you knew what was involved.

Bill: You are right, I wouldn't do it again. But back then I suppose it was ambition that drove me.

Bianca: So when you bought the building you only had a very loose plan of what it could become, but you were very passionate about it. How do you feel now about the way the Mill has developed over the years?

Bill: I would say that Islington Mill has organically become what I imagined it had the potential to be, and it still holds more room for development. The Mill is always unfinished: when, for instance, we built this building (The Engine House), we made the decision not to paint the walls or the steel or anything. We realised that when things are in some way unfinished, they have a better sense of potential. Whereas if the development is complete and shiny as the architects specified it, then there is no prospect for it to be anything other than what it is.

Maurice: Then it is over.

Bill: It can only decay from there and look old and tired. Whereas when you never finish it in the first place, there is always space for improvement. That is my plan: never finish anything.

Bianca: As you have been running the place now for ten years, has being the owner of the Islington Mill become your creative practice?

Bill: Maybe. Some people think of it like that. I don't call it that. But I guess the decision-making process I adopt is more akin to how artists work or make decisions, rather than to how business people and property developers make decisions. The Mill is always changing. We try various ways of doing things and if ultimately we see that they are not working, we try a different approach.

Maurice: What that way of operating is acknowledging is that perhaps there is no fixed way of doing things. Different groups of people occupy the space at different times and, inevitably, changing groups of people have different ways of being in the space and different needs. It is an acknowledgement that there is no such thing as 'the right way'.

Bill: Islington Mill is always unfinished and responsive to the people that are here. As Morry says, people bring their own ways of using the physical space and have their own approaches to how to be part of a community.

Maurice: And I think Bill is pretty laid back with the freedom he allows people.

Bill: Possibly. Painting, moving walls, bringing furniture—it is all no problem.

Maurice: One of our tenants says that what he found different here in comparison to studios run on a cooperative model is that people liked it, because you don't have to go into the politics of who should change the light bulb or the toilet roll. He had been part of cooperative groups in the past and had presumably seen how it can go really badly wrong in terms of efficiency and organisation.

Bill: Having said that, here there isn't anyone to change the light bulb! We don't have a building manager or a caretaker as such that everyone relates to, so if the toilet paper runs out, whoever realises goes and finds some. I think that when it comes to things like that, the politics of a cooperative way of working are set up differently. Here, the tenants are not particularly expected or required to contribute. They are autonomous, working for themselves. They just go into the studio and get on with their work. They don't need some sort of shared ideology or shared practice. Everyone is totally independent of each other, which, ironically, then enables them to be more of a community because they are not getting into arguments with their neighbours about the toilet roll.

Bianca: Islington Mill is a constant experiment. Could you maybe recall some of the experiments that went wrong and how you adjusted to that?

Maurice: We have tried things like opening a shop down the road in Salford. That was a bit of a disaster.

We tried to open it in a place with more passing trade than we get hidden away here.

Bill: There wasn't much of a passing trade there either!

Maurice: It was a little bit better, but only a little bit. That was a joint initiative with the makers hosted in the Mill who wanted to sell their work. It was a real disaster.

Bill: It wasn't that bad, but it is difficult to call it a success.

Maurice: It would be dishonest to call it a success!

Bill: It lasted for about two months. Now one of the tenants has taken on the same space and makes it work as a studio and exhibition space.

Maurice: In that sense, the original initiative in the space didn't come to a full stop. Again, it became what it was more suited to: not a shop but a studio. A way of making it work was found, it changed and it is now more successful.

Bill: We did another experiment with artist-directed dinners. We tried to make something of a good quality social experience.

Maurice: Everyone paid something like £10 for a three-course meal with a glass of wine. We, and maybe five other people, would do the cooking. It was so much work to cook for 30 to 40 people that we realised that, in order to make it financially viable, we would have to charge people at least £25 and of course then, nobody would pay that. Trying these things out gives you an appreciation of why things are as they are; how difficult it is to set up a restaurant and to make a successful business out of it. It also gives you a concept of value, because in a place like the Mill, people expect things to be really cheap, whereas if you go to some fancy restaurant, paying £25 is acceptable. Here, that would be outrageous, so it is all a bit fucked-up (big laughter).

Bianca: Running Islington Mill sounds like a trial-and-error endeavour but also like a job for life. Are the two of you able to make a living from this?

Maurice: I guess we don't really spend much money, because we never leave here. (big laughter) I always notice that whenever I do leave, how expensive every-

thing is. You go for a night out and the prices hit you. In the bar here, we don't pay for the concerts and the drinks.

Bill: We don't get on the bus. We go to the supermarket maybe once a week. That is the only time I get out. (big laughter)

Maurice: There is a café here on Thursdays and Fridays. If it was open everyday, we would never go to the supermarket—we would never leave! That's not good either though, because you start to have no understanding of what the real world is like. (big laughter)

Bill: The Mill and the work here are also our social life. Everyone comes here, which is again great, but it makes you do too much socialising and the combination of work and social life makes it difficult to spend quality time with people.

Recently, I needed to get away to think because there were a number of problems to do with the energy levels of people driving the activities on the ground floor. We set up the ground floor as Islington Mill Arts Club to specifically run the venue and the gallery. The Arts Club is a company limited by guarantee, whereas a private company like the one with which I own and run the studio spaces is not fundable.

I lease the ground floor independently as the Islington Mill Arts Club, which is run by three directors—me, Morry and Mark. We then employ two people on a freelance basis. We also had a Bar Manager, and then there is Kim who does the food, but in itself it is an independent project, almost like any tenant. This group of people making things happen in that space was getting worn out. I got away to consider practical solutions to that, but ultimately came back with the feeling that none of the practical solutions would be enough, as the negativity had, at times, turned into confrontation and even almost animosity. A general bad feeling existed, not from the fact that the crisps were stored in the wrong place, but from a fundamental difference in vision as to where we as individuals wanted the place to go. We would have these two-hour long meetings—myself, Morry and Mark—and by the end of it, Morry would always say 'but I don't want to run a café and not make any art. I'm not getting in the studio as much as I want to to make my art.'

Maurice: In 2010, we hoped that by also creating a gallery and by making visual things, we could draw in more people, but then it becomes about making the most successful bar and café because that's the only way that you fund the whole thing. You do that up to the point that you realise you don't actually have the skills to do it. I had never even worked in a café and I had no idea of how to make it a successful café. And then you think that perhaps you are not even all that interested in running a café.

Bill: We had this calendar on the wall, showing all the months ahead and, before I went away, there was this sense of desperation in trying to give people reasons for coming here, in order to generate funds.

Maurice: We had a target of money, a turnover that we had to reach every month in order to make it work. Since autumn, we had all this pressure piling up to get people here to participate in activities.

Bill: Which is potentially an OK business model, but only if that is what you want to do. In our case, it wasn't working because we weren't able to commit to it passionately as individuals and find the 150% of energy you need because that is the energy you want to put into your artwork. Our hearts weren't in it and we were not all pulling in the same direction.

Maurice: There would be some months that our income would be under the amount we needed and some months where it was over, but over six months, on average we would still be a little bit under. We had this idea that the more popular things we put on would pay for the less popular things. That was good in theory, but didn't work in practice as even the popular things weren't popular enough, and the things that were unpopular, were really fucking unpopular.

Bill: Since making the decision to cut the activities back to the level they where at before starting this, we all feel so much better. We have drawn a line to end an era. Now, we are carving out some space for ourselves as individuals, to spend time thinking about what we actually want to do. We are giving ourselves the choice not to do this if we don't want to and to see what can grow out of that.

I'm quite excited about removing ourselves and allowing other people to come in with new ideas. While we are there, people assume that we have made decisions when in actual fact, we probably haven't. By removing ourselves, there is more chance for other people to get active and passionate.

Maurice: Because you can be an obstacle for other people stepping in and taking ownership over something and making it what they want it to be.

Bill: You are definitely an obstacle if you are in a bad mood, if you are tired, overworked. Terrible! We realised that and made a change.

Bianca: Keeping the Mill running means juggling all sorts of different tasks and necessities. Does there remain some time for a private life and time away from the structure or is there almost an analogy to a farm where you can never really leave?

Maurice: I grew up on a farm and know what you mean: when we grew up on the farm, in order to go away for a holiday for a week, we had to spend two weeks preparing, and it is the same here. We've got an old campervan, but it takes at least three or four days for us to get ready to leave in it. Also, the way the Mill has previously been structured, going for artist residencies has been difficult, but it might be possible now. Until now, I've only been able to get away for about two weeks, so it is never very long. It is tricky to find the right balance. Hopefully, we can make it work better.

Bianca: Going back to the financial side of Islington Mill, how do you deal with the financial and psychological pressure of paying off the debt?

Bill: Psychologically, you just don't think about it, you just ignore it. Financially, the rates that I'm paying at the moment are all interest only, so the debt isn't really been paid yet. However, I'm in negotiation with my bank to start making capital repayments as well, which will increase the monthly fee but will enable us to pay back the debt and not just the interest. You need to demonstrate that you cover the mortgage payment with an income of 130%. Reasonably, the income is about double the outgoings as half of that money is what helps us survive. Now, I can afford to consider a fifteen-year plan to pay off the debt. Fifteen years... Luckily we don't have many outgoings since the Mill is also our lives, in that everything is in here. Everything we need is almost covered within the business. Even the B&B is a way of getting what we want: living where we want and meeting people in order to have a nice experience with them, while at the same time it pays the bills a little bit. In the end, I guess it has always been about planning things so that you get what you need in your life before money. If you get all those things

through other means, then you don't need money.

Bianca: Given the current situation at the Mill and your own plans for life, what would your hopes for the future be?

Bill: A hope would be to be able to carve out a bit of space for ourselves; spending some time really thinking about what we want, or maybe not thinking but being open to a wider sense of what the future might hold for us as individuals. I own it, I'm here and I'm not going—the decision to sell the building is not on the table at all. It wouldn't make financial sense; it wouldn't make any sense. But from there, to decide to disband the Arts Club and to lease the venue to someone else is an option, if it helps remove our requirement to be here. In some form or another, I will continue with the overall vision to complete the building, which means looking at the fifth floor at some point and continuing with the ground floor to get as full a program as resources allow. This might mean going back to that idea of a six or seven days-a-week open building with a regular program, but only once the resources are in place to enable that to happen. Morry and Mark might not be involved in that—or at least not in the same ways—because they have more option to just go. It is important that, as individuals, we get our freedom and we might then come back and find that, this time next year, we are doing all of the things we just stopped doing—but if we are, I hope it is in a much better way.

www.islingtonmill.com

THE NONFORMAL UNIVERSITY OF TEREMISKI

BACKGROUND

"We have forced ourselves to believe that the sole motivation of human activity is profit—maximized profit being the best option. This is false. For love and solidarity are the highest values, and they are creative. I believe that we will survive, only if we start building together a world in which each person will be able to realise their most beautiful dreams. I believe in this community of all humans; it is of such a community—built in midst of everyday hardships, and everyday care for our neighbour—that I dream of. And when I look at the young people that are starting to work together in Teremiski, I take it as a good sign."
(Jacek Kuroń in Znak, nr. 592)

The Nonformal University of Teremiski is located in a tiny village close to the Belarusian border of Poland. The university was established in 2000 by the extended family of Jacek Kuroń, who was in life-long opposition both to the Polish communist party with its oppressive regime and to the hyper-capitalist shaping of the country after the fall of the Eastern bloc in 1989.

The university was set up to counter a series of lacks that affect people in post-communist Poland, especially in rural villages of the now defunct Polish state-farms: limited access to culture, education and work. The initiative sets itself the goal to address these lacks together with the pressing question of how to live meaningfully in contemporary society.

In its first years, the university's program expressly addressed rural youth who couldn't count on financial support for their education both because their parents were unemployed and because their families suffered from wider social problems. For them, joining the Nonformal University of Teremiski meant joining, for the period of one year, a context in which they were encouraged to build their identity and make choices of value.

AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT

During the first six years, the university was focused on the education of young Polish people between the age of 18 and 21 who came from deprived rural areas, regardless of their level of schooling. The objective of the educational program was to prepare up to twenty students per year for an independent and creative life, a life in which they would participate in cultural, social and civic life and in which they would be prepared to find employment. The students who obtained a diploma were equipped to act as animators of local development and as animators of culture and education.

Since 2008, the university has been contributing to the cultural and social development of the Białowieża region, where it is located. These contributions are made through the organisation of activities within the local educational context as well as through the running of the Barn Theatre, the first and only theatre in the region.

FUNDING

2002-2008: friends from various periods of Jacek Kuroń's political opposition and leadership; royalties from Jacek Kuroń's book *The Republic for my grandchildren* (*Rzeczpospolita dla moich wnuków*); the Jacek Kuroń foundation; the Norway Fund; royalties from the work of the poets Julian Tuwim and Irena Tuwim.
Since 2008: small project grants from regional and national government.

DEVELOPMENT

2000: writing the basic program for the Nonformal University
2001: recruiting the first 20 students across Poland
2002: 1st year of educational program in Teremiski
2004: Jacek Kuroń dies
2008: funding for the Nonformal University is cut
2009-2011: the program of the university is reduced to local interventions
2011: funding for the engagement in regional development is secured

LOCATION

Teremiski, Poland, 50 inhabitants, situated on the border of the oldest virgin forest in Europe (Białowieża Forest), which is a UNESCO world heritage site.

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CONVERSATION

This conversation with Katarzyna and Paweł Winiarski, co-authors and leaders of the educational program of the Nonformal University, was held in their home in Teremiski in May 2011.

Bianca Elzenbaumer: You have both been involved in the Nonformal University of Teremiski from its very beginning. Could you tell us what urged you to set up this initiative?

Paweł Winiarski: In 1989, when the political and economic system in Poland changed, most of the people who created that change were on the left side of politics, so rather social and focused on equality more than on other things. But economists like Jeffrey Sachs, who at that time was campaigning for mainstream neoliberalism, had dominated the changes that were finally implemented. The economists' tasks, together with that of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), were to make the Polish economy effective in such a way that it could fit into the global system. From today's perspective, we can say that the generation which created the changes in Poland, won and lost in the same moment: they really changed the country from the ground up, but also lost everything they believed in. Some of the people who fought for bringing about a change, like Jacek Kuroń, the second husband of my mother Danuta, were unhappy with this loss, while others fitted quite happily into the new structures.

Kuroń, who was one of the main leaders and strategic thinkers of the democratic opposition in Poland, spent his life campaigning for social equality. He never accepted the way the changes went after '89. He was active in social dialogue and published lots of articles on which way Poland should go. Having seen how the country was affected by the remodelling of the economy, Kuroń created a foundation which helped children in places where the economic and political changes had hit people the hardest. This foundation helped with school life, with family problems, with health and food issues—basically with nearly everything. The foundation's strategy was to find money to support local organisations which where focusing their work on children.

After ten years of this kind of engagement, when the first children of this group had grown up and become adults, they discovered that in the social world, there was no place for them. People that had grown up in deprived, rural areas were completely out of the system: their abilities did not matter; all that defined their place on the social ladder was their place of birth. Growing up in such run-down areas was like a life sentence.

When this dynamic became clear, Kasia and I had just finished our studies in cultural animation and sociology in Warsaw. We decided to join the team at Kuroń's foundation, which, at the time, basically constituted Kuroń himself and my mother, in order to work towards changing these discriminating social structures.

Katarzyna Winiarska: The first ideas for an educational program for young people from disadvantaged areas started to grow in 2000: we began to imagine a place where such things as background, economic and social status didn't matter. It took us one year to prepare a program for a hypothetical university and to prepare a space for this educational program to be located in, and another year to recruit students from all over Poland.

Paweł: At that time, there were two traditions that inspired us. The first big inspiration was the high social capital in Poland: every time we are occupied, we manage to have an excellent working underground state, like, for instance, in the 1860s with the January Uprising against the Russian occupation. During the Russian occupation, there was a huge underground educational movement called The Flying University, which had schools all over the country and an underground university with four faculties in Warsaw. The second inspiration was the Dutch idea of the Volkshogeschool—a higher education institution for adults that does not award a degree. These schools were also good practice in Poland during the 1920s and 1930s, but had since disappeared.

So, our idea was to combine these traditions and to set up a village house in which to create an educational community which is like a home. We imagined it to be like a family environment, living to the rhythm of the everyday and celebrating feasts, like Christmas and Easter, together. Personal, deep contact, as well as a constant working rhythm, were the main ideas.

Katarzyna: With the creation of our own educational program, we wanted to operate outside the official educational system, without any papers and stamps from the Ministry of Education, but also without any support. We wanted to start out with an open field, in order to create a program especially tailored for the group of people we had in mind. The aim was to address specific needs and to break down social and economic barriers for those people who grew up in the most impoverished areas of Poland. We wanted to support those who really wanted to learn more but who didn't have the money for the journey to a school located 20km from their village.

Paweł: After one year of theoretical preparation, we began to organise meetings with the people we wanted to work with—future students in different parts of Poland. We wanted to invite them to the program, but also we simply wanted to get to know them. Engaging with rural youth was to enter a completely different social world for us, so these first encounters were very important.

Bianca: Your initial vision was to create your own educational program and to start out with an open field. How did this work and what were the basic guidelines you put in place?

Paweł: The idea of this program was bi-directional—on the one hand, we invited the students to participate and on the other hand, we invited young academics to become lecturers and to extend the cycle of their subject. These lecturers came to Teremiski, once a week or twice a month, to deliver the regular program that they had devised through exchanges with our students. When the first group of students arrived at the Nonformal University, there was no program. We only had a rough idea of what direction to go in and of the subjects that might be fitting. The most important principle was that culture is the basis for everything—both if you like to be a humanist or a mathematician. Culture is the base you need in order to be human and to be happy.

Besides the young academics, we also invited famous people to teach here. People that would have some authority attached to their figure, like famous writers or people known from TV. We invited these people once or twice a year, which always turned into an event. So, once in a while, we would have a guest like this, who would not only come to speak for an hour and then leave, but who would stay for dinner and over night. This allowed the students to speak with the guest in a completely informal way about everything they wanted.

Katarzyna: For us, space was a very important tool of education: you can talk about everything when you are in the class room, but when you are sitting together next to the fire place or are making soup, the atmosphere and the way of speaking are completely different. The English lessons would, for instance, be delivered by two native speakers who were living with us and who would be cooking with the students. The most important thing for native speakers was to be with the students in all situations and to talk to them. The formal lessons were in second place. During traditional lectures you were able to develop your knowledge, but during dinner or while being on the veranda, you could transform that knowledge into inspiration, make plans for the future or develop the passion to take a book and start to study for yourself.

Paweł: Another very important element was that we invited the students to create their own program in dialogue with the lecturers and us: one group bringing a knowledge of the contemporary world and the other contributing knowledge of the real condition of life in this world. Both approaches were important to each other and had equal value in shaping the program. I believe that the strength of our initiative was in this kind of interaction.

Katarzyna: One of the professors of sociology, who is a specialist in poverty, said that during the one year she spent lecturing with our students, she got to know more about poverty than during all her years of research.

But coming back to the program, the idea was to invite lecturers to show the students a way of living which creates something not only for oneself, but that contributes to the society we are living in.

Paweł: We wanted to encourage them to return to their home villages and to become people who start change. But, of course, this is a very difficult path to go down and just a few of the students chose this option.

Katarzyna: But a lot of them chose this way of life, even though they are not now in their local communities.

Fabio Franz: Could you tell us more about the conditions that the students came from and what was needed for them in order to join the Nonformal University?

Katarzyna: Our students came from all over Poland. Many were from the north because that was the area where a lot of the State Agricultural Farms [PGR] were located. These enormous farms had been implemented in 1949 and were based on the idea of communism that private ownership is the root of social evil—believing that if everything will be common, people will stay equal. In practice, this idea, proposed in the Russian revolution, conflicted with the social rights and traditions of free farmers. So the state insisted that these traditions had to be broken and thus took the fields away from the farmers. In Ukraine, this practice led to a hunger disaster with millions of people dying in the '20s, because the state's policy insisted on breaking the common agricultural tradition.

In Poland after WWII, the state border was moved 300km to the west and included previously German land, without Germans as they had been moved out. On these vast stretches of land, the state created these PGRs and people from the east were moved to the west to cultivate the fields.

Paweł: After 1989, a variety of problems arose for the people living in these PGRs: in the first place, the state had no idea how this kind of enterprise could exist within a capitalist economic system, which meant the state farms collapsed. Moreover, social problems surfaced since the roots of these state farmers had been cut and there were no other places they could have moved back to, or could have got support from. Therefore, the political and economic changes were especially destructive for these workers and their families. The change of '89 was like an earthquake for these villages. For example, you would have a block of city flats and next to it, a similar block where chicken were bred. One day, the block of chicken collapses and you can't do anything else, as all you did your whole life was to feed these chicken. You end up with one hundred people living in the middle of a field who find themselves without work, without public schools, without skills to do anything, but needing to deal with this new situation, while even the state has no idea of how to intervene. The only thing that keeps on working in such places is a shop where you can buy alcohol, which only makes the social problems run deeper and deeper. And it is from these rural and family contexts that we recruited most of our students.

Katarzyna: The people who came to us had different levels of education. Some of them would have done the equivalent of their A-levels, but many hadn't and some even only had a diploma from primary school.

Paweł: For us, it was important to say that they didn't need any official papers, or any money, or anything else in order to join the study program.

Katarzyna: The only thing we checked was if people really wanted to come here. But we also didn't take any people with such evidently strong social problems that they needed therapy rather than education at that point. We couldn't take these kinds of people because

we are not equipped to deal with them and therapy was not the idea of this group, the idea was education. Of course, then, most of the students did have some problems connected to their past that had to be solved. In relation to the social problems, it has been very important that we chose this specific place for the university: this Belarusian region is multicultural and we could use this local context with its multitude of traditions to explore different problems connected to identity. The culture of this place was the base which would appear in most of the subjects taught. Visiting the synagogue, the orthodox church, meeting people from different religions and cultures was very important for the students to think about their own identity, their roots and their families. The best example of this is related to one of our female students who had an extremely low self-esteem, thinking that she was of no value. During an excursion through these borderland villages, she discovered that she is from a very big Tatar family [Tatars are Polish Muslims]. This was an enormous discovery for her and her family, providing them with a bigger picture for their own life narration. And like her, many students confirmed that engaging with identity issues had been very important for them.

Bianca: What happened once the students had gone through the program in Teremiski?

Katarzyna: After the nine months in Teremiski, some of our students decided to finish their secondary school or to go on to study at official universities. Our foundation supported these further moves by renting a house in Warsaw where the students were hosted for free but had to earn money for their food and all other expenses. In Warsaw they lived together, they took care of themselves but also helped and supported each other. Also the educational program continued in Warsaw, albeit at a much lower frequency—meetings were held only every two weeks.

Paweł: The support structure in Warsaw was important, because when you break social barriers and invite people to an educational program such as ours, you still have no answer as to how they can be independent in their lives. Our experience showed that in the framework of such a program, you need to have the financial means to support people for a minimum of three years. Because after the first very crucial year, a person needs another two years to become truly independent: to find an adequate employment or to continue their studies at university level. Of course,

we needed a lot of money for this, but still, one student in our university was cheaper than a child in an orphan house or an inmate in a state prison. In that sense, our educational program was a much cheaper and more effective way of improving the social situation for people than what was proposed by many institutions at state level.

Fabio: This transition from Teremiski sounds like a crucial part of your program. How was this transition structured?

Katarzyna: In Teremiski, we were living closely together for nine months, which helped everyone make big steps in their education, but did not necessarily contribute to making people independent. Here we gave them everything—even their toothbrush—because we decided that money should not be an issue. But money exists and we did not want them to be "addicted" to us and to the structure. So in Warsaw, we invited them to start to work for themselves. Also, with regards human support, everyone knew that all the lecturers of the university would also be at their disposal in Warsaw, but that the students had to organise the meetings themselves.

Paweł: With the house in Warsaw, we also wanted to support those who were eager to continue their education. Finding the money for a place to live was a barrier that we wanted to eliminate. Besides the financial barrier, we also wanted to create a safe space in the capital from where the students could explore their choices for life. Those who continued their studies did very well and one student, who came to Teremiski without having done his secondary school diploma, is now even doing a research degree. Some of the former students returned to their villages, some are teachers and others have become social animators. We will see what will happen with them, it is still open.

But now the program is finished because the money for constant financial support ran out with the death of Kuroń and because running such a program on unreliable grants is impossible. It also ran out because in 2004, Poland joined the EU and the work markets of Western Europe became open. This opening up of the borders meant that for the bravest young people living in deprived areas, going abroad to earn money became a much more seductive option than coming to Teremiski to study in a non-registered university that would not even give you a degree. Going to the West for many has become some sort of natural choice.

Bianca: You successfully worked with students for six years and then the funding ran out. What do you think were the main factors that made this happen?

Katarzyna: Certainly the death of Jacek Kuroń was one factor that made finding funds more difficult. He knew many people and many were indebted to him for one reason or another. This meant that he could secure funds by simply ringing up important people and getting them to support the initiative. Besides Kuroń's personal influence, another main issue might have been that we refused contact with the media. We wanted to protect our students and only ever presented our intentions and the educational program to the media, but did not allow them to get close to the students. We did so because we felt that nobody wanted to understand what we were trying to create—all they were interested in was putting our students into boxes as stereotypes and keeping them there all their lives. Thus, for the first five years of our activities, we were completely closed to media. A lot of people thought that this was foolish as money flows are closely connected to the media presence of an initiative.

Paweł: And maybe those people were right. Maybe, if we had created a show about the program, people would have cried about these 'poor children' and would have given financial support.

Katarzyna: But that would have been contrary to what we wanted to do. Our aim was to break class structure and stereotypes and not to put them on show in order to finance the project. We think there is something more important than the question of how to pay for a project like this. If we want to help these people, they should be in the centre.

Bianca: The initial program of the Nonformal University has ended, but you are still living here in Teremiski and have in fact settled here by buying and renovating a traditional wooden house and raising your two children in this community. What have been your plans from 2009 up to now?

Paweł: The situation in Poland has changed, but this change also opened up a new way for us. Already, by 2006, we knew Białowieża quite well and we could see that this area needed to deal with a lot of problems. As our philosophy is that of noticing things and then doing something about them, this meant that we felt

the urge to get engaged locally. We are still trying to find an answer to the same question of 'How to live, be independent and creative in a rural place', it's just that the focus has shifted to a much more local context. The villages in the area have only a 200-year old history because the forest was closed to people for more than 600 years of Polish history: first it was the property of Polish kings, then it was owned by Russian emperors. Only in the last part of the 18th century were Teremiski and other villages established around a growing wood industry. But that industry collapsed just as did the PGRs. After 1989, the State Forest Industry became just a normal enterprise on the market and they began to lock people out. This means that for the society in this region, there are no more means of using the forest industry as a driver for development. But there is also no collective idea of what to do instead. Of course, everyone here has his or her own answer, but there is a deep divide in opinions and this makes us weak as a community. In my opinion, with this conflict we are risking to loose those things which can make us rich and happy people. I think a place with this natural and cultural heritage could find a way into the contemporary world based on its symbolic value in order to produce money for development, while at the same time protecting the environment and the regional culture. With this vision in mind, we are now working on the idea of a social and cultural development centre in Białowieża, which is 7km from Teremiski and the biggest local village. The goal of this centre would be to bring people together to solve this conflict of interests and to find a way for our society to move forward.

But this project about local development still lies in the future. For now, we have been invited by official representatives of this district to work on the cultural development of this region. For six years, we have been waiting for this invite, because we did not want to impose anything on the local people, as doing things without an invitation is never good in small societies. We have since started programs for different groups, for children in the local kindergarten and also for elderly people. All activities deal with culture and identity and we try to create constant educational situations which allow children to engage in activities all year long. For the work with the kindergarten, we invited the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra to give a monthly concert for children. They come and play classical music, but also talk about the music, the instruments, the culture the piece came out of and so on. We also set up a library in the kindergarten from where the children can borrow books to take home. In that library we also organ-

ise weekly encounters where local adults read stories aloud to the children. This reading initiative has been running for a year and a half, but now we can't find more people who want to dedicate their time to it.

We also had a program for school children but that was very difficult, because Teremiski is 7km from Białowieża and there are only five buses a day and none at the weekend. This limitation of mobility made us realise that if we wanted to do something for the area, we needed to set up a place in Białowieża.

Bianca: Do you think that you can find funding for this new project centre?

Paweł: We have been preparing this project for more than one year and we don't have any money for it yet. Last week we met with the Ministry of Regional Development and maybe something will change, but we don't know.

The grant system we are operating on for the initiatives with the children is making programming very difficult and sometimes we have to suspend the activities for some months until the next grant money comes in.

Katarzyna: For example, we didn't get selected in the application process for financial support for a big program of after-school activities we wanted to run next year. This arbitrariness of funding makes it very difficult to do anything and even when you get some support, it might only be 30% or 50% of what you asked for. But then you are still expected to do the whole program.

Moreover, everyone wants you to do something "innovative". We believe that continuity is more important than innovation, because when you do basic things in kindergarten, you can then do something more challenging and innovative when these children are older. It is like the pyramid of Maslow: if you don't have any food to eat, you don't think of ideas like self-realisation and philosophy. It is the same with education, if you don't have basic education and skills, you can't do any innovation.

Bianca: Does your own income depend on these grants?

Katarzyna: Yes, it does. We haven't received any money since January. We basically live on money my parents give us and on the guided tours that Paweł does in the forest, but it is really not big money. And even when we have money from the ministry or from other

foundations, it is usually dedicated to organising activities and not for us. If we were to pay ourselves a wage, there would be much less money available for the projects. This is very problematic.

Paweł: In the Polish NGO sector, there are a lot of big and rich organisations which appear to operate as centres where leaders educate leaders. They have hundreds of workers and get really good money. People like us are just the first line of soldiers and we are told that we are not professionals.

Katarzyna: The thing is that you can't say that NGOs are bad. They are great because they help people...

Paweł: ...even if after twenty years of activity, nobody sees what has happened with the people's energy and the money? Where are the social changes? Maybe we need less bureaucracy and more action.

Fabio: So now that you are in this phase of transition, trying to get the new centre off the ground, what is happening with the building of the Nonformal University?

Paweł: We are trying to rise again after the winter. Because of our financial problems, we have not been able to properly heat the building and some pipes have broken, so now we are trying to prepare the school for the summer groups. It is a very difficult moment as our foundation does not have any money in its account and the future doesn't look very optimistic, but we will see. Maybe this is the last year of this adventure and the first year of a new departure.

Bianca: Would it be possible to support the school with donations?

Katarzyna: We have some forty people who support us, but that is not enough. We would need 400 people to support the school with 50 złoty [about €13] per month to pay all the bills for the building and to have a constant program. But it is not easy. Also, the money we get from grants is tied to specific expenses. For example, with the grant from the ministry, you can rent hotels in Białowieża for big money, but you can't pay for the central heating in our school in order to have twenty people staying over. This would be a lot cheaper, but you can only use the hotel.

Paweł: Of course, Kasia and I don't know how long we can sustain this anymore with our children and living off money from her parents. But, like I said, the generation of the democratic opposition spent their lives to do things which everyone had thought were impossible. How can one, two or one hundred people fight the Russian communist state? They changed the system, even if they lost the main values, but they changed something. So, maybe we will see what happens with our work. There are many important things to be done in Białowieża.

www.teremiski.edu.pl

ZOE ROMANO

WWW.DAZOESCOPE.COM

BACKGROUND

Zoe Romano is a Milan-based activist, who since 1998 has been directly involved in a series of initiatives and struggles against precarious working conditions. Romano is constantly using her specialism in communication design to try to reach people who, up to that point, were not politicized.

AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT

Chainworkers.org, an Italian webzine on media and mall activism for awareness-building and unionisation of precarious workers. The collective was active from 1999 until 2010.

The **MayDay Parade**, which, on the 1st May each year, brings many types of non-standard workers across Europe onto the streets in a joyful (but angry) expression of dissent towards sub-standard conditions of work and living.

San Precario, an Italian activist collective grouped around the patron saint of the precarious, campaigning for a fixed axis of non-precarity with regards to income, housing, human affection, mobility, communication and access to new technologies.

Serpica Naro, a meta-fashion brand dedicated to rethinking a style of production beyond precariousness. The brand was launched during the 2005 Milan Fashion Week using guerrilla communication activity in order to draw the attention of the media to the problem of precarious working conditions in the creative industries, particularly, in this case, the fashion world. Serpica Naro has since evolved into a network of fashion makers trying to build a system of production parallel to the classical one.

OpenWear, a European collaborative platform for fashion creation, attempting to establish makers, fashion producers, small local enterprises and educational institutions working together towards the creation of a new vision of fashion based on micro-communities and sustainability.

FUNDING

Her own job in a communications company; EU funding for OpenWear.

DEVELOPMENT

1999: Chainworkers webzine is launched
2001: the first MayDay Parade takes place in Milan
2004: San Precario makes his first apparition
2005: Serpica Naro is launched as an alternative, activist fashion label
2007: the European alternative fashion network Open-Wear is launched

LOCATION

Milan, IT, 1,338,436 inhabitants

CONVERSATION

This conversation was held in Zoe's kitchen in Milan in February 2012.

Bianca Elzenbaumer: Considering all the creative activist groups you have initiated and been part of, we are wondering what path brought you to be so thoroughly engaged with precarity. Could you trace your path for us?

Zoe Romano: At the beginning I was studying philosophy, because at the age of nineteen, I did not know what I wanted to do in life. I only knew that I wanted to work little and earn the most money out of this little work. I used to work when I was in high school and had realised that working was pretty tough, sucking a lot of your energy. Therefore, my aim was to go to university in order to get a highly-paid job that would allow me to work just part-time. (laughs) That way I hoped to have time for developing my personal ideas and for all the other things I wanted to do in life. So I studied moral philosophy here in Milan, because my parents would not pay for my studies abroad, insisting that here I could get all I needed. And I accepted their position, knowing from all my older friends who were working and studying at the same time, that by needing to sustain myself away from home it would take me a very long time to finish university. So I concentrated on my studies, hoping to finish them in a reasonable time. Studying philosophy was good though, because it was teaching me how to think. It was like a psychological treatment for me. Discovering all those philosophers who were thinking about the meaning of mankind and asking these big questions, taught me that the important thing is to ask questions more than to find answers. For me, it was a good training to understand the situation we are living in and to find the right perspective to solve problems.

At that time, I also found myself liking computers—even though I was doing humanistic studies, I re-

ally liked video games and playing with technology. Already during high school, around 1986/1987, my uncle, who was working at IBM, would be giving me his "leftovers" to play with. When I graduated from university, I longed for a nice computer and my ex-boyfriend told me to ask my grandma to give me a nice big computer. And indeed, to celebrate my degree, my grandma bought me one: I got this nice big IBM, which was about 4,000,000 Lire (about €2,000). So I began to work with graphic programs, beginning to do interactive stuff with basic programs like Director. Being passionate about computers, I applied for a master's degree in "New Media, Science and Technology" in the engineering department of the University of Pavia. There, they were trying to bring together humanists with engineers for all the multimedia stuff coming up at that time.

Fabio Franz: So did your connection to the hacker and DIY scene come from that experience in Pavia?

Zoe: Actually, in 1998, just after starting the master's, my boyfriend and I started to work with the people of the occupied space Deposito Bulk. It was a huge building in Milan squatted by high school and young university students. The occupiers had called older people to manage the second floor of the building and so one of my friends, who was in touch with the people from Deposito, suggested we manage the space together. And in fact, my boyfriend and I at the time used to be really hardcore techno club goers, but we had also become tired and bored of going around Europe for clubbing. We realised that only consuming becomes boring. So, over a period of a year, we managed the second floor of the squat by organising parties. And then the first Italian tech meeting happened to take place on the 3rd floor: all these hackers arrived and it was very inspiring. So when I had to take an exam for the master's on html, I decided I wanted to make a social project out of it rather than designing something random. During that summer, I had been to the US and I remembered that in the Financial Times, I had read that the first McDonald's had been unionised in Canada. For me this was amazing news, because, during my last year at high school, I had worked at McDonald's! This prompted me to build a website that talked about the rights of the workers but with a way of communicating that was more akin to MTV, rather than to the unions. While I was doing this social html project, my boyfriend and I wanted to create a collective inside the squat in order to do direct actions to raise awareness around chain stores, after having seen how these chains had

colonised the American cities. So we began the Chainworkers Collective with a website and by going around chain stores with flyers talking about the rights of the workers. We were going around at mid-night, when the places were closing, talking to the people our age who were working there. It was a nice experience.

Bianca: How did you make a living at the time when you were mainly involved with the Chainworkers Collective?

Zoe: I sustained myself with a stable job that I had found after my MA studies. I knew I wanted a stable job because my mother had been laid off because of the recession in the '90s and I saw how much she had to struggle as a freelancer. This was actually how I experienced precarity for the first time, through her. We had ten years of little money and so finding a job for me was a major concern, even if it would be boring, because otherwise I would have been stuck in their house forever. After refusing the unpaid internship that had been arranged by the University, with the help of a friend I found an opportunity as an html programmer for an educational project by Telecom Italia in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. It was a nice job; we were planning activities for online collaborations between schools—very elementary things like chatting online. I liked it. I started as a coder but began to work more on content once they realised I was not simply able to code. I spent six months there within a paid internship and another six months on a contract. Then one of my colleagues was hired in another, bigger place and he told me to come with him. And in fact, they offered me a good contract because they were about to enter the stock exchange and needed project managers. So I went there as a project manager on a long-term contract. But I didn't want to get sucked in and so I negotiated a working week of four days. At the beginning they said no, but then they accepted.

Bianca: Do you think that this negotiation of free time protected you from not being sucked into this world of the creative industries and giving up on your activism?

Zoe: I was never seduced by any job. Having a job was a necessity for me in order to be independent, to pay my rent. I never lived in occupied houses, so I always had to pay the rent and Milan is not cheap. So I was in my paid job from Monday to Thursday, 8 hours a day, while at night and on Friday and at weekends, I was

working on my other projects, studying and exploring.

Then, in 2001, we had this idea with the Chainworkers of participating in the parade of the 1st May in Milan, but not in the boring way it usually happened. We wanted to do the parade in the afternoon with music, trucks and a big sound system. In order to launch that idea, to let people know about it, we did a huge action at a mall. We didn't like the malls that were trying to become a new fake "public space" and we wanted to experiment with a new way of protesting that would be different than the usual picketing. We wanted to bring the social centre into the mall. (laughs) So we entered the mall at the top floor with about sixty people pushing carts packed with a sound system and a generator. The building had a hole in the middle and so you had this feeling of being in a theatre. We put the jack into the system, started the generator and played loud reggae music. (laughs) We had printed about 3,000 flyers and started throwing them out, giving them to people.

We managed to stay for one hour, negotiating with the DIGOS [The General Investigations and Special Operations Division that in Italy, amongst others, follows the activities of the social centres], because we were not aggressive. We just talked to people, had a bit of music and some flyers. "We stay here another 10 minutes"—it is like that when you are protesting. We were not doing anything bad, we were not destroying the place—we just had a bit of music and some flyers. Anyway, at a certain point, we heard a voice from the speakers of the mall saying, "Would everyone in this mall please leave the building." The manager of the mall was saying this! He was so overwhelmed by these flyers that he had the building evacuated. (laughs) That was Saturday afternoon at around 4pm—can you imagine how much money they lost?! (laughs) We couldn't believe it. He could have waited like 10 minutes and we would have gone, but we were pretty happy about this. And then we started MayDay. In the first year, it was 5,000 people, in the second year 10,000, the third year 15,000 and in 2004, there were 50,000 people, and then 100,000, and then in 2006, 120,000—since then it has been declining a bit.

Fabio: Who were the people that you wanted to get involved with the parade when you started it in 2001?

Zoe: Until 2004, the main target of our actions was the service industry—people working for call-centres, in big offices, malls or chain stores—because there was a clear target there. But at a certain point we realised that we also wanted to involve more people like us—people working in communication, fashion or other 'creative' jobs—so we began San Precario. As an idea, the patron saint of the precarious came out of a meeting in which the unions proposed that we do an action on the 27th of each month, the day employees get paid in Italy. But we pointed out that this proposition only worked for those who actually had a stable job, so for us precarious the 27th was meaningless. We needed something else; we argued that we would need something more like a saint to protect us. From that moment, we were convinced: "Yes, we need a saint." And so people came to me with this idea, asking me to design that saint. To create the figure, I decided to use a painting by Chris Woods of a chain worker praying. So I did this thing with this weird green I liked. (laughs)

And so, as now we had a saint, we did a warm-up action for the MayDay with him. One month before the parade, we did a procession in a supermarket with a sculpture of San Precario. There was a guy dressed like a priest and another dressed like a nun and we went into the supermarket saying the prayer of San Precario. That was very weird for people! (laughs) We did that action to protest against working Sundays, expressing the need for a day on which everyone rests. Right now, I still have some doubts about this action, because we surely need a day when everyone rests, but at the same time I like it when everything is always available. So it is a difficult topic.

Fabio: So your activism passed from the Chainworkers Collective to San Precario and now you are actually involved in a bottom-up fashion label called Serpica Naro. How did that come about?

Zoe: In 2005, we wanted to focus with our political actions on the creative industries. With San Precario, we wanted to protest against and talk about the precarious working conditions within the fashion system in Milan—not in China or India, which are usually targeted by 'fashion protests'. We wanted to speak about the red carpet of fashion, where everyone thinks they are rich but where in fact most people are poor and exploited, working 14 hours a day, being mobbed, not being paid enough. For this, we needed to do a protest that was different because there is a lot of aspirational as well as affective investment in this industry.

When you work for McDonald's or a call centre, you don't think that your work will make yourself better, you just do it for the money and want to go home at six. Whereas, when you work for fashion, design or communication, you constantly believe that if you work hard, if you can show your talent, then you will make it. So in a way you want to be your own boss. No one wants to protest against his or her own boss. It is generally accepted that you need to make some *gavetta* [Italian for a time of sacrifice that will help you to climb the career ladder]. Organising a protest was impossible, so we came up with the idea of creating the fake fashion label Serpica Naro and building a scandal around it. This branded anagram of San Precario allowed people to work for a thing that was actually furthering their cause, while at the same time doing their job: in the action we had to build the catwalk, make the garments for the events, create the videos, the graphics, the web site, everything. There was the perception of doing something that was actually cool and subversive for a good cause and that was different from working for a classical pro-bono event. And in fact, in this, the meaning of the brand also changed. It became less about 'correcting' big brands. Why correct them if what you actually want is to see them crash? It became about building a new network in which creatives could do without selling their creativity to big brands. How can we think of a new fashion system that is not based on the values the existing one is built on? With Serpica, I changed my activism to a day-to-day work—how can I build something different with the work I do on a daily basis? We also realised that people working in the creative industries usually do a shit job for making money and then they do free projects where they don't

earn anything, but they learn a lot and gain satisfaction. Very often the job that pays their rent is not connected with their creativity. The problem is that they don't fight for their income in 'the other job' because it is not their 'real job'. They say, "That is not me. I'm a designer. I don't make money out of it, but who cares."

Bianca: Would you say that you figured out that creatives don't fight against their shit job and they don't fight for their creative job?

Zoe: They don't fight at all. (laughs) And this is a problem. A lot of people here in Milan work in a 'high-level' service industry like catering, which is very precarious, but people don't identify with the job, because their real career is somewhere else. The real career... (laughs) Even if underpaid or not paid at all, they like what they are doing because they are part of a network of 'cool' people with 'cool' parties. And then, once they are over 30, when they would like to live in a house on their own, maybe have kids or simply need some money, they start to say there is a problem. "How comes I'm not making a career? Why has my shit job become my real job?"

Bianca: How did you deal with that situation in your life? Combining activism with building a somewhat stable career?

Zoe: Actually, I am someone who thinks a lot about the future. I try to plan ahead even for when I am old. I am doing a little action for the future every day; this gives me more confidence about it. I don't just want to have the young years to enjoy. I would like to build something to enjoy the life from when I'm 60 'till I'm 90. It is 30 years! My experimental moment will be from 60 to 90. (laughs) I see it like this. You could say that I'm a slave to this job of mine and to this flat I bought, but I don't know. I also bought this flat as an investment for when I'm old. In ten years, when I'll finish paying for this, I could rent it out and go wherever. And in my job, I try to be as productive as possible, using minimal time so I can still have time to think about my projects even when I'm there and without getting too tired. Even if I could work as a graphic designer, I prefer to work only on text and campaign strategies because it is not as time consuming. I think I have found a balance and, also, this way, I feel more in touch with reality: waking up every morning, going to work. And I learn a lot from observing the marketing strategies of big brands. You cannot imagine how much they invest in campaigns every month, while their offer is

always the same, just restyled, to make people think it is a new thing. Many brands invest around €200,000 a month just for online marketing. (everyone laughs) If we want to be successful in our creative, critical thing, we need to put a lot of effort into talking to people, because companies are not just selling stuff: they are really convincing and moving masses of people with a lot of investments. In order to make Serpica work, the thing of "coolness" was really important. We started to move from the idea of the militant activist to the cool person that doesn't get exploited and that fights against capitalism, but not as an old communist.

So now what I'm working on is trying to find new business models, or ecologies of work, where you build a new type of producer, a new type of consumer and a new type of supplier. It cannot just be the workers changing, the whole network must change. I want to do something that is more ethical, not exploiting the world and its people. This is why I also recently entered the area of technology, prototyping and personal manufacturing, because I believe that this kind of technology is democratising the way things are produced. So, you don't need to be a designer, you don't need to produce 10,000 pieces. You can just go small, produce on demand and it is a good thing environmentally as well as creatively. It is not easy, but that is my big plan. I'm experimenting—trying to understand what the nodes of this new ecology of work and creativity are.

Moreover, I feel that there is something about 'satisfaction' that is important, because when I meet people who are successful, around 40/45 years old, they feel drained. They speak about living in the countryside and so on. This gets me very angry, because I think they should use their knowledge to talk to other designers in order to change this draining situation. Also, in terms of my job, I realised that I would have liked to work for an ethical agency, but they don't really exist because NGOs like WWF, left-wing parties or unions go to big agencies to have their campaigns planned and designed. Sometimes agencies actually do it for free because they want to say that they also have some 'good' clients. I hate that.

Fabio: How are you trying to address these issues around production and marketing with Serpica Naro at the moment?

Zoe: In 2006, with Serpica, we created a new license to open up the brand, which we had to register for the fake fashion show. Until now, no work has been done on 'open' patents or licenses, so we began to experi-

ment with this open license, so that everyone could use the brand. Moreover, we began to foster networks with small producers of garments to see whether it was possible to create relations between them and to support them, to create an economy out of their work. We also began to do sewing workshops with people, so they realised how difficult it is to produce something with a sewing machine. This way they realise that when they buy garments for a low price, it means that someone else was paid very little to make these things.

Bianca: In parallel to Serpica, you are now also involved in the European fashion network OpenWear. Can you tell us how that came about?

Zoe: I started the project with OpenWear because I wanted to try to establish a business prospect to this idea of networking, to actually build a network that is parallel to that of the existing fashion system. OpenWear is trying to do this in a more institutional way since we also applied for some EU funding. I took one year off from my job—every 7 years, you can take one year off—and so I played my jolly for OpenWear. The first two years of the project were very good, so I think there could be a chance that it can become financially viable and that some of the people from Serpica could be employed on it. But in any case, Serpica is more political, more grassroots and with no mediation, whereas OpenWear is a lot more about mediation between the interests of the European partners involved.

This project really helped me to understand how fashion universities work and what are the limits of dealing with them. I realised that the maker scene is more keen on this new approach to fashion than proper fashion schools. That's why I've now moved my actions more into the maker scene. They are not really politicised either, but they have a different approach to how they do things. They don't like the glamour—for them, it is more about substance than appearance and that is more in line with my approach.

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APPENDIX D

KRISIS – COLLECTIVE WRITING: *NON-AFFIRMATIVE MANUAL OF ORIENTATION*

During the last days of the collectivised residency at Careof DOCVA (Milan, October 2011), everyone involved in the Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative decided to respond to an open call for contributions to a magazine on the crisis of orientation. The plan was to produce – through a process of collective writing in an on-line document – a "non-affirmative manual for orientation" based on the experiences of the collective residency.

See the following pages for:

- the published text in Italian and English
- the unedited version of the initial text in Italian

FIGURE 1 and 2 *above* Cover and back cover of Unità di Crisi. "Orientation Krisis," Spring 2013.

FIGURE 3 *below* Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative. "Manuale Per Pratiche D'Orientamento Non-Affermative." *Orientation Krisis*, 2013, p.252-253
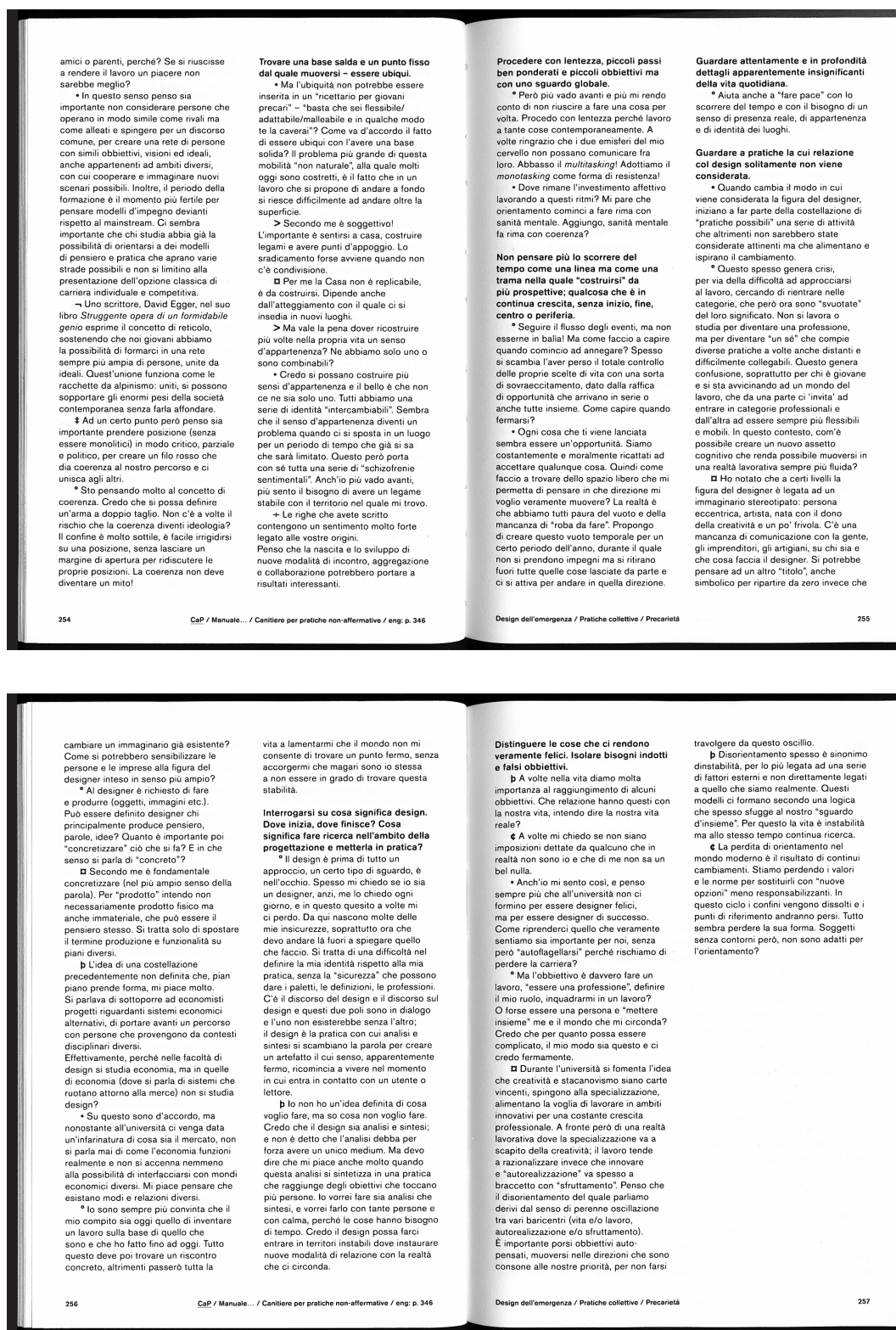
FIGURE 4 and 5 Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative. "Manuale Per Pratiche D'Orientamento Non-Affermative."
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Manual for non-affirmative orientation practices
by the Construction site
for non-affirmative practice (p. 252)

Collective practices / Emergency design / Precariousness

"The crisis of orientation is born out of the complexity of the correlations between numerous different emergencies, which most visible effect is an overall tendency to fragmentation, to individualisation, to selection, to separation, to the monetisation of the social and environmental context […] In this scenario it becomes crucial to rethink the disorientation as an experience that can be a source of renewal for the new practices of orientation".
Unità di Crisi

How to find new models of orientation through one's own practice? The Construction site for non-affirmative practice has asked each one of its components to share new possible methods of thinking and practicing design and alternative approach methods in the

FIGURE 6 English translation of Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative. "Manuale Per Pratiche D'Orientamento Non-Affermative." *Orientation Krisis*, 2013, p.346

workplace and in life. The first step has been the collective draft of a pseudo "Orientation Manual" that would in certain places indicate possible guidelines for orientation and that supply a base from which to start a discussion. The streaming of thoughts generated deconstructs the manual-format: we don't have, in fact, the answers, but the confrontation creates a dialogue. The "manual" has been written on a text file that is shared and rewritable by each of the participants. The interventions have been gathered over a week. This text is the result of various editing operations of the original text that can found online at the address http://pratichenonaffermative.net/scrittura-collettiva/ in its unabridged version and is open to further contributions.

The bold typed sentences are the points in the orientation manual, written as a base for the discussion; the portions of the text that follow are the comments of participants. Every intervention of each participant is introduced by a symbol that has the function of visibly rendering the plurality of the voices in the dialogue. Each symbol corresponds to a single participant that is part of a group.

Considering precariousness a unifying element and giving it space

• In this space methods can, then, be approached that until now have been given little importance. Here I think first of all of the exploration of the concept of multitude as a multiplicity of singularities that can communicate and act together while remaining different at their core.

Trying to be more utopian

• Keeping in mind that heterotopias can be created, meaning "real spaces in which (micro) utopias exist and where the paradigms of our society are contested and inverted" (Foucault, *Des espaces autres*).

¤ Somewhere I have read that where there is utopia responsibility begins. One of the first responsibilities, in my opinion, should be to chose between being "a victim of the situation" or "a potential bomb for change".

Exploring the concept of possible economies, considering the economic system in force only one of the many possibilities that exist to structure social life.
• Building cooperation networks, combining autonomy and self-organisation seems important to carry forward, for example, activities parallel to design or "constructing new jobs". The designer could become inventor of new possibilities and life models, for example, building "enlightened" businesses that meet the needs of today. It is almost as if carrying an activity parallel but different to the work as designer permits to keep our creativity free. The idea of refusing work "does not coincide with the cessation of every activity, but with the defence of creativity itself" (Hardt & Negri, *Comune*, 2010). The importance resides then in finding a second way that permits to carry on what we believe in. It would seem absurd to me if this "second way" would actively sustain a system that with our creative practice we would want to dismantle instead. Also, all that is to be constructed reconsidering one's own life ambition as well, and thinking more in "social" terms. As Bakhunin said, "My liberty grows in proportion to that of others".

¤ I think that today there is a need to analyse and experiment what should be the forms of cooperation and social networks that work in the long run.
• The designers have dealt little or not at all with the problem of sustainable organisation. We have much to learn from people that operate in other sectors and

FIGURE 7 English translation of Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative. "Manuale Per Pratiche D'Orientamento Non-Affermative." *Orientation Krisis*, 2013, p.347

that, because of the nature of their activities, have the need to create "mutual support structures" to carry on their practice and research. We have to copy all that works!

Having a more systemic approach to projects and life in general. What kind of relation exists between the way of designing and the way to live?

¤ Can we derive ethics from design? Or should an "ethic design" be a natural consequence of a sustainable way of life in every way? What could be the container for these ethics? The work in itself, the way in which it is acknowledged and/or by whom, the production systems, the topics, the methodology of designing, the ways to collaborate and organise?

> The will to change starts mainly in ourselves, therefore the ethics in design or in whatever other kind of work cannot disregard self-reflection. We cannot think to change the world for ourselves, but rather to change ourselves in a continuing critical view of our habits and ways of life.

We need to know the real social, economic, and political dynamics that surround us, to know how to enter and exit the complexities of various situations. More information, less manipulation!

> Substituting mainstream informational channels with independent networks based on the spontaneous exchange of ideas can guide us in the multitude of information.

° Even friendship is a free informational channel, sincere and interactive.

• But who are our real friends? Childhood friends, friend-colleagues, colleague-friends, people that have the same interests that we do?

* Often a sincere personal relationship with people is missing. Money drifts us apart, all the matters tied to bureaucracy drift us apart. I hear that we should never work for or with friends or relatives, why? If we could render the work a pleasure, wouldn't that be better?

• In this sense, I think that it is important not to consider people that operate in a similar way as rivals, but as allies and to push for a common discourse, to create a network of people with similar objectives, visions and ideals, even belonging to different settings, with which to cooperate and imagine new possible scenarios. Also, the time within education is the most fertile moment to think up models of commitment that deviate from the mainstream. We think it is important that who studies should already have to possibility to direct themselves toward models of thinking and practicing that open various possible paths and that do not limit themselves to the presentation of the classic option of the individual and competitive career.

¬ David Egger in his book, *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, expresses the concept of network, sustaining that young people have the possibility to form an ever-growing network of people, united by ideals. This union functions like mountaineering shoes: united, the enormous burdens of contemporary society can be withstood without sinking it.

‡ At a certain point, however, I think it's important to take a stance (without being monolithic) in a critical, partial and political way, to create a red line that gives coherence to our journey and that unites us with the others.

° I think a lot about the concept of coherence. I think that it can be defined as a double-edged sword. Is there not, sometimes, the risk that coherence becomes ideology? The line is very thin, it is easy to stiffen on a position, without leaving a margin of opening to argue once more one's positions. Coherence must never become a myth!

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FIGURE 8   English translation of Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative. "Manuale Per Pratiche D'Orientamento Non-Affermative." *Orientation Krisis*, 2013, p.348

Finding a solid base and a fixed point from which to move – being ubiquitous.
   • But couldn't ubiquity be inserted in a "recipe book for the young precarious"? – "you just need to be flexible/adaptable/ malleable and somehow you will make it"? How does the fact of being ubiquitous tie in with having a solid base? The biggest problem in this "non-natural" mobility in which many are compelled in nowadays, is the fact that in a job in which one proposes to go in depth, it is rare to be able to breach the surface.
   > I think it is subjective! The important part is being able to feel at home, building ties and having support. The uprooting perhaps comes when there is no sharing.
   ¤ For me "Home" is not replicable, it is to be built. It also depends on the attitude with which one settles in new places.
   > But is it worth the effort to rebuild time and time again in one's own life a sense of belonging? Do we only have one or are they mixable?
   • I think more than one sense of belonging can be created, and the good thing is that there is not only one. We all have a series of "interchangeable" identities. It seems that the sense of belonging becomes a problem when one moves to a place for an already known limited period of time. This, however, brings with it a whole series of "sentimental schizophrenias". I too, the more I go on, the more I feel the need to have a stable tie with the territory in which I find myself.
   ÷ The lines that you have written contain a very strong sentiment tied to your origins. I think that the birth and the development of new ways of meeting, aggregation and collaboration can lead to interesting results.

Proceeding at a slow pace, small well thought-out steps and small objectives, although with a global vision.
   ° However, the more I go on, the more I realise that I cannot do one thing at a time.

I proceed slowly because I work on many things at once. Sometimes I am glad that the two hemispheres of my brain can't communicate with each other. Down with multi-tasking! Let's adopt mono-tasking as a form of resistance!
   • Where is the emotional investment left, working at this rate? I think that orientation is beginning to rhyme with mental stability. I add, does mental stability rhyme with coherence?

To not think about the flow of time as a line anymore, but as a pattern in which to "build oneself" from multiple perspectives; something that is growing continually, without a beginning, end, centre or periphery.
   ° Following the flow of events, but not being at the mercy of it! But how do I understand when I begin to drown? Often, the loss of total control of one's life's choices is exchanged with a sort of overexcitement, given the flurry of opportunities that come up in a series or all at once. How do you know when to stop?
   • Everything that is flung at you seems an opportunity. We are constantly and morally blackmailed into accepting anything. How can I, then, find free space that allows me to think in what direction I really want to move? The reality is that we all are afraid of emptiness and the lack of "things to do". I propose to create this temporal emptiness for a certain period of the year, during which no commitments are taken, but all the things previously put aside are taken out and action is taken that leads in that direction.

Looking carefully and in-depth at apparently insignificant details of modern daylife.
   ° It also helps to make peace with the flowing of time and the need of a sense of real presence, belonging, and identity of places.

FIGURE 9   English translation of Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative. "Manuale Per Pratiche D'Orientamento Non-Affermative." *Orientation Krisis*, 2013, p.349
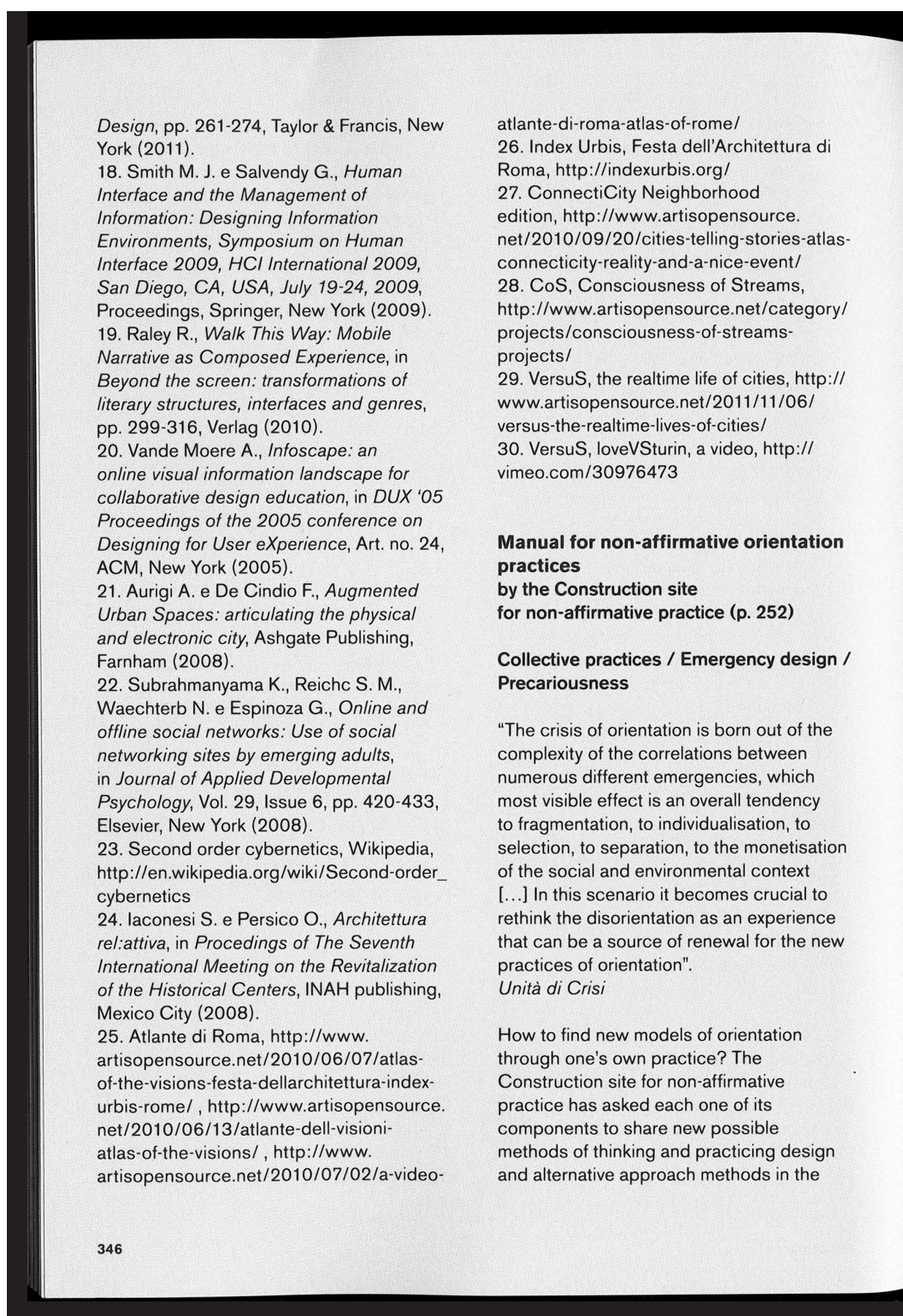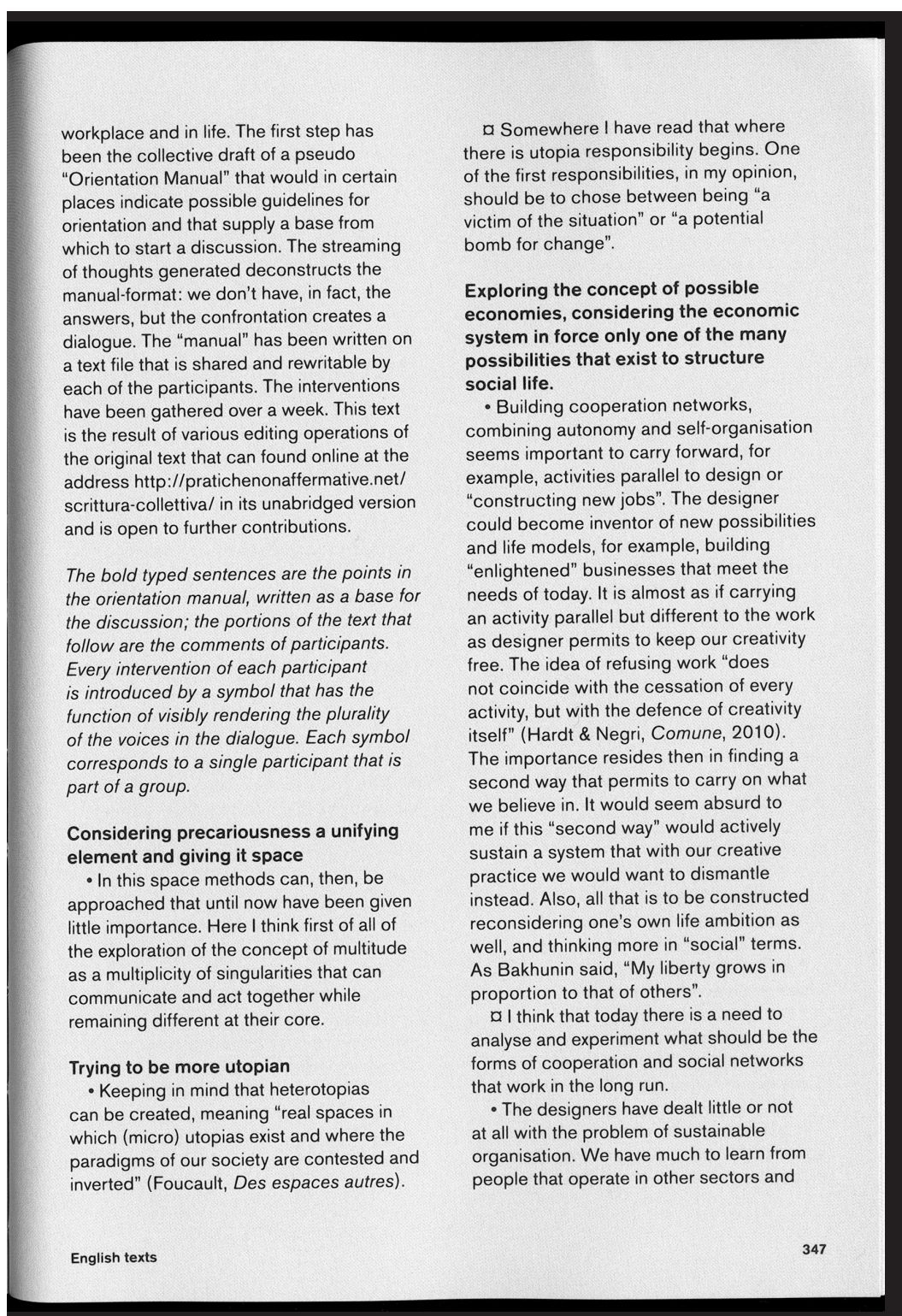
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Looking at practices whose relationship with design is usually not considered.

• When the way in which the role of the designer is considered changes, a series of activities that otherwise would not be considered pertinent but that incite and inspire change begin to become part of the constellation of "possible practices".

° This often generates a crisis, because of the difficulty one has approaching work, trying to fall within the categories, that however are "emptied" of their meaning. You do not work or study to become a professional, but to become "a self" that performs different practices at time even distant and hardly connected. This generates confusion, above all for someone who is young and is entering the workforce, that on one side "invites" us to enter into professional categories and on the other at being ever more flexible and mobile. In this context, how is it possible to create a new cognitive attitude that makes it possible to move in a reality that is ever more fluid?

¤ I have noticed that at certain levels, the role of the designer is tied to a stereotyped imaginary: an eccentric, artist, born with the gift of creativity and a little frivolous. There is a lack of communication with the people, the businessmen, the craftsmen, on who is a designer, and what he does. Could we think of another "title", symbolic even, to start from scratch instead of changing the existing imaginary? How could we make people and companies aware about the role of the designer intended in its broader sense?

° The designer is asked to make and produce (objects, images, etc.). Can the designer be defined as the person who produces primarily thoughts, words, ideas? How important is it to then "make concrete" what one done? And in what sense do we talk about "concrete"?

¤ For me, it is imperative to "make concrete" (in the broader sense). For "product" I do not necessarily mean physical product, but also the immaterial kind, that can be thought itself. We only need to shift the terms production and functionality on different planes.

þ I really like the idea of a previously undefined constellation that little by little takes form. There was talk of submitting to economists projects regarding alternative economic systems, to do something with people that came from different disciplinary contexts. As a matter of fact, why is it that majoring in design you study business, but majoring in business (where you talk about systems that revolve around merchandise) you do not study design?

• On this I am in agreement, but although at the university we are given a smattering of what the market is, we never talk of how the economy really works and there is not even a hint about the possibility to interface with different economic worlds. I would like to think that different relations and ways do exist.

° I am ever more convinced that my task today is to invent a job founded on who I am and what I have done up until now. All this, then, has to find concrete validation, otherwise I will live all my life whining that the world does not allow me to find an anchor, without realising that maybe it is I that am not able to find this stability.

Asking ourselves what design means. Where does it begin, where does it end? What does it mean to do research in design and to put it into practice?

° Design is first of all an approach, a certain type of gaze, it is in the eye. Often I ask myself if I am a designer, rather, I ask myself that every day, and sometime I lose myself in the question. A lot of my uncertainties are born form here, above all now that I have to go out and explain what I do. It is about a difficulty in defining

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FIGURE 10 English translation of Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative. "Manuale Per Pratiche D'Orientamento Non-Affermative." *Orientation Krisis*, 2013, p.350

Full version of initial collectively written text (in Italian)

Dal call for entries di Krisis Orientation:

Da sempre l'uomo ha cercato di costruire un proprio orientamento all'interno del mondo che abita.

Nel corso degli ultimi decenni questi modelli sono entrati in crisi.

La crisi dell'orientamento nasce dalla complessità delle correlazioni tra numerose emergenze diverse, il cui effetto più visibile è una complessiva tendenza alla frammentazione, alla individualizzazione, alla selezione, alla separazione, alla monetarizzazione del contesto sociale e ambientale.

I paradigmi di orientamento diventano circoscritti, limitati, incapaci di costruire visioni ampie e condivise.

In questo scenario diventa cruciale ripensare al disorientamento come un'esperienza che possa essere una fonte di rinnovamento per nuove pratiche d'orientamento.

Qual è il tuo punto di vista?

Racconta in breve come attraverso la tua pratica cerchi di trovare nuovi modelli di orientamento.

Il tuo contributo verrà utilizzato per la redazione di un "Manuale di Orientamento" per brevi punti.

—

Scusate per il ritardo esorbitante... ecco i mie punti

Essere più utopici tenendo a mente che si possono creare delle eterotopie ovvero degli spazi reali in cui delle (micro)utopie esistono e dove i paradigmi della nostra società vengono conteste ed invertite. (Foucault scrive di questo nel suo test Des espaces autres).

Da qualche parte avevo letto che là dove c'è utopia inizia la responsabilità. ci sono una marea scritti sulla questione utopia (li posterò sul blog), in generale è un parola connotata un po' negativamente perché la si associa a qualcosa di irrealizzabile ma il nesso con la responsabilità è interessante. Riporto un testo tratto da 'Utopia del tramonto' di Massimo IIritano su identità e crisi della coscienza europea (nn è chiarissimo, se trovo un passaggio più semplice lo riposto)

'Utopia' non può significare 'programma' o 'progetto', qualsiasi programma non può che formularsi secondo i principi di una razionalità alla scopo, la quale non potrà che fondarsi che sul 'fine' della conservazione del sistema. L' utopia, invece, ha a che fare con responsabilità, cioè capacità di rispondere ad una aporia (passaggio impraticabile), ad un 'fine' che non appare 'transitabile', ad un impossiblile.

E' evidente che se l'Europa oggi sta 'semplicemente' svolgendo un 'programma', non saprà evocare alcuna 'responsabilità'. Ma senza 'responsabilità' non è neppure immaginabile grande politica.

Dobbiamo decidere se essere "vittima della situazione o potenziale bomba per il cambiamento".

Considerare la precarietà come elemento unificante e dargli spazio In questo spazio poi si possono approcciare concetti ai quali fino ad ora è stato dato poco spazio. Qui penso in primo luogo all'esplorazione del concetto di moltitudine come una molteplicità di singolarità che riescono a comunicare e agire insieme rimanendo differenti al loro interno. Se penso a come si è formato il nostro gruppo fino ad ora mi sembra che in questo senso siamo sulla buona strada :)

In secondo luogo mi piace l'idea di esplorare il concetto di economie possibili, considerando il sistema economico vigente solo una delle tante possibilità che ci sono per strutturare la vita sociale.

Consapevolezza! Abbiamo bisogno di tanta teoria e di conoscere bene i meccanismi che muovono certe dinamiche per saper entrare ed uscire dalla complessità delle varie situazioni

Autonomia, autorganizzazione AUTOGESTIONE!

Portare avanti un'attività parallela ma diversa dalla progettazione che possa permetterti di guadagnare abbastanza per accettare solo determinati progetti senza dover scendere a compromessi che a lungo andare potrebbero scoraggiarmi. Anch'io trovo allettante questa idea/opzione. Potrei quasi dire che, non essendo del tutto negato con il legno, un giorno potrei guadagnare qualcosa come falegname o eseguendo altri tipi di lavori da "tecnico". Ma qui, secondo me, c'è il rischio che l'"attività parallela", se ci voglio guadagnare "abbastanza", non mi lasci

molto tempo o energie mentali per dedicarmi anche alla progettazione. Anche per la natura dei progetti che facciamo e per il tipo di time management che comportano, faccio fatica a pensare di poter combinare nella mia giornata o settimana un'altra attività più remunerativa. Se ne parlava l'altro giorno: forse metà anno si dovrebbe fare un certo tipo di lavoro e per l'altra metà un altro.

Gelateria (mi piace il gelato, il gelato fa bene alla salute, con il gelato si può inventare), un lavoro in cui si potrebbe far rientrare la propria pratica di designer, nel senso di inventore di nuove possibilità e modelli di vita, una sorta di attività imprenditoriale illuminata che risponda ad alcune esigenze di oggi, soprattutto di chi è giovane e non sa dove sbattere la testa. mi piace molto il concetto dei luoghi di co-working e penso che non sarebbe male gestire un posto in cui vanno a lavorare tante persone che fanno cose diverse ma che si trovano a condividere uno spazio di lavoro che se organizzato bene potrebbe diventare un'officina di menti, uno spazio condiviso, come è stato questo in questo periodo.

Analizzare e sperimentare **quali siano le forme di cooperazione e reti sociali più funzionanti a lungo tempo.**

Assolutamente sì! I designer sono rimasti indietro e si sono occupati poco o per nulla del problema dell'organizzazione sostenibile (sapete di esempi storici che andavano in questa direzione?). Abbiamo molto da imparare da persone che operano in altri settori e che, per la natura della loro attività, hanno bisogno di creare delle 'strutture di mutuo aiuto' per portare avanti la loro pratica e ricerca. Dobbiamo COPIARE TUTTO CIO' CHE FUNZIONA – COPY EVERYTHING THAT WORKS.

Mi sembra che negli ultimi anni sia nata tanta letteratura sull'argomento ma poca pratica. Cresce in modo esponenziale la letteratura sull'idea di sviluppo sostenibile ma poi mancano i momenti di confronto tra le esperienze che hanno avuto successo e i modelli che potrebbero funzionare, c'è poca gente che copia o forse i 'modelli pratici' di sviluppo e cooperazione non sono molto diffusi?

Considerare la creatività non come merce ma come servizio. Assolutamente sì e inoltre la creatività non è terreno solo delle professioni cosiddette creative, ma è un modo di fare, sì, un servizio utile per tutta la società.

Mantenere un rapporto e un ritmo di lavoro consono/in equilibrio con lo sviluppo personale (vita sociale vs isolamento; capacità lavorative vs capacità

personali; tempo lavoro vs tempo libero)

Avere un approccio più sistemico ai progetti e alla vita in generale (che relazione c'è tra modo di progettare e modo di vivere?)

Possiamo derivare un'etica dal design? o un 'design etico' dovrebbe essere una naturale conseguenza di un modo di vivere 'sostenibile' in tutti i sensi. Partire da una pratica di progettazione per arrivare ad una filosofia o vale piuttosto il contrario? in tal caso quale potrebbe essere il contenitore di quest'etica? il lavoro in sé, il modo in cui viene recepito e/o da chi, i materiali, i sistemi di produzione, i temi trattati, la metodologia della progettazione, i modi di collaborare ed organizzarsi?

La volontà di cambiamento secondo me parte principalmente da noi stessi, quindi secondo me un'etica nel design o in qualsiasi altro lavoro non è pensabile senza un'autoanalisi. Non bisogna pensare di cambiare il mondo per noi stessi ma piuttosto cercare di cambiare noi stessi in una continua visione critica delle nostre abitudini e modi di vivere per migliorare la collettività essendo noi parte integrante di questo sistema e quindi con valori più o meno inconsci imposti da esso che difficilmente vengono messi in discussione.

Considerare l'istruzione e l'educazione anche al di fuori delle istituzioni.

Smettere di autosfruttarsi.

Concordo su tutti i punti, tranne quello su quello di considerare la creatività come servizio. Sono d'accordo che non va trattata come una merce, ma non so nemmeno se metterla nella categoria dei servizi la libera dalla gabbia nella quale viene messa da chi parla della new creative economy in cui la creatività serve per fare l'economia di un paese, di una città più competitiva. Mi sembra sempre che la mia creatività ha bisogno di essere libera per riuscire a scorrere. Appena mi viene messa pressa o un obbiettivo troppo stretto, si ritrae e non ne vuole sapere di uscire. Riprendendo sempre l'argomentazione di Hardt e Negri, sembra importante di combinare autonomia, auto-organizzazione e la libertà di costruire di reti di cooperazione. Poi loro propongono un giro interessante di argomentazione intorno al rifiuto del lavoro - tenendo a mente che il rifiuto del lavoro non equivale alla cessione di ogni attività, ma il rifiuto dello sfruttamento delle attività umane da parte del capitale: rifiutare il

lavoro come difesa delle libere forze/potenzialità della creatività. Questa loro argo-
mentazione mi piace molto, e ritrovo questa voglia della liberazione della creatività
quando scrivi "portare avanti un'attività parallela ma diversa dalla progettazione."
È quasi come se facendo anche un altro lavoro (zappare la terra?..) ci potessimo
tenere la nostra creatività libera – per me qui l'importanza starebbe in trovare una
seconda via che comunque ci permette di portare avanti una cosa in cui crediamo.
Mi sembrerebbe assai assurdo se questa seconda sostenesse attivamente e primaria-
mente un sistema che con la nostra pratica creative vorremmo contribuire a sman-
tellare. Qui viene sempre in mente Daniel Eatock di cui le voci dicono che rifacendo
il logo di Big Brother ogni anno riesce a ritagliarsi tutti i soldi e il tempo per fare
le sue cosine "witty" – credo che ormai dovremmo cercare ad andare oltre ad un
approccio di questo tipo. Non so bene come questa cosa si potrebbe tradurre nella
nostra quotidianità, ma è assolutamente una cosa che va costruita man mano - an-
che riconsiderando le proprie ambizioni nella vita e pensando molto di più in termi-
ni "sociali", cioè allontanandosi dalla nozione di arricchimento a livello personale:
immagino che insieme potremmo costruire delle strutture di sostegno fantastiche
– case cooperative, cooperative economiche, gruppi di libero scambio e altro - che
possono sostenere non solo noi, ma che fruttano per tutti. Come dice Hervé citando
Bakhunin, la mia libertà cresce proporzionalmente a quella degli altri.

   :)

   (Dunque si, cerchiamo di metterlo in piedi questo spazio progetto/vita che può
sostenere pratiche alternative?)

   Vale sicuramente la pena di provare!

Mi piace questo testo di AMARTYA SEN 'Globalmente rassegnati'

   "L'ottimista testardo tende a sperare che presto le cose migliorino, che l'eco-
nomia di mercato, che ha portato prosperità in una parte del mondo, finisca au-
tomaticamente per estendere a tutti i suoi benefici. "Dateci tempo, non siate così
impazienti", dice. D'altro canto il pessimista a oltranza riconosce ed enfatizza la
persistenza della miseria nel mondo. Ma egli è pessimista anche sulla nostra capaci-
tà di cambiare le cose. "Dovremmo cambiarle, ma a essere realistici, sappiamo che
non ci riusciremo", dice. Il pessimismo conduce spesso alla supina accettazione di
grandi mali. Come scrisse Thomas Browne nel 1643, "il mondo... non è una locanda,
ma un ospedale": possiamo imparare a vivere felici in un posto pieno di gente soffe-
rente, evitando di pensare a tutti quei disgraziati intorno a noi.

C'è dunque una convergenza, parziale ma vera, tra l'ottimista testardo e il pessimista incorreggibile. Il primo ritiene che non sia il caso di fare resistenza, il secondo che sia inutile. O come disse James Branch Cabell (di fronte a una manifestazione ben diversa di questo paradosso): "Per l'ottimista viviamo nel migliore dei mondi possibili. Il pessimista teme che sia vero". I punti di vista opposti si uniscono nella rassegnazione, e la passività globale si nutre non solo di cecità morale, apatia, egocentrismo ma anche dell'alleanza conservatrice di due posizioni estreme. Convinti – o per lo meno confortati – da entrambe, possiamo occuparci dei fatti nostri senza vedere nulla di imbarazzante nell'accettare tranquillamente le disuguaglianze del mondo.

Informarsi e studiare. Cercare di capire più a fondo possibile le dinamiche sociali, economiche e politiche che ci circondano. Risalire alle origini di queste dinamiche, comprendere attraverso quali processi storici si sono generate. Più informazione meno manipolazione.

Studiare insieme come gruppo, cercando di affrontare le cose in modo critico, senza essere distruttivi. Sarebbe anche bello trovare/creare dei dispositivi per comunicare quello che si è appreso ad altri che forse hanno meno tempo o voglia di studiare in modo da contribuire a spezzare il circolo vizioso della manipolazione.

Prendere posizione (senza essere monolitici). Interrogarsi su cosa è più giusto per noi e per gli altri e agire di conseguenza. Chiedersi su che cosa siamo disposti a scendere a compromessi e su cosa no. Creare un filo rosso che possa dare coerenza al nostro percorso, rimanendo capaci di cambiare rotta se necessario. Essere critici, parziali, politici. esatto, creare un filo rosso contro la frammentazione delle esperienza! Si, e direi anche contro la frammentazione della società. Un filo che guida il tuo percorso ma che ti unisce anche alle esperienze degli altri.

Fare ciò che ci fa stare bene. Distinguere le cose che ci rendono veramente felici da quelle che in realtà non lo fanno. Isolare i bisogni indotti e i falsi obbiettivi che ci hanno inculcato o che ci siamo auto-imposti. Liberarsi dai modelli di vita che altri hanno scelto per noi. A che cosa possiamo rinunciare?

Imparare a dire di no. Distruggere il mito dell'accondiscendenza a tutti i costi. Ricordarsi che il lavoro non è tutto. Prendersi del tempo per pensare e per riposare.

Auto-organizzarsi, creare una rete di persone con simili obbiettivi e visioni con cui cooperare. Costruire circuiti indipendenti di informazione, produzione, consumo. Condividere risorse materiali ed immateriali. Portare avanti con ostinazione le proprie idee e i propri progetti. Non farsi prendere dal panico del tempo che scorre. Scegliere un luogo da cui partire e procedere a piccoli passi e piccoli obbiettivi (con uno sguardo globale).

Coltivare i legami e gli affetti. Assolutamente si! Concordo, c'è spesso troppa svalutazione affettiva

Non considerare il "denaro" come un tabù. Imparare a pretendere i compensi che ci spettano. Informarsi sull'origine dei soldi che usiamo o che ci vengono offerti (esempio nei finanziamenti). Essere consapevoli di come gira il mercato.

Conoscere i propri diritti, anche legali.

Farsi ispirare da chi ci circonda, copiare modelli e stili di vita che sembrano interessanti e inserirli nella propria pratica. Essere curiosi, aperti, fare domande, bussare alla porta delle persone.

Cercare approcci multidisciplinari, sia nel momento in cui si ci forma (letture, visioni,) sia nella rete di persone che si frequenta. Sottoporre le proprie pratiche/lavori a persone appartenenti agli ambiti più diversi, coinvolgerle. Immaginare insieme nuovi scenari possibili. Mi viene in mente una frase con cui Pasolini apre il film *Il Fiore della Mille e una notte*: "La verità non sta in un solo sogno, ma in molti sogni"

Collaborare – fare rete – avere punti di appoggio sparsi

Collegare – stringere legami di lavoro / di vita

Essere curiosi / eclettici / ubiqui Come va d'accordo il fatto di essere ubiqui (cosa intendi qui precisamente?) con l'avere una base solida? Anch'io simpatizzo con l'idea di avere un punto fisico fisso nella mia vita (uno spazio dove organizzare cose) e di trovare il modo di trovare una forma d'impegno più locale, senza dover sempre saltare da una situazione all'altra, esser chiamato di qua e di là, il che comporta sempre il fatto di doversi interfacciare con una realtà nuova e tagliare temporaneamente i legami (personali, ma anche nel senso di impegno costante su determinati fronti) che mi sono costruito. Dopo l'esperienza a Varsavia, credo che il problema più grande di questa mobilità non naturale, a cui molti sono costretti oggigiorno, sia il fatto che in un lavoro che si propone di andare a fondo si riesce difficilmente ad andare oltre la superficie. Hai ragione! ci si muove e si rimane in superficie, magari si hanno nel cassetto una miriade di lavori ed esperienze di vita ma poi non sono forse un po' tutte uguali?

In genere, non credi che queste qualità potrebbero anche essere inserite tal quale in un "ricettario per giovani precari" – della serie "basta che sei curioso e flessibile/adattabile/malleabile e in qualche modo te la caverai"? Questo è proprio infatti la decostruzione del manuale: i punti sono vaghi, e quindi non dicono nulla o meglio non risolvono prorpio nulla, ma generano problemi. i punti sono la superficie, proviamo ad andare in fondo e vedere cosa c'è dietro

Secondo me è molto soggettivo e dipende molto dall'approccio di ognuno! L'importante è sentirsi in qualche modo a casa, costruire dei legami, avere punti d'appoggio. Lo sradicamento forse avviene quando non c'è condivisione. Per me casa è un luogo in cui tutti portano una parte della loro vita che viene condivisa. Chiaramente più lontano si è da casa, meno collegamenti con il territorio e con persone che si conoscono si hanno e bisogna impiegare un sacco di energie per riconnettersi.

Per me la Casa non è né replicabile, né comprimibile, ma penso parta ogni volta dall'inizio, perché il luogo, persone le interazioni sono diverse. un po' come un progetto, è da costruirsi. Forse le persone fanno casa, mmm ma neanche solo le persone… . Dipende anche dall'atteggiamento con il quale uno si insedia in nuove città/luoghi, se lo fa considerando l'esistenza sulla base di un'idea positiva della transitorietà o se invece sa che quello non sarà il posto dove può costruire qualcosa e viverci potenzialmente per tutta la vita. Un mio amico che per circa 8 anni si è spostato in diversi paesi per studio/lavoro una volta mi ha detto "a me piacerebbe tornare e

vivere nel paese natale, ma ormai lì mi sento un fantasma", forse è un caso isolato.

Sono d'accordo sul fatto che la cosa che può far sentire a casa è la capacità di condividere un'esperienza. Il problema è che non può essere una regola, ossia, la condivisione vera avviene solamente se realmente cercata. Nel caso in cui si è costretti alla condivisione nascono delle problematiche. In questo caso, secondo me, ci si può sentire "fuori casa", spaesato e non appartenente ad un determinato contesto.

Hai ragione, infatti parlavo di un certo tipo di condivisione spontanea.

Mi è venuta l'idea di scrivere un breve racconto...

Il morbo del Flessimpassibile

Una nuova sindrome lavorativo compulsiva si è inserita da un po' di tempo nel nostro immaginario, quella del flessimpassibile. forse diventiamo flessimpassibili quando ci confrontiamo con pratiche indefinite che si scontrano con le nostre passioni, quando tentiamo di rispondere in maniera dinamica a richieste lente monolitiche e anacronistiche, mettendo da parte i nostri interessi. Ci facciamo idebolire dal parere di una voce antica, accusatoria e critica rispetto ad un pensiero diverso dal suo e cominciano ad arrivare i primi sintomi.

La mente del soggetto flessimpassibile non reagisce quando riceve richieste del tipo: "Perchè non lavori con noi tutti i giorni per tutto il giorno gratis o al massimo per un rimborso spese senza porti domande?" Comincia a diventare ingordo, Si accanisce nel voler a tutti i costi riempire il suo cestinocurriculum con nomi o esperienze take away. Il flessimpassibile ormai è diventato sordo e cieco come il vicolo in cui vuole costruire la sua casa. Si aggira solitario ma in realtà fa parte di una tribù molto grande che si muove senza meta, disorientata, alla deriva. Oramai lotta contro se stesso sgomitando e nutrendosi di individualismo. Il Mito, la Star, il Glamour, la Celebrità il grande Nome sono diventati i punti di riferimento del flessimpassibile che non intravede più altre strade possibili. A questo punto è tardi il morbo si è preso tutto il possibile, ormai è troppo debole per una cura, non reagisce più, i suoi occhi sono spenti è entrato in uno stato vegetativo.

Mi sorge la domanda: per cosa dobbiamo sprecare molte energie? Vale la pena dover

ricostruire più volte nella propria vita un senso si appartenenza? Ne abbiamo solo uno o sono combinabili?

La domanda sulla costruzione di appartenenza mi piace. Credo che possiamo costruire più sensi di appartenenza e che il bello è proprio che ce ne siano di più. Mi piace il fatto che tutti abbiamo comunque una varietà di identità e che possiamo passare dall'una all'altra senza problemi: per esempio, in Inghilterra mi sento molto italiana, in Italia mi sento molto Sudtirolese e in Sudtirolo mi sento molto Pusterese. Ma queste identità cambiano anche come le persone con cui sto, quando per esempio sono con la mia famiglia i temi di cui si parla sono diversi da quelli che mi accomunano con altri designer.

Insomma, pare quasi che il senso dell'appartenenza diventi un problema quando ci si sposta in un luogo per un periodo di tempo che già si sa che sarà limitato. Quando sono in Inghilterra ho per esempio sempre la sensazione che questo non è il luogo dove voglio vivere, ma che è un passaggio obbligatorio che devo fare se voglio studiare quello che sto studiando. Purtroppo in Italia dove vorrei vivere e creare legami permanenti non posso sviluppare le mie qualità come designer così come me ne viene data possibilità a Londra. Chiaramente questo porta con sé tutta una serie di "schizofrenie sentimentali", ma si spera che tutto questo passi presto. Queste schizofrenie sono per esempio legate agli impegni da "attivista" – vorrei coinvolgermi in un sacco di iniziative e magari anche gestire uno spazio insieme ad amici, ma so che appena ci sarà la possibilità di tornare in Italia, io scapperò. Non perché vivere a Londra mi faccia schifo, ma perché mi mancano le montagne, la mia famiglia, voglio poter parlare italiano e tedesco, voglio sentire una connessione forte col territorio quando sviluppo dei lavori.

Sono d'accordo. Modifichiamo il nostro senso in base al luogo nel quale ci troviamo.

Anch'io più vado avanti, più sento il legame con il mio territorio. Probabilmente dipende molto anche dal contesto di provenienza. Una persona nata e cresciuta in una metropoli sarà sicuramente meno legata ad un territorio ma più a un non-luogo (ciò che sono le metropoli). Stando in una grande città sento spesso una necessità molto forte di avere un maggiore contatto con la natura. Chi è abituato ad avere il mare o le montagne dietro casa sa bene cosa significa.

Il nostro paese ha subito un duro colpo in questi anni perdendo personalità attive e pensanti. I tagli, la crisi, la mancanza di strutture adeguate sommati a evidenti

problemi politici ci hanno portato verso terre lontane, rinforzando idee e personalità stagnanti. Tutto questo però ha permesso la riscoperta di un pensiero diffuso che potremmo definire incosciente, restare o ritornare. Le righe che avete scritto contengono un sentimento molto forte legato alle vostre origini, indice di una diversa percezione delle cose. La situazione attuale non sembra dare speranze a chi decide di operare nel contesto Italiano forse destinato ad affondare. Questa voglia di riprendere contatto con il territorio però potrebbe davvero portare ad un cambiamento importante lontano da sterili ideologie nazionaliste. In questi due mesi di cantiere mi sono accorto che quella sensazione di confusione dilagante può essere colpita duramente. Penso che lo sviluppo di nuove modalità di incontro, aggregazione e collaborazione potrebbe portare a risultati collettivi interessanti.

Procedere con lentezza – piccoli passi ben ponderati

Sì! Però più vado avanti e più mi rendo conto di non riuscire a fare una cosa per volta. sì procedo anche con lentezza, ma perché faccio piccoli passi ma di tante cose tutte insieme. un giorno mi sono ritrovata a leggere tre cose contemporaneamente, schermo, libro e quaderno. folle. e stancante. il mio più grande desiderio infatti è questo, fare con lentezza, piccoli passi, senza ansia, una cosa per volta e quello che riesco lo faccio, senza salti mortali

A volte ringrazio che i due emisferi del mio cervello non possano comunicare fra loro ;) Abbasso il multitasking! Adottiamo il monotasking come forma di resistenza!

D'accordissimo!

A proposito, tempo fa, in un incontro con Maki e Kajsa di Abake, gli abbiamo chiesto quanti progetti stessero portando avanti contemporaneamente. 16. Se dovessi fare il conto di quanti ne stiamo portando avanti noi direi.... boh, 5 forse. Loro comunque sono in 4. Mi pare troppa roba compressa insieme. Dove rimane l'investimento affettivo lavorando così?

Ma quindi mi pare che "orientamento" cominci a fare rima con "sanità mentale", e mi pare che la nostra discussione fin dall'inizio puntasse in questa direzione. E aggiungo, sanità mentale fa rima con coerenza. No? - Ieri ho parlato con Valeria di questa coerenza e lei suggeriva di utilizzare il termine congruenza che è un termine simile, ma che non ha nozioni moralistiche. Che ne pensate?

Sì!

Non pensare più lo scorrere del tempo (nello spazio) come una linea (faccio questo dunque ottengo questo) ma come una trama (metto insieme – costruisco un qualcosa che è in continua e complessiva crescita da più prospettive – senza inizio / senza fine – no centro / no periferia)

Seguire il flusso degli eventi, ma non esserne in balìa Sìììììììììì! Ma come faccio a capire quando sto oltrepassando il nuotare e comincio ad annegare? perché spesso si scambia l'aver perso il totale controllo delle proprie scelte di vita con una sorta di sovreccitamento dato dalle "opportunità" che arrivano in serie, una dopo l'altra o anche tutte insieme. Come capire quando fermarsi?

Questo forse centra col discorso che si faceva con le Carrots l'altro giorno a proposito del colloquio di lavoro: per noialtri, ogni incontro, ogni conversazione che abbiamo con persone che magari non rientrano nella nostra cerchia di amici ristretta, è un potenziale colloquio di lavoro. Devo sempre performare appropriatamente, che magari salta fuori qualcosa, una collaborazione, un incarico per il futuro...

Comunque sì, ogni cosa che ti viene lanciata è un'opportunità. Siamo costantemente ricattati moralmente ad accettare qualunque cosa. Come cazzo faccio a trovare dello spazio libero che mi costringe a pensare in che direzione mi voglio muovere veramente? Partecipa a questa mostra, fai quell'altro progetto. la realtà è che abbiamo tutti paura del vuoto e della mancanza di "roba da fare". Mi trovo spesso ad annotare cose possibili e interessanti che vorrei fare in futuro ma per le quali alla fine non trovo mai tempo per via di altri impegni, ovviamente meno interessanti. Ma come detto, non si sa mai, magari salta fuori qualcosa.

Propongo che per un certo periodo all'anno ci creiamo attivamente questo vuoto. Per un tempo che ognuno può definire come meglio crede, non si prendono impegni. Ma non nel senso di vacanza, ma come periodo in cui si ritirano fuori tutte quelle cose lasciate da parte e ci si attiva per andare in quella direzione. Agosto sembra essere un mese buono per questo :)

Ma comunque mi pare che nella vita da creativi (ma probabilmente in genere) ci sono cose che puoi pianificare e cose che senza preavviso ti vengono proposte, ti capitano, ti si buttano addosso e in mezzo. Dunque come fare? Mi sembra che andando

avanti col tempo/la propria pratica, ritagliarsi dei tempi propri diventa sempre più difficile. Dire di no a proposte belle è difficile: c'è sempre la paura che dicendo di no si tagliano le possibilità per sempre. Pensandoci razionalmente non è così, ma spesso l'ansia prevale.

Il lavoro di gruppo, la cooperazione, nel nostro campo, può essere vista come un'ottima risposta a questo tipo di problematica. Lavorare in gruppo permette una gestione molto più flessibile dei doveri: oggi mi faccio il culo io perché te hai bisogno maggiore concentrazione per un qualsiasi motivo, domani sarà viceversa e così via...

Trovare una base salda e un punto fisso dal quale muoversi

Negli anni Sessanta chi avesse affermato una cosa del genere sarebbe stato impiccato! Il problema, secondo me, è che l'uomo è sempre in cerca di quello che non ha. Ci si dovrebbe sforzare maggiormente di capire di cosa si ha veramente bisogno! Io, ad esempio, ancora non sono sicuro della necessità di un punto fisso dal quale muoversi. Potrebbe soddisfarmi di più muovermi meno ma vivere stabilmente delle situazioni: quindi girare sì ma arrivare a conoscere i contesti che vivo più approfonditamente di quanto molto spesso succede.

Il movimento non è uno stato fisico ma mentale (e digitale) diventeremo tutti degli obesi. E solitari e depressi e i nostri sensi si atrofizzeranno...che tristezza!

Credo sia importante non confondere le due realtà (fisica/digitale). Per me il movimento rimane legato alla fisicità: mi muovo solo se effettivamente compio uno spostamento. Il movimento "digitale" è tutta un'altra cosa! Se è vero che con google maps posso muovermi in giro per il mondo è altrettanto vero che ne sono limitato nella fisicità.

Io voglio muovermi fisicamente! Con il digitale, il virtuale non ci si sposta affatto, se ne ha solo l'illusione. È sicuramente un concetto ovvio, ma sono convinto che, specialmente in questo momento, abbiamo bisogno di ricordarcelo!

Ciò che è lontano può essere vicino

In che senso? Ma questa non è un'illusione? La società con la quale ci confrontiamo non è forse frammentazione ed eccesso di spazio tempo ed ego? Intendevo che il lontano nel tempo e nello spazio è un concetto che ogni giorno anche nelle cosa

quotidiane viene stravolto, ma questo da tempo, da quando ti muovi in aereo e parli al telefono.

Sembrerebbe che l'essere umano non voglia avere dei limiti. Anche se ho l'aereo e internet una città lontana rimane lontana a tutti gli effetti... per questo parlo di illusione, bisogna reintrodurre il concetto di limite materiale...

Approvo completamente. Tempo fa abbiamo deciso di non viaggiare più in aereo per diversi motivi. Questo ha significato una serie di cambiamenti nel nostro modo di lavorare. Primo fra tutti, il fatto che ora dobbiamo pianificare ogni attività con largo anticipo e facciamo più fatica a inserire qualcosa all'ultimo momento. I biglietti li dobbiamo prenotare presto, altrimenti costano una cifra...

Ma devo anche dire che questo viaggiare in treno è difficile quando tu vuoi rallentare, ma le cose intorno a te accelerano. È come cercare di fare una vita veloce con i mezzi lenti e quello che ci rimane di mezzo sei te. Dunque anche qui ci vuole più coerenza per non arrivare esauriti.

Mi sembra molto positivo, le possibili ripercussioni di una scelta simile si inseriscono in molti punti discussi. Prendendo l'aereo non ci rendiamo conto delle distanze e del fatto che ci sia un territorio tra noi e il luogo da raggiungere. Per esempio questo è un limite materiale, lo spazio. Comunque ora non mi vengono ulteriori parole per spiegarmi, ci proverò in seguito.

Per me l'importante è ricordarsi delle distanze. Il mezzo può ridurre il tempo di percorrenza, non la distanza.

Sì! Ricordarsi delle distanze è rimettersi con i piedi per terra.

A tal proposito mi viene in mente una cosa detta da Hervè: oggi siamo metafisici nella pratica e realisti e limitati nell'immaginazione. Questo è dovuto principalmente ai mezzi potentissimi che abbiamo a disposizione e alla proliferazione di immaginari pre-confezionati.

Ciò che è vicino può essere lontano

Soprattutto le persone. Mi rendo conto, soprattutto in una grande città, di come hai vicino molta gente che in realtà è come se non ci fosse affatto... l'affollamento in un non-luogo ti mette ad una distanza sempre maggiore dalle persone... Certo è comune pensare che i non luoghi spesso siano facilmente identificabili, ma ho le sensazione che non sia più così. La città invece di contenere non luoghi sta diven-

tando essa stessa un non-luogo, anzi lo è già. Come ci si orienta? Forse creando dei veri luoghi, come questo...

Bello 'sto pensiero, comunque non posso fare a meno di considerare questo luogo bizzarro. Interagire con voi in tempo quasi-reale, avendovi di fronte, ma con le informazioni che formalizziamo che viaggiano alla velocità della luce fino all'altra parte del globo e poi ritornano :-S e in un silenzio assoluto....guardandoci mi viene male che la società futura potrebbe essere così: tutti si parlano guardando uno schermo con zero emozioni coinvolte. Facciamo un po' paura.

Noi ci conosciamo però, ci parliamo. Questo magari è solo un modo più pratico per dialogare e mettere per iscritto i pensieri direttamente.

Sì sì pare che la cosa stia funzionando piuttosto bene, almeno, personalmente mi trovo più a mio agio a mettere i miei pensieri per iscritto. Sarà la dislessia...

Non essere così duro con te stesso! hehehe

In realtà la cosa positiva di mettere tutto per iscritto è che riusciamo a controllare il flusso di pensieri e dargli una qualche direzione. Per quanto riguarda il discorso luogo / non-luogo, credo vada a braccetto con il significato di identità. Ma che cos'è l'identità? Questa è una bella domanda. Mi viene in mente che molto spesso non ne sappiamo molto, molto spesso prendiamo per buone delle "identità" che ci vengono fornite da altri, le facciamo nostre. Lottiamo per queste, c'è gente che addirittura muore per difendere una qualche identità. Ma poi capire che cosa questa identità abbia veramente a che fare con le singole persone, questa è un'altra cosa.

L'identità. Ad una conferenza durante il Salone del gusto del 2010 a Torino un economista dell'Università di Firenze parlava proprio del concetto di Identità. Diceva che il concetto di identità è figlio della globalizzazione. Faceva l'esempio dei vini. Nell'antichità non c'era la necessità di dare un nome e quindi un'identità al vino; era unico. Quando le diverse tradizioni hanno iniziato a comunicare tra loro c'è stata la necessità di dare i nomi alle cose, a diversificare ad attribuire un'identità quindi ai vini. Ora che la globalizzazione è all'ennesima potenza anche il concetto stesso dell'identità è cambiato. Se prima l'identità era intrinseca al prodotto e comunque veniva dopo al prodotto, oggi si crea l'identità e poi gli si associa un prodotto. >>>> MIO DIO CHE BANALITA! QUESTO PEZZO LO RIPRENDERò ALTRIMENTI CESTINIAMO-LO!!! <<<<

Quello che mi viene in mente è un breve elenco scritto di getto di azioni e concetti che tutti assieme contribuiscono ad un orientamento personale nella

mia pratica (o almeno così sembrerebbe). Alcune cose sono concrete altre sono questioni aperte.

Sostituire i canali mainstream d'informazione con esperienze di altro tipo (o riuscire ad analizzarli in modo critico e combinarli tra loro) ci può aiutare a trovare altre vie, ricostruire reti differenti che si basano per esempio sullo scambio interpersonale di sapere e idee spontaneo, uno sfogo necessario per orientarsi nella moltitudine d'informazioni. Io trovo sempre problematica la questione dei come orientarmi nel mondo dell'informazione anche per una questione di tempo. e qui sto parlando soprattutto di informazione politica. certamente l'essere scettici nei riguardi di tutto è inutile e non porta a nessuna informazione vera.

L'amicizia è un canale d'informazione gratuito, sincero ed interattivo.
Altro punto discusso con le Carrots. Chi sono i nostri veri amici? Amici d'infanzia, amici-colleghi, colleghi-amici, gente che ha i nostri stessi interessi, è un casino.

Questo punto è apertissimo! Io spesso mi interrogo sul concetto di amicizia. Mi potrei collegare al discorso di casa e di appartenenza del quale si è discusso prima. Il termine forse ha più significati... sicuramente però considero amici le persone con le quali riesco a condividere qualcosa, un legame che si basa sul mettere in comune le proprie idee, sentimenti ed emozioni, farle uscire spontaneamente e mostrarle per quello che sono. Forse il discorso è un po' strampalato però non credo ci si debba soffermare sul contesto (infanzia, lavoro) quello è casuale. Di una cosa però sono convinto, per orientarsi, per creare qualcosa questa condivisione deve esserci, socialità autentica e interpersonale.

Concordo, quello che manca è un sincero rapporto personale con le persone. Il denaro ci allontana, tutte le questioni legate alla burocrazia ci allontanano, come facciamo?

Sento spessissimo dire che non si dovrebbe mai lavorare per o con amici o parenti! Perché? Se si riuscisse a rendere il lavoro un piacere non sarebbe meglio? Ci sarà mai possibile?

Cercare il dialogo e la convivenza piuttosto che la solitudine.
Ma la comunicazione soprattutto quella digitale (tipo questa) può generare solo

un'apparenza di dialogo, ora stiamo parlando? O no? Hai ragione, il problema è:
internet è una realtà parallela o un semplice canale/strumento di comunicazione?
Non so, non credo che il problema si possa attribuire solo ad internet, che secondo me è in ogni modo uno strumento efficace e ora neanche più di tanto scindibile dalla vita e personalità delle persone. Tutto si è internettizzato ma questo non è per forza una cosa brutta, è che secondo me usiamo oggi degli strumenti per i quali però ancora non abbiamo un linguaggio, nel senso di discorso su di essi, è come se li subiamo ma con la mente che funziona un passo indietro. McLuhan parla di anestetizzazione, di effetto soporifero dei media. Ho di recente letto *Precarious Rhapsody* di Franco Berardi e lui parla di un intensificazione degli stimoli informatici, che nella loro combinazione, inducono uno stato di elettrocuzione permanente dei nostri cervelli che poi porta a tutta una serie di patologie (chiaramente questo fenomeno è molto esteso tra i lavoratori cognitivi dove l'essere "up to date" è quello che ti permette di sopravvivere). Mi sembra che la sua analisi sia molto azzeccata. Noto anche con me, ma anche con altri, che dopo aver lavorato intensamente al computer non riesco a interagire bene con altri. È come se le cose fossero troppo lente. Insomma, non mi piace come sensazione. Mi rendo conto che preferisco parlare a voce e a faccia a faccia, ma quanto è più difficile! lo scambiarsi idee scrivendole mette una sorta di muro protettivo e da il tempo per riflettere ma è come se visto che scripta manent ci sia il bisogno di "dire le cose meglio" e anche il fatto che una volta scritto è tutto lì, è come se avessi la sensazione che devo scrivere per forza qualcosa che sia sensato, verbalizzato e giusto (politically correct?). e poi posso aggiungere le virgolette e cercare come si scrive correttamente politically correct ahahah

Sicuramente studiando il passato si può arrivare alla radice di molte problematiche, non solamente teoriche ma anche formali.

Fare le cose con calma.

Guardare attentamente e in profondità dettagli apparentemente insignificanti della vita quotidiana. Giusto e bello, aiuta anche a "fare pace" con lo scorrere del tempo.

Ridefinire il concetto di utilità. Questo mi sembra molto interessante e complesso. cosa intendi per ridefinire? è già complicato definirlo. forse è più semplice definire

l'inutile. o forse si tratta in entrambi i casi di illusioni (immaginari). per esempio, pensando al kitsch: è l'inutile. ma anche l'utile. o meglio, è sia l'appeal dell'inutile che il mito dell'utile, dell'utilitario, del funzionale. che poi, sono i confini poi così netti?

Infatti questo punto in realtà è nato da un mio ragionamento sull'inutilità. Posso collegarlo anche all'osservazione quotidiana e al gioco. L'inutile nella società di oggi viene mal visto, è paradossale secondo me, visto che la maggior parte delle cose che vengono prodotte sono inutili. Quindi la negazione del gioco fine a se stesso, dell'immaginazione quotidiana nella nostra vita standardizzata, ridotta a lavoro/consumo, e la frustrazione che ne deriva, viene scaricata sul consumo di massa e sui sogni che esso promette di realizzare.

E poi la progettazione diventa semplicemente uno dei modi per rendere questo meccanismo più oliato, più efficiente. È il modo per palesare l'apoteosi della funzionalità che poi è anche il trionfo dell'inutile (quindi del kitsch). Ma il design non è solo questo. Non significa solo condurci lungo percorsi stabiliti da altri, così fintamente rassicuranti. Io credo possa essere anche uno dei modi che abbiamo per entrare in territori instabili, in cui si instaurano nuove modalità di relazione con la realtà che ci circonda.

Sì, è indagine, ricerca. ma non solo quella che fa il progettista! anche chi usufruisce di un qualcosa in un certo senso fa un'operazione di ricerca di una relazione con la realtà, è ciò in cui al nocciolo consiste la vita stessa, entrare in relazione in uno spazio e in un tempo con l'altro da me. i design può essere un modo di approcciarsi ad alcune modalità di vita.

Trasformo il punto in una domanda: ormai l'idea di medioevo mediatico è già stata largamente discussa. Internet è più disorientante che altro o il nostro orientamento nella vita quotidiana viene rispecchiato in esso?

Essere curiosi verso cose più o meno improbabili.

Radunando progettisti che condividono interessi e ideali simili, sia dal punto di vista del contenuto dei lavori che del modo in cui viene praticato il design (dinamiche di gruppo, interfacciamento con esperti operanti in altri settori,

messa in questione del rapporto col cliente inteso in senso classico ecc.)

Cercando di costruire attivamente alternative che funzionino e siano sostenibili: interfacciandosi con realtà esterne al mondo del design classico che cercano di operare in maniera alternativa e deviante – vedere se ci sono metodi e tattiche che possono essere appropriati: pratiche la cui relazione col design fino ad ora non era considerata d'un tratto divengono parte di una costellazione precedentemente non definita. Al designer è richiesto di fare e produrre qualcosa (progetti, disegni, cose). Può essere definito designer chi principalmente produce pensiero, parole, idee? So che noi tutti pensiamo di sì perché è quello che per esempio facciamo qui. Ma quanto è importante poi "concretizzare" ciò che si fa? E in che senso? Cos'è oggi il "concreto"?

Secondo me è fondamentale concretizzare il pensiero/idea/parola altrimenti resta solo una chiacchierata che magari avrà aiutato te come singolo ma non ha prodotto (nel più ampio senso della parola) niente esternamente e lì cade un po' il palco. In un contesto dove ad esempio ci sono un sociologo e un designer che producono lo stesso pensiero, qual è allora la differenza tra i due? può essere il fatto che il designer magari sarà spinto non a restare solamente sul piano del pensiero puro/teorico ma a pensare a dei risvolti pratici anche quotidiani, a capire e ingegnarsi su cosa quel pensiero può produrre e come? Per 'prodotto' intendo non necessariamente prodotto fisico ma anche immateriale che può essere il pensiero stesso. Rifiutarsi di 'produrre' secondo me equivale a non pensare come designer. (mmm...non sono per niente convinta di quest'ultima frase). Si tratta solo di spostare il termine produzione e funzionalità su piani diversi.

L'idea di una costellazione precedentemente non definita che, pian piano prende forma, mi piace molto. oggi (o ieri?) bianca diceva di fare dei progetti di sistemi economici da sottoporre ad economisti. io trovo che questa sia la strada giusta. l'approccio di fare dei percorsi insieme a persone che provengono da contesti disciplinari diversi. effettivamente bassi aveva ragione quando diceva che non si studia design in una facoltà di economia (cioè in una facoltà in cui si parla notte e giorno di sistemi che hanno al centro la merce!!). forse aveva (molta) meno ragione quando diceva che nelle facoltà di design si studia economia. Su questo sono d'accordo. Ci viene data un po' un'infarinatura su cos'è il mercato e nozioni di base di imprenditoria, ma non si parla mai di come le cose funzionano realmente. E non si accen-

na nemmeno mai che possono esserci molti modi per interfacciarsi con il mondo economico. Poi mi piace pensare che ci sono mondi economici, cioè modi diversi di relazionarsi economicamente - ma come abbiamo visto con Hervé questi modi stanno sparendo e c'è il rischio di rimanere solo con il modello capitalista. Man mano inizio a capire come funziona il modello capitalista e come il nostro pensare il design/ il nostro lavoro viene strumentalizzato per mettere al lavoro la nostra creatività - queste comprensione si sta formando grazie all'aiuto di Hervé, le lezioni video di David Harvey che legge Marx, di Franco Berardi che scrive sul semiocapitalism. Ora sarebbe bello riuscire a mettere in immagini questo sistema di "catturazione capitalista" della nostra creatività in modo da poterlo discutere insieme senza dover passare ore e ore di lettura di roba pesante.

Poi, come si diceva, si potrebbe passare dalla fase di analisi a più mani (designer, economisti, etc) di metodologie di intervento alternative, ad una fase di sintesi, in cui si mette a punto una tattica. e poi vedere se funziona. daje tutti!

Sarebbe proprio bello mettersi lì con degli economisti eterodossi per discutere dei micro modelli economici pensati da noi designer. A noi piace questa illustrazione di Gibson-Graham (le marxiste femministe di cui ogni tanto vi parlavo) dei mondi economici che solitamente non vengono considerati:

Ci sarebbero altre cose da aggiungere qui? Ci sembra che quest' immagine potrebbe aiutare a noi progettisti a concepire altri modi attraverso cui interfacciarci con la società (riuscendo idealmente a vivere bene senza essere schiavi del mercato).

Mi piace molto l'idea di tradurre in immagini alcuni concetti legati soprattutto alle strutture di funzionamento, con stefano ci si stavamo pensando ieri di creare degli schemi illustrati tipo sopra con personaggi e piani diversi di relazione, ci servirebbe

magari hervè o un testo di riferimento dal quale partire. Alcune situazioni sarebbero sicuramente più facili da far capire agli studenti di Bz.

Vi ricordate lo schemino di Serpica con i 3 valori (mi sembra soldi, felicità e capacità personali) non c'è nelle slide,

era un'altra presentazione?

E se inseriremo una parte sugli eletti del design…. la versione super philippe starck ci sta. che panza!

Creando reti di mutuo supporto in cui vengono condivise risorse e percorsi di ricerca – avendo un approccio il più possibile aperto a quello che si fa e pretendendo lo stesso da altri practitioners che hanno un una pratica interessante.

Cercando di instaurare un elemento open-source nel modo in cui si fa design. Cercando di non considerare persone che operano similmente come rivali ma come alleati per spingere un discorso comune. Per la concezione attuale di pratiche alternative nel mondo del design, si potrebbero creare dei problemi derivanti dall'aumento sproporzionato di "designer alternativi" rispetto a quello di possibilità di finanziamenti à competizione per accaparrarsi le poche risorse disponibili provenienti da istituzioni disposte a supportare finanziariamente queste pratiche à cercare di rendersi sempre più indipendenti da questo tipo di supporto diventando sempre più autarchici.

Io sono sempre più convinta che il mio essere designer sia più uno stato mentale e che il mio compito sia oggi quello di "inventarmi un lavoro" che per essere definito richiederà sicuramente del tempo. non chiedo tanto in realtà, solo la possibilità di fare qualcosa con il mio approccio mentale che è frutto di quello che sono, di quello che ho fatto fino ad oggi e in continuo ridimensionamento. ma deve arrivare un

momento in cui tutto ciò viene incanalato in qualcosa che prenda una strada e che abbia una conformazione, altrimenti passerò tutta la vita a lamentarmi e piangermi addosso che non trovo pace e che il mondo non mi consente di trovare un punto fermo, senza accorgermi che in parte forse sono io stessa che un punto non sono in grado di darmelo (per paura? per balìa del flusso?)

Ci piace pensare che dobbiamo inventarci un lavoro, nel senso che seguire le vecchie ambizioni da designer che ci sono state presentate all'università ci mettono in crisi: conquistare il mondo con prodotti fighi/intelligenti, convincere (a cosa poi?) la gente con grafiche super, etc. sembra tutto inutile/superfluo in un mondo saturo di prodotti e segni. Ma è anche evidente che non viviamo nella società migliore immaginabile (anche se ci vogliono far credere che ogni altra forma di società sarebbe peggio di questa e che dunque sarà meglio accontentarsi) e che il pianeta non regge più il nostro stile di vita (e qui penso non solo agli oggetti "personali" che consumiamo, ma anche a scorie nucleari, progetti megalomani come dighe etc.). E quindi si, credo che possiamo anzi dobbiamo inventare un modo alternativo per contribuire al mondo come designer, non limitandoci più a seguire stereotipi, ma sperimentando le mille possibilità che ci danno le nostre capacità da designer (e qui penso soprattutto a come approcciamo e pensiamo il mondo). Essere designer senza produrre oggetti/grafiche mi sembra assolutamente possibile e qui mi sento sostenuta da un discorso sulla produzione biopolitica che fanno Hardt e Negri in Multitude. Definiscono la produzione biopolitica come la produzione non solo di beni materiali, ma anche di comunicazione, relazioni e forme di vita. Secondo loro è proprio questa produzione biopolitica che apre nuove domande sull'ecologia, la povertà, economie sostenibili, e di fatto tutti gli aspetti della vita. Quando leggo queste loro riflessioni mi sento veramente chiamata in causa e mi da il senso che la nostra pratica di design che stiamo portando avanti sia proprio una forma di produzione biopolitica. Cosa sta succedendo al Cantiere se non in primo luogo una produzione di nuove relazioni sociali e di nuove domande a porre al mondo? Qui mi sembra effettivamente che la nostra vita lavorativa, sociale e politica vengono portate su un piano unico (anche se non sempre, ma almeno molto spesso). Per chiudere intanto questo pensiero eccovi una citazione loro: "The way the multitude can resist is by exodus, an exodus that transforms also in a constituent power that creates the social relations and institutions of a new society. To do so, biopolitical production presents the possibility to do the political work of creating and maintaining social relationships collaboratively in a cooperative daily network of social production,

rather then in interminable evening meetings." (Hardt e Negri, *Multitude*, p.350)

Produzione di forme di vita mi sembra molto interessante. Effettivamente quello che fa sembrare le nostre pratiche poco concrete è in realtà forse una loro potenziale concretezza, non ponendosi come lavoro o produzione nel senso classico del termine, ma come reale pratica di vita collettiva, insomma una parte della nostra vita non sottoposta al denaro ma a logiche completamente diverse di codivisione. Si sperimenta così da subito e nel concreto un barlume di speranza sul fatto che forse una possibile emancipazione dal sistema economico in cui siamo immersi forse esiste. Sarà minima e per ora estremamente marginale ma è una prova pratica. In questo modo finiamo di appellarci a questa sorta di presunta predestinazione secondo la quale un bel giorno supereremo il limite che ci impone la penuria di denaro che possediamo (intendo rispetto agli standard di vita ai quali le persone tendono) per finalmente auto realizzare se stessi ma piuttosto renderci conto su quanto sia effimero tutto ciò.

Attraverso l'insegnamento: il momento più fertile per pensare modelli d'impegno devianti rispetto al mainstream è il periodo della formazione. Ci sembra importante che già chi studia abbia la possibilità di orientarsi a dei modelli di pensiero e pratica che aprano una varietà di strade possibili e non si limiti alla presentazione dell'opzione classica di carriera individuale e competitiva.

Dimostrando continuamente che un altro tipo di pratica è possibile – qui centra il discorso sulla coerenza: più coerenti si riesce a essere, più si ha il potere di contribuire ad un modello di orientamento diverso.

Sto pensando molto al concetto di coerenza in questi giorni e soprattutto dai discorsi fatti ieri a pranzo e dopo. credo che sia una questione molto delicata quella della coerenza e una di quelle cosiddette armi a doppio taglio: mi spiego: non c'è a volte il rischio che la coerenza diventi ideologia? il confine è molto sottile e indefinito, spesso non ci si rende conto che la coerenza diventa uno schema, un modello rigido in cui alla fine si diventa un po' il padrone di se stesso. credo che le posizioni (che oggi diventano forse sempre più difficili e anche delicate) debbano essere sempre e comunque messe in discussione da noi stessi per primi in modo anche da lasciare spazio al dialogo. è quello che si diceva ieri sull'essere radicali, ovvero la radicalità intesa non nel senso dell'operazione che si a a compiere (che radicale sì,

deve esserlo!) ma nel senso dell'equilibrio tra apertura mentale e posizioni salde.
duri e puri? mah! forse detta così è un po' banale ma credo che sia importante

Pensiero a parte: nel momento in cui cambia il modo in cui viene considerata la figura del designer, anche leggermente, iniziano a far parte della costellazione di "pratiche possibili" (che alimentano e ispirano cambiamento) tutta una serie di "attività" che poco prima non sarebbero state considerate attinenti. (per me la nozione della produzione biopolitica mi apre nuove strade)
Aggiungerei che questo spesso genera una crisi, perché c'è la difficoltà di approcciarsi al lavoro, ma anche al sapere in generale, cercando di rientrare nelle categorie, che però ora sono svuotate. Secondo me adesso non si lavora o studia per diventare una professione, ma per diventare un sé che compie diverse pratiche a volte anche distanti e difficilmente collegabili. Questo genera confusione, soprattutto per chi è giovane e comincia ad avvicinarsi a un mondo del lavoro che ragiona ancora troppo per categorie da una parte e dall'altra non rende neanche più possibile l'accesso a queste categorie professionali perché richiede flessibilità, mobilità ecc. Come orientarsi? Come adattarsi? O meglio, come creare un nuovo assetto cognitivo che renda possibile muoversi in una realtà sempre più fluida?

A certi livelli la figura del designer è legata ad una quantità spaventevole di modelli e pregiudizi... persona eccentrica, artista, nata con il dono della creatività e/o uno spiccato senso estetico, un po' frivola e che prima o poi farà i soldi (queste sono alcune delle cose che mi sono state dette nel corso degli anni quando dicevo che studiavo design...) Si potrebbe pensare ad un altro 'titolo', anche simbolico per ripartire da zero invece che cambiare un immaginario già esistente?
Come si potrebbero sensibilizzare le persone e le imprese alla figura del designer/? più ampia? Forse quello che vorremmo fare nelle scuole poi si potrebbe adattare anche alle imprese o a piccole comunità di persone????

Crisis
There is almost no area or specimen who could not be stroke by a «crisis». From the subjective area, until the objective zone, crisis hits persons and systems, shaking individual, as well as collective health. But if we investigate the very original meaning of the Greek word «krisis», we discover to our surprise, a positive sense: it means «opinion» or «evaluation», in a situation of changing matters.

Instead, nowadays, we use the term in a lot of disciplines, like medicine, psychology, finance, economy or system-theory to indicate a problematic period of bad functioning, of profound thinking about the own fundaments. «Crisis» designs a bend in the usual direction, an eruption in a long lasting settlement.

The Greek word «krisis» comes from the verb «krinein», which means to separate or to distinguish. Of course, in a moment of «crisis», we have to decide whether we choose the way to the right or the one to the left side. And in order to be able to decide, we have to separate and to distinguish clearly the two alternatives. Are in moments of crisis those 2 paths still distinguishable? Aren't there forces who guide us in one direction? I am asking this, because I actually can't see 2 ways, but only one. Example: People are suffering because of the capitalism who is in crisis. So wouldn't it be the best to do everything to get the capitalism out of this crisis and as a result to return to our daily behavior, lifestyle, etc..

So, we can conclude, that in reality, the term «crisis» has not such a negative meaning, as it first seemed. At the contrary, any forked road is a possibility of choice for a new direction and an excuse to define another aim.
The word «crisis» has suffered the same destiny as the words «problem» or «critics»: from a neutral to a negative understanding. But the meaning of the Chinese word «weiji» for «crisis» can help us further on: «wei» means «danger» and «ji» «opportunity».

So any dangerous situation of a «crisis» is at the same time an opportunity for something new: a new consciousness, a new direction, a new system, new solutions, new vitality or new health.

So, how to overcome the «crisis»? There is no need to overcome it, but it will be enough to accept the shaking strength of the eruption in order to analyze what's wrong in the system, to change it and to come out of it as new born.

«Volevo solo dire che al di là delle istruzioni per l'uso, gli strumenti sono, nella vita degli uomini, i mezzi con i quali essi compiono o cercano di compiere il rito della vita e se c'è una ragione per la quale esiste il design, la ragione – l'unica ragione possibile – è che il design riesca a restituire o a dare agli strumenti e alle cose quella carica di sacralità per la quale gli uomini possano uscire dall'automatismo mortale e rientrare nel rito.» *E. Sottsass jr* Mi sembra

assai mistica questa citazione :) (Bianca prova a vedere il testo di Martha Rosler, lì forse c'è una citazione che potrebbe andare bene con questa)

Cosa significa design. Dove inizia, dove finisce. Cosa significa fare ricerca nell'ambito della progettazione. Cosa significa mettere in pratica questa ricerca. Il design inizia nel momento che lavoro per un cliente o fare design è proprio un modo di pensare, di fare, di approcciare le cose? Design è quello che noi definiamo come ciò? Un po' come l'arte?

Il design è prima di tutto un approccio, un certo tipo di sguardo, è nell'occhio. Credo che questo sia il primo livello, come il primo cerchio di un sistema in cui e rientrano si incontrano varie sfumature e gradi di vicinanza al progetto vero e proprio, alla pratica che va di fatto a modellare la realtà. Spesso mi chiedo se io sia un designer, anzi, me lo chiedo ogni giorno, in questo quesito a volte mi ci perdo, entro in crisi, me lo chiedo da sempre e sempre continuerò a chiedermelo. Da qui nascono molte delle mie insicurezze, soprattutto ora che devo andare là fuori a presentarmi, spiegare quello che faccio, come lo dico? So che continuare a farmi questa domanda è il mio approccio, il mio modo di essere designer, è una ricerca costante che faccio su me stessa e sul mio ruolo, ma mi rendo conto che, nonostante poi sia consapevole e sicura nel mio non interesse alla definizione di ruoli, soprattutto se si tratta di "professioni", si tratta anche di una difficoltà reale nel definire la mia identità rispetto alla mia pratica senza la "sicurezza" che possono dare i paletti, le definizioni, le professioni. Questo problema di certo nasce anche da questo * (vedi giù). Io non progetto, se per progetto si intende il disegnare un oggetto. Io non faccio design se per design si intende disegnare. Io mi occupo di quello che sta nell'*intorno* e quello che si può fare con gli altri, mettendo insieme diverse pratiche (design relazionale?). Quello che è sempre lì, e non viene né prima né dopo. Per dirla in termini semiotici, c'è il discorso *del* design e il discorso *sul* design e questi due poli sono in dialogo e l'uno non esisterebbe senza l'altro; si può dire in tanti modi, ciascuno può indicare una diversa lettura di quello che è un sistema complesso. Si può dire in termini di analisi (delle parti, degli elementi che compongono un progetto, un problema, uno spunto, un'idea) e di sintesi e il design è la pratica con cui analisi e sintesi si scambiano la parola che si sposta, va da una parte e poi torna indietro, così, finché non si decide di fermare il ciclo in un "qualcosa", che forse poi continua a "vivere" nel circuito di senso di chi ne entra in contatto.

«La verità è che gli strumenti non hanno mai avuto alcun effetto sugli uomini, cioè gli uomini non sono stati trasformati dagli strumenti come tali: se si sono trasformati durante la loro storia è per via delle azioni rese possibili dagli strumenti e soprattutto per l'effetto che ha avuto sugli uomini l'idea di poter essere causa di certe azioni. In altre parole, gli uomini non hanno mai deificato le frecce. Hanno casomai deificato gli animali che venivano uccisi dalle frecce o hanno sublimato in qualche modo l'idea degli animali, o –il più delle volte–hanno deificato se stessi. A questo punto (un punto che è molto vicino all'origine degli strumenti ma può anche non esserne l'origine stessa) comincia il design, che a quei tempi significava incidere sulle frecce dei segni magici, simboli e così via o anche dare una forma speciale alle frecce. [...] Alcuni hanno tentato di definire le zone degli automatismi, attraverso mille modi. prendiamo dieci, cento mille persone e facciamole usare quella roba lì, vediamo che succede. E tutto questo va benissimo, è pure affascinante, ha quasi dell'incredibile. Si arriva a definire tutto, a dar forma a tutto, ecc.

E fin qui tutto fantastico.

Nessuno dice che design vuol dire inventare la freccia. Dicono che quella è un'invenzione, una questione di ingegneria. Di tecnica. E fin qui va bene. Ma poi mi vogliono far credere che design vuol dire fare in modo che si possano tirare meglio le frecce e fare in modo che la freccia colpisca meglio nel segno. Cioè mi vogliono far credere che design significhi lubrificare l'automatismo professionale del tiratore di frecce. A questo non credo. Naturalmente l'automatismo va affinato. Si deve fare tutto il possibile perché il povero tiratore di frecce non sbagli mira e ammazzi il povero mammut. Ma fino a questo punto la storia riguarda l'inventore della freccia o quelli che vogliono perfezionare lo strumento. Non riguarda il design, come del resto non riguarda la magia (se vogliamo riprendere il tema che il design comincia con la magia). Perfezionare uno strumento per facilitare gesti automatici o i gesti che tendono ad essere automatici è un'operazione che non ha niente a che fare con la magia, né la magia ha niente a che fare con i gesti automatici. La magia è un tipo di tecnica che richiede all'uomo una partecipazione totale e riguarda dell'uomo, più che i gesti automatici, quelli instabili, più che la presunzione le certezze, la paura e le insicurezze più angosciose, tanto angosciose che per uccidere un animale, prima ancora di andare a caccia, si comincia a chiedergli perdono.

Non è la stessa cosa rovesciare un bicchiere d'acqua perché voglio bagnare al terra o rovesciarlo per compiere un gesto di magia che richiami dal cielo la pioggia. Non è niente affatto la stessa cosa. Come non è la stessa cosa perfezionare uno

strumento con i procedimenti razionali che usiamo noi oggi o perfezionarlo con la magia.

Sono, per l'uomo e riguardo all'uomo, due procedimenti diversi. Così ho sempre pensato che il design cominci dove finiscono i procedimenti razionali e cominciano quelli magici» *E. Sottsass jr*

Wow

Io sono d'accordo con queste cose, io non ho un'idea definita di cosa voglio fare. ma so cosa non voglio fare. ad esempio adesso non voglio più usare il maiuscolo perché sono triste. a parte gli scherzi, io credo sia analisi e sintesi; entrambi sono design. e non è detto che l'analisi debba per forza avere un unico medium (vedi martino gamper) e non è detto che a volte non possa esistere da sola (vedi riccardo dalisi oppure paul elliman per dire). ma devo dire che mi piace anche molto quando questa analisi si sintentizza in una pratica che raggiunge degli obiettivi che toccano più persone, diciamo. è forse questo che differenzia il design dall'arte: un'attitudine spiccatamente sociale nella sintesi. io vorrei fare sia analisi che sintesi, e vorrei farlo con tante persone, e vorrei farlo con calma, perché le cose hanno bisogno di tempo.

Si racconta che un giorno il Buddha Shakyamuni si recò sul Picco dell'Avvoltoio per predicare. In poco tempo si radunò una grande folla: migliaia di persone attendevano pazientemente la parola del Maestro. Dopo esser stato a lungo immobile, Shakyamuni in silenzio raccolse un fiore e lo mostrò. Nessuno capì. Solo Mahakasyapa a quel gesto sorrise. Si dice che il quel momento Shakyamuni trasmise al suo discepolo il cuore dello Zen, l'insegnamento al di là della dottrina, al di là della comprensione mentale. È, questo ora narrato, un momento di fronte al quale le parole scivolano via. Solamente un fiore, l'immobilità, il silenzio ed un sorriso. In quel momento Mahakasyapa non apprese qualche cosa di nuovo: aprì gli occhi alla sua vera realtà.

A volte nella nostra vita diamo molta importanza al raggiungimento di alcuni obiettivi. Che relazione hanno questi con la nostra vita, intendo dire la nostra vita reale? * (collego a discorso su) A volte mi chiedo se non siano imposizioni dettate da qualcuno che in realtà non sono io e che di me non sa un bel nulla. Anch'io mi sento così, e penso sempre di più che sia anche l'università a farci voler raggiungere degli obiettivi che in realtà non nascono da noi stessi. Voglio dire che all'università non ci formano per essere designer felici, ma per essere (poten-

zialmente) designer di successo il che vuol dire sacrifici (lavorare a palo, fare una famiglia il più tardi possibili che è solo d'ingombro, essere presi bene sempre, essere disponibili sempre, prima il design poi noi, ...insomma robe di questo tipo). Forse il problema sta nel fatto che ci beviamo queste stronzate che ci dicono? Come riprenderci quello che vogliamo noi, quello che sentiamo importante senza però poi cadere nell'autoflagellazione che ci stiamo per perdere una "carriera" etc. Ma l'obiettivo è fare un lavoro, essere una professione, definire il mio ruolo, inquadrarmi nel lavoro? e così via ... o essere io che *metto insieme* me e il mondo che mi circonda (fatto di persone) in un qualcosa che crea un *in più?* Credo che per quanto possa essere complicato il mio modo di essere sia questo e sono contenta perché ci credo fermamente e questo già è un punto fermo e quello che mi fa stringere i denti e andare avanti.

Sono d'accordo. Secondo me l'autoflagellazione avviene proprio per il paradosso che incorpora il 'percorso studio-lavoro': ovvero, durante l'università ti danno gli strumenti e la consapevolezza di possedere conoscenze, fomentano l'idea che la creatività, possibilmente unita a vari livelli di stacanovismo, sia la carta vincente; che l'importante sia la qualità del lavoro, ti spingono alla specializzazione perché specializzandoti avrai delle competenze che nessun altro avrà, alimentano la voglia di lavorare in ambiti innovativi, dove sia possibile una crescita professionale costante e magari arricchimento culturale (togliamo la parte dei compensi adeguati perché almeno quello forse iniziano a fartelo capire o proprio non te ne parlano). Tutto questo a fronte di una realtà dove la specializzazione va a scapito della creatività, dove il lavoro tende a razionalizzare invece che innovare e dove l'autorealizzazione va spesso a braccetto con lo sfruttamento. Insomma, una serie di paradossi e contraddizioni che crea vulnerabilità e disorientamento. A quel punto o ignori la cosa o prendi delle decisioni, quali sono i compromessi che sei disposto a fare, le priorità, le tue aspettative reali (non quelle date)... Io penso che il disorientamento derivi proprio da questo senso di perenne oscillazione tra vari baricentri (vita e/o lavoro, autorealizzazione e/o sfruttamento). e quindi si, è importante innanzitutto decide se ignorare o no la cosa, se no, posizionarsi in modo consapevole in modo da evitare di muoversi nelle direzioni che non sono consone alle nostre priorità e per non farsi travolgere da questo oscillio. Porsi degli obbiettivi (autopensati) penso sia altrettanto importante.

Quello che sto cercando di dire malamente è che disorientamento spesso è sinonimo di instabilità, per lo più legata ad una serie di fattori esterni e non

direttamente legati a quello che noi siamo in realtà. Voglio dire qui, adesso. Almeno nel mio caso, questi fattori sono proiezioni mentali che però distolgono la mia attenzione da quello che è la mia pratica della vita. Non so se mi spiego.

Sì. A me vengono in mente le domande che mi faccio spesso: in cosa devo spendere le mie energie, sto facendo la cosa giusta, come percepisco la realtà? La percezione della realtà è un grosso problema (i fattori esterni dei quali parli), è vero che non sono legati direttamente a quello che noi siamo in realtà, ma ci modellano, secondo una logica che sfugge dal nostro sguardo d'insieme (o quasi). Questo quasi è interessante. Per questo la vita è instabilità ma allo stesso tempo una continua ricerca.

La perdita di orientamento nel mondo moderno è il risultato di continui cambiamenti. Stiamo perdendo i valori e le norme e per sostituirli con nuove opzioni con responsabilità minore. Questo crea una dinamica particolare, un processo di cambiamento permanente che si sta accelerando costantemente.

   In questo ciclo i confini vengono dissolti, valori familiari e punti di riferimento andranno persi. Tutto sembra essere lo stesso, la cosa essa perde la sua forma. Soggetti senza contorni però, non sono adatti per l'orientamento.

Luca tempo fa ci girò questo stralcio particolarmente interessante di un'intervista ad Anceschi:

"C'è una cosa che trovo particolarmente interessante, ed è l'emergere di un protagonismo dei gruppi: il fatto che tanti giovani decidano di lavorare insieme. Perché i gruppi indicano che c'è un movimento culturale è sempre così, prima vengono i gruppi e poi emergono le personalità. Lo dico perché anche io stesso ho fatto questa esperienza in ambito artistico. Il singolo alla fine dei conti naviga, il gruppo vuole cambiare il contesto, cambiare il mondo. Per dirla in modo molto elementare, stando insieme i ragazzi si fanno coraggio per procedere oltre è importantissimo che questo modello sia ricomparso. Credo che sia un fenomeno che riguarda principalmente il design oggi, non solo la comunicazione visiva. E l'esistenza dei gruppi è un buonissimo segno. Noi stavamo nel gruppo T per tanti motivi: perché non c'è migliore sistema formativo che quello che punta all'apprendimento collaborativo fra pari - alla faccia dell'ideologia della competitività - ma anche perché apparte-

nere al gruppo vuol dire vivere modelli esistenziali alternativi, rispetto al resto del contesto sociale. E nell'oggi dell'omologazione planetaria c'è davvero bisogno di mondi nuovi."

APPENDIX E

DESIGNERS' INQUIRY **ON** *LA STAMPA*

In spring 2013, for the launch of the report of *Designers' Inquiry*, the Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative collaborated with the infographic designer Gianluca Seta and the Italian national newspaper *La Stampa*. On this occasion, the collective produced five pages for a supplement in the newspaper to be published during the first day of Milan Design Week.

The supplement consisted of an introduction by writer Marco Belpoliti and data visualisations from the inquiry by Gianluca Seta, accompanied by short stories on the precarious lives of precarious designers written by Lucia Gaidotti, Leonardo Stagliano and Raffaele Riba. These were followed by four short texts written by designers reflecting on how the profession could respond to the challenges of contemporaneity, by Silvia Sfligiotti, Marco Zito, the collective VOCE and the Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative. These were followed by four short interviews with young Italian designers working both in Italy and abroad: the collective Unità di Krisi, the collective Make people do, Marco Ugolini and Chiara Onida. The last contribution was an interview by the Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative with design veteran Enzo Mari, trying to reflect together with him on precarious working conditions.

See the following pages for:
- images of the supplement to *La Stampa* (in Italian)

FIGURE 1 and 2   Supplement of the Italian national newspaper *La Stampa*, 9 April 2013, p.I-III

FIGURE 3 and 4   Supplement of the Italian national newspaper *La Stampa*, 9 April 2013, p.IV-VII

APPENDIX F

OTHER TEXTS PUBLISHED BY CANTIERE PER PRATICHE NON-AFFERMATIVE

The Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative published further collectively-written texts. See the following pages for:

- *Progetto Grafico,* issue number 22, Italian magazine on communication design, November 2012
- *Abitare*, issue number 529, a Milan-based international magazine on design, February 2013
- *Dopo gli anni Zero. Il nuovo design italiano* by Chiara Alessi, Laterza, Roma (upcoming January 2014)
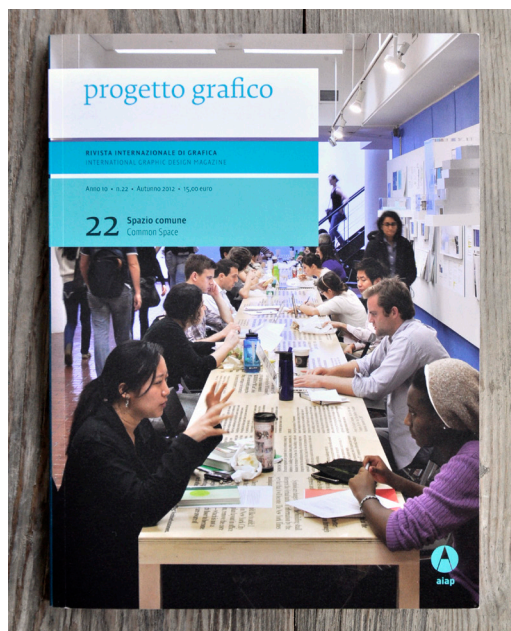
FIGURE 1 to 5   "Un cantiere aperto," an interview with the Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative by Silvia Sfligiotti on *Progetto Grafico*, issue 22, November 2012

FIGURE 6 to 8   Short contribution to "Back to Students: On Design and Schools in Italy," edited by Giorgio Camuffo and published on *Abitare*, issue 529, February 2013

Contribution to *Dopo gli anni Zero. Il nuovo design italiano* by Chiara Alessi

Cantiere per pratiche non-affermative è un gruppo di giovani designer italiani che si sono incontrati nell'autunno del 2011 a Milano, durante una residenza d'artista collettivizzata presso Careof DOCVA, spazio d'arte no-profit nella Fabbrica del Vapore. Da allora, il Cantiere si impegna per fare domande, studiare e sperimentare strutture di supporto per pratiche di design dall'approccio critico.

Il suo ultimo lavoro, *Designers' Inquiry*, è un'indagine sul profilo sociale ed economico di chi oggi si definisce "designer". Il progetto è stato lanciato nell'aprile 2012 attraverso un questionario anonimo, compilabile online, che in due mesi ha ricevuto 767 risposte. Un anno dopo, i dati e le testimonianze ottenute dalla *Designers' Inquiry* sono state raccolte in una pubblicazione, scaricabile gratuitamente dal sito http://www.pratichenonaffermative.net/inquiry/it/.

*1.	Il sondaggio che avete lanciato in rete era aperto a chiunque spontaneamente volesse partecipare. Dai profili di chi ha risposto al questionario, che cosa avete evinto rispetto alla professione del designer?*

Le otto sezioni tematiche articolate nell'inchiesta hanno ritratto una figura professionale complessa e difficilmente riassumibile senza tralasciare sfaccettature importanti. In generale, possiamo dire che "fare design" sembra essere oggi un mestiere di cui si è profondamente appassionati, e che richiede un grande investimento di tempo e risorse – indipendentemente dai traguardi raggiunti durante la propria carriera. Come molte altre professioni contemporanee tuttavia, è un'attività segnata da condizioni di lavoro precario riassumibili in alcuni punti: un rapporto ore di lavoro-retribuzione non soddisfacente, la tendenza a lavorare in uno stato di isolamento, la necessità di essere supportati spesso da una rete familiare perché il reddito non basta per essere autonomi, la richiesta di grande flessibilità che poi costituisce una discriminante per chi ha figli o altre circostanze che non permettono questa flessibilità. A tutto ciò si aggiunge una generale disinformazione sui propri diritti di lavoratori e la scarsità o addirittura assenza di organizzazioni che tutelino questi diritti.

2. Quali sono le riflessioni più interessanti a vostro parere emerse dai risultati di Designers' Inquiry?

Uno degli aspetti interessanti emersi dall'inchiesta è la diffusa tendenza a considerare il design come uno strumento critico capace di contribuire in modo significativo alla società. Questa consapevolezza è però accompagnata da un continuo senso di disorientamento rispetto alle direzioni che il lavoro del designer (soprattutto in Italia) potrebbe prendere in un momento di crisi economica, sociale ed ambientale.

3. Che rapporto c'è tra istruzione e design oggi? Che ruolo hanno le scuole nella formazione dei designer oggi, secondo l'opinione dei partecipanti all'inchiesta?

Il modello di progettista che viene proposto nelle scuole/università è spesso ancora ancorato ad una realtà che non esiste più. Dall'inchiesta emerge che i designer sono solo parzialmente soddisfatti circa la formazione che hanno ricevuto. I partecipanti infatti da un lato esprimono il bisogno di una formazione che li prepari concretamente ad affrontare la professione, che li aiuti a capire cosa vuol dire guadagnarsi da vivere con questo mestiere. Dall'altro, desiderano un'educazione che li spinga ad essere più visionari e sperimentali, così da superare quella specie di empasse in cui il design italiano sembra essersi imprigionato. In generale, si avverte la necessità di forme di sostegno che possano in qualche modo supportare i designer anche dopo la fine dell'università, perché certe domande e problematiche emergono solo in un secondo momento, quando ci si relaziona con il mercato. Il punto dunque è capire come avvicinare la formazione al mondo del lavoro senza riprodurne le dinamiche più "pericolose", come ad esempio il realizzare progetti non pagati per enti esterni alla scuola, e senza soffocare la speculazione e un tipo di progettazione più concettuale, sociale e politica, che spesso trova spazio solo all'interno di un'istituzione formativa.

4. Perché la condizione lavorativa del designer e le problematiche incontrate secondo voi dovrebbe essere differente da quella vissuta da qualunque altro giovane professionista nel 2013?

L'inchiesta non è stata lanciata con l'intento di dimostrare l'eccezionalità della situazione precaria vissuta dai designer, al contrario, il progetto è nato anche

dalla voglia di allargare il confronto a chi prova a destreggiarsi nella complessità della situazione attuale, per capire punti in comune e differenze, così da costruire insieme nuovi orizzonti di lavoro e di vita. Abitiamo un momento storico in cui la produzione pare diventare sempre più immateriale e come designer ci sentiamo molto vicini a tutti i lavoratori e lavoratrici della conoscenza (ricercatori, traduttori, scrittori, redattori, curatori, registi, eccetera eccetera). Ma per molti aspetti, che hanno come punto in comune non solo l'instabilità lavorativa ma anche quella esistenziale, ci riteniamo simili anche ad altre tipologie di lavoratori precari, come camerieri, centralinisti, facchini.

In questo senso, il ritratto del "designer tipo" delineato dall'inchiesta cozza con la versione patinata proposta dai media e diffusa nell'immaginario comune. Pare quasi che - per una sorta di deformazione professionale- tendiamo a progettare mondi talmente perfetti e "lisci" da non riuscire poi, come designer precari, a trovarvi posto. La *Designers' Inquiry* ci ha permesso di portare a galla queste contraddizioni, aprendo un interrogativo: come fare design in modo diverso, progettando per un mondo che corrisponde alla realtà segnata dalla crisi piuttosto che alle immagini patinate propagate dai media?

5.   Dai risultati raccolti emerge un quadro abbastanza critico e problematico. Avete raccolto delle proposte che vi sembrino interessanti per proteggere, promuovere, trasformare il mestiere di chi si considera designer in Italia oggi?

Attraverso il questionario volevamo soprattutto creare una consapevolezza diffusa circa le dinamiche che quotidianamente affrontiamo, per capire quali fossero i 'punti sensibili' su cui poter agire concretamente in seguito. Come prima azione ci stiamo mettendo in relazione con altri studenti, designer e lavoratori cognitivi/creativi, così da tematizzare le problematiche comuni senza considerarle debolezze o incapacità personali, ma piuttosto elementi sistemici che ci attraversano. Tramite workshop, dibattiti e tavole rotonde vorremmo coinvolgere università, collettivi e organizzazioni nell'elaborazione condivisa di strumenti d'azione.

CAMPUS IN CAMPS: *COMMONS & COMMONING*

Between September and October 2012, Fabio and I – together with Naba Al Assi, Mohammed Abu Alia, Nedaa Hamouz, Aysar Dawoud, Isshaq Al Barbary and Murad Owdah – produced a first issue of the *Collective Dictionary* of Campus in Camps.

See the following pages for:

- *Commons & Commoning*, English version, October 2012

To download a digital copy of the fanzine, visit: www.campusincamps.ps/en

CAMPUS IN CAMPS
COLLECTIVE DICTIONARY

COMMONS & COMMONING

المشاع/المشايعة

CAMPUS IN CAMPS
جامعة في المخيم

CAMPUS IN CAMPS

Campus in Camps is a two-year experimental educational and project oriented program, engaging the participants from the West Bank's refugee camps in an attempt to explore and produce new forms of representation of camps and refugees beyond the static and traditional symbols of victimization, passivity and poverty. The program aims at transgressing, without eliminating, the distinction between camp and city, refugee and citizen, center and periphery, theory and practice, teacher and student.

WWW.CAMPUSINCAMPS.PS

COLLECTIVE DICTIONARY

Collective Dictionary is a series of publications containing definitions of concepts.

The terms proposed are those considered fundamental for the understanding of the contemporary condition of Palestinian refugee camps. These words have emerged as a result of actions and active dialogues with the camp community. Written reflections on personal experiences, interviews, excursions and photographic investigations constitute the starting point for the formulation of more structured thoughts.

Collective Dictionary is both the reference and conceptual framework for all Campus in Camps projects and interventions.

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Contributors *Commons & Commoning* issue: Mohammed Abu Alia, Naba Al Assi, Isshaq Al Barbary, Brave New Alps, Nedaa Hamouz, Murad Owda

PREFACE & INTRODUCTION:
THE CAMPS AS COMMONS

<u>Brave New Alps</u>

Since the West Bank's refugee camps have been established in 1949/1950, and with the influence of a variety of historical events, they have seen a unique social and spatial situation developing inside their boundaries. Today, the main actors defining multiple aspects of the daily lives and of the social dynamics occurring in the camps, are not central institutions as the Palestinian Authority or UNRWA (The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East), but the camps' inhabitants themselves.

In a constant, underlying, and informal process of interpersonal negotiation, the refugees "take the matter of their lives into their own hands" (M. De Angelis) in order to make collective decisions and to solve big and small, individual and communal problems. These negotiations and processes of decision-making, steered by the camps' community itself, range from the spatial arrangement and the material shape of the camps (for example, building new houses, extending existing properties, administering the economy related to the real estate property sector, temporarily blocking

streets in order to celebrate wedding parties), over the sphere of services (for example, the sharing of infrastructures for water supply and its storage), to the camps' community's engagement as conflict mediator (for example, if there is a family feud going on, turning to external mediators or even the police is the very last option and in most cases it is the camp's families themselves who try to solve the conflict in the first place). Moreover, in some cases, long-lasting networks of mutual support have been implemented by groups of refugees in order to cope with various kinds of adversities. An example for this is the 'economic safety net' that has been implemented by the families of refugees originating from the Palestinian village of Zakaria, who regularly pay a certain amount of money into a communal fund, which can be accessed in the case a person needs money to send its children to study at university.

Given these conditions of self-organising, we ask ourselves how a heightened attention to the commons, which are grounded and growing – yet are also contested – within the West Bank's refugee camps, could shift the discourse of Palestinian refugeehood. How could a consideration of the commons shift the way the right of return is imagined and articulated? But also, could the camps be considered as "islands of commoning" in the West Bank, in which social modalities are being

cultivated, that may have the potential to spill over into the rest of the Palestinian society?

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Commons & Commoning: in this booklet we attempt to reflect on the commons and the act of commoning starting from the experiences informed by growing up and living in Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank.

Initial thoughts on the objective and subjective definitions of the chosen terms are followed by a number of contributions that focus on the relationship between Dheisheh Refugee Camp and Doha, an urban agglomerate that was built by refugees on the hill opposite Dheisheh. What are the material and immaterial differences between the two environments? What happens when refugees living in a camp decide to move out of this peculiar social and spatial context in order to carry on with their lives elsewhere? What habits and methods do these families take with them from the camp? How does this shape the new community and its surroundings? What can be learned from these experiences if we try to imagine the way the Return will be actualised?

Following contributions reflect on the relation between the right of return and the commons, on

contemporary examples of profit-driven enclosures of commons in the Bethlehem area, and on the voluntary sharing of knowledge as an act of commoning. The closing contribution focuses on the plants growing in Dheisheh as a form of commons.

Set up of a wedding party in the streets of Dheisheh – November 2012. Photography: Martina Dandolo

DEFINITION

<u>The Commons & Commoning Group</u>

OBJECTIVE

The commons are all the non-commodified re-
sources that we share with other people in our
lives. Air, water, empty spaces, parks, education,
health care, knowledge, information, skills, the
internet and much more should be considered
commons.

SUBJECTIVE

The commons are everything in life used by the
whole community for free. The commons cannot
be abandoned, but they need to be activated and
taken care of, otherwise they cease to exist. Public
squares, for example, can be used and activated
by people and are thus transformed into com-
mons, but if they are abandoned someone can
come and claim them as private.

Knowledge is one of the aspects of life, which is
a common. Knowledge should not be exclusive or
owned by anybody in particular.

If we think about the commons we should consider the following terms as their points of definition: trust, shared responsibility, respect, sustainability, equality, participation. These terms cannot be included in capitalist practices since these try to take control of the commons and of commoning in a bad way, followingg the logic of profit maximisation. For this end, borders are traced and the ways people use the commons are regulated. However, the commons themselves encourage people to practice neighbouring* and ways to share things without the need for any division or classification.

In the refugee camp, there are places that are common, such as the streets. People can use them in different ways (children play, parties are celebrated, people exchange ideas or hang out) without being blamed or bothered by anybody. Moreover, in emergency cases, for example if there is an invasion by Israeli occupation soldiers, the common space suddenly expands from the streets to the whole camp. If someone is running from the Israeli soldiers, s/he can enter any house in order to escape, without even knocking on the doors.

Commoning is to do something which is strongly related to sharing and participating, in a way that does not separate us from others. It also lets us recognise that negotiating through neighbour-

ing means to take the matter of our lives into our collective hands. In addition, we can say that commoning is a way to support the relations between people and things by the principles of responsibility and equality in order to work towards social justice.

Additional thoughts

Common is resistance, struggle and rebellion.

The right of return is to reclaim the land for common use.

The camp is the common.

The common exists and you don't always choose to be part of it, especially if it is a "negative common" that affects many peoples' lives, like the Israeli occupation or environmental pollution.

Texts we discussed

An Architektur. *On the Commons: A Public Interview with Massimo De Angelis and Stavros Stavrides.* e-flux journal June-August, no. 17 (2010): 1-17

De Angelis, Massimo. *Reflections on Alternatives, Commons and Communities or Building a New World from the Bottom Up.* The Commoner, www.commoner.org.uk/deangelis06.pdf

Federici, Silvia. *Feminism and the Politics of the Commons.* The Commoner, www.commoner.org.uk/?p=113

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* Neighbouring in this case refers to the Arabic *almojawarah* (standard Arabic) or *aljereh* (street language), which indicates how people live together and how neighbours care about each other. It refers to how neighbouring itself makes social relations stronger. In the Islamic world, neighbouring includes the whole neighbourhood, because as prophet Mohammed expressed it, you should care about your 7th neighbour in every direction. This way neighbouring sets the whole world in connection.

DOES RESIDENCE MATTER WHEN DEFINING THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEES' IDENTITY?

Mohammed Abu Alia

In 1948, many Palestinians were expelled from their towns and villages by Israeli forces. Among them my grandfather. Now, after 64 years, we still struggle for our right to return to the original villages our grandparents were forced to leave. Does the place one lives hold importance in the process of struggling for the Palestinian Refugees' right of return? In the following pages, I will try to simplify this question, by beginning with a small journey in search of a realistic and well reasoned answer.

After 40 years of living in Dheisheh Refugee Camp, my family decided to leave and buy a land elsewhere. Why? That was my question to my father. Why does most of our family still live in the camp while we have left?

His answer was simple; he explained that it was a question of money, those who had enough of it and could afford buying land elsewhere did so. "Living in the camp was not easy for your grand-

father" – he said; "he grew up in it but wanted a different life for me and my siblings."

My father was born in 1964, just three years before the 6 day war, the "Naksa", which ended with the Israelis occupying the West Bank, the Sinai and the Golan heights.

These times were hard for the Palestinians in general, but for the refugees the Naksa had a double impact. First, they lost their land in 1948 and became refugees. Then, in 1967, they came under the direct control of the Israeli army occupation forces. Palestinians then had no means to stand against Israel militarily. Many left the West Bank for Jordan, but most Palestinians remained, especially those who lived in refugee camps. They refused to become refugees a second time.

Other than this difficult political situation, living in refugee camps was a constant struggle. My father said that his family used to live in two rooms built by the UNRWA and that they were eight siblings. They had to share the toilet with five other families who lived nearby. The camp sanitation and sewage pipe lines were non-existent; instead the sewage ran in the streets in uncovered canals. The hygienic situation was very bad. Illnesses were widespread; the camp was approaching the brink of an epidemic. Most men were jobless and fam-

ilies relied on the UNRWA food distribution pro-
gramme to survive, which often was not enough.
My father also said that while growing up the
Israeli army would prevent him and his colleagues
from reaching school. Israeli soldiers harassed,
arrested, or interrogated them every now and
again. He explained that reading certain books
was prohibited, and if the Israeli army found
these books at your house you could spend three
to six months in jail. So, on top of the bad living
conditions, the Israeli Army's constant presence
in the camp turned the life of people into a huge
challenge. For many, living in the camp resembled
living in an actual jail.

My grandfather was a witness to all of these hard-
ships that his sons and daughters along with all
the camp's residents were facing. So he worked
hard in order to be able to buy land elsewhere so
he could move with his family to a better place.
In 1977, he was able to buy a small piece of land
just across the road from Dheisheh and started
building a new house. In the same year, the mayor
of Beit Jala went to Qatar and brought back funds
to construct a large street in the area. The place
was called Doha because Qataries were the first
funders of the project. Therefore, my grandfather
was one of the first people to settle in Doha and
to start a life there.

My grandfather believed in his identity and that he belonged to his original village Ras Abu Ammar, but he also refused the fact that one needs to live in poverty and in bad condition in order to retain his identity or political standpoint. He was a refugee whether he lived in Dheisheh or in Doha and he died as a refugee even though he completed the house in Doha and moved there with his family.

My grandfather believed his family deserved better and worked very hard to refine his family's status. It was not shame from being a refugee that drove him but his belief that the family deserves sustainable living conditions. He believed that his daughters and sons deserved a good home, better health conditions, and freedom of movement. Doha was better from this point of view, as it was more accessible.

During the first Intifada, Palestinians rose against the Israeli Army occupation forces using the means of peaceful marches and stone throwing against the fully US-funded and armed Israeli forces. The situation in the camps worsened because camps were the hot spot of resistance. At the same time, Doha was growing as a city, more people had the financial ability to leave the camps and left for Doha. In 1996, Duha became a municipality.

> Doha – outline of evolution
>
> 1960s – Dheishehian families start building houses on the rocky hill facing Dheisheh refugee camp, at that time a part of Beit Jala Municipality.
>
> 1970s – A partnership between Beit Jala municipality and Doha, capital of Qatar, is established. The Qataries fund the construction of streets and a sewage system.
>
> 1996 – The city's municipality is established. In order to honor the donors of the construction of the first infra-structure of the urban area, the municipality is called Doha. At this time the city counts 5,500 inhabitants.
>
> 2007 – Doha counts 9,700 inhabitants.
>
> 2012 – An estimated 11,000 people live in Doha City.

After my interview with my father I made a tour in Dheisheh Refugee Camp and in Doha to be able to compare the two to one another.

HOUSING

Doha — Houses are mostly spread far apart. There is enough space to have gardens around the hous-es. Most are suitable to be built in multiple stories.

Dheisheh — Houses are close to each other, that means little of them have gardens around them. The camp's land no longer withhold population growth. Houses are built in multiple stories.

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Comment — I think that living in Doha is better than living in Dheisheh because I prefer to live in a city where there is space between the houses. You have private life in the city more than in camps. Doha can withstand population growth.

STREETS

Doha — The streets in Doha are wide and well lit. Streets are a public area.

Dheisheh — Small and narrow streets without lighting. The streets in the camp are a common place.

Comment — I prefer living in Doha since its streets are wider and more well lit than the camp's streets.

INTERRELATIONSHIPS

Doha — 90% of the inhabitants are refugees who originate from Dheisheh, Ayda and Alaza camps. Refugees who had the resources to buy land or a house moved to Doha.

Dheisheh — A closer community: people know each other well. Same schools, health facilities, and closer living space mean that everyone knows each other.

<u>Comment</u> — Doha has mixed community interrelationships and they are still growing. Dheisheh Refugee Camp has existed since 1952, so interrelationships between families are stronger.

ORGANISATIONS (NGOs)

<u>Doha</u> — 8 organizations are working to help the around 11,000 residents living in Doha.

<u>Dheisheh</u> — 45 organizations are working to help the around 14,000 refugees living in the camp.

<u>Comment</u> — I wonder why there are only 8 organisations working in Doha while there are 45 of them working in the camp. Doha needs more active organisations.

PUBLIC SPACE

<u>Doha</u> — The municipality has some public space. However, the park of Doha, which should theoretically be a public space, is outsourced, privatized and under surveillance.

<u>Dheisheh</u> — NGOs' spaces and the camp's streets are public spaces.

Comment — There's not a lot of public space, and the space which is there is not perceived. Better strategic planning in both Doha and Dheisheh is important to be able to activate spaces that are present but ignored.

WATER

Doha — People in Doha pay for their water, which comes from the municipality each 15 days.

Dheisheh — Refugees in the camp don't pay for their water, they receive it from Bethlehem municipality for free, each 15 days.

Comment — People from both Doha and Dheisheh are refugees, but in the case of water supply I would prefer to live in Dheisheh because the expenses are less than in Doha.

ELECTRICITY

Doha — The inhabitants pay for electricity, which is quite constant and powerful.

Dheisheh — The inhabitants don't pay for electricity, but it is rather weak.

Comment — To pay money in order to have good electricity is better than not to pay for it and have a weak supply.

EDUCATION & SCHOOLS

Doha — There are in total seven schools: four governmental schools and three private schools. There are secondary schools.

Dheisheh — There are two UN schools, which reach the 9th grade. After that students will need to go to another city in order to complete their studies, like Doha.

Comment — There are many schools in Doha. This means that each class has less students than the classes in Dheisheh. Therefore, in my opinion studying in Doha is a better option.

HEALTHCARE

Doha — There are three pharmacies and a physio-therapy center, but no health center nor a hospital.

Dheisheh — There are the UN clinic, the Dheisheh service clinic and the Shams Hospital.

<u>Comment</u> — Healthcare-wise Dheisheh is better than Doha but Beit Jala Hospital is not far from Doha, so people from Doha can go there.

<u>Conclusion</u>

The land on which Dheisheh refugee camp has been established is being rented by UNRWA in a contract that lasts 99 years. There are still voices in Dheisheh that wonder what will happen when this lease is over. One might also ask if the struggle for a certain political right is constricted to living in a certain place. Furthermore, is the identity of being a refugee limited to living in refugee camps, and should the struggle for the Palestinian refugees' cause be restricted to refugees living in camps? This contribution represents a beginning that tackles some of my personal opinions along with those of my family. More research is needed in order to tackle these points in a more informed way and to be able to reach a point where one can assert if the term "Palestinian Refugees" is a question of geography, meaning restricted to those living in the camps, or if it is an identity carried regardless of the place one lives in.

VISUAL INVESTIGATION
DHEISHEH/DOHA

The Commons & Commoning Group

Dheisheh (left) and Doha (right) developing along Hebron-
Jerusalem Road. Two sides of the same coin?

Following images are a selection from a photo-
graphic journey that seeks to enlighten the differ-
ences in the urban fabric of Dheisheh and Doha.
Could the two urban agglomerates be considered
parts of a whole, in which Dheisheh represents
the *qasaba* [old city] and Doha the new city?

The main entrance of Dheisheh refugee camp

Looking from Dheisheh towards Doha

The main entrance of Doha City

Looking from Doha towards Dheisheh

Empty space in Dheisheh

Empty space in Doha which previously was occupied by an
Israeli military base

Empty space in Dheisheh

Street in Dheisheh

Empty space in Doha

Street in Doha

Gated public park in Doha

Gated football field in Doha

THE REFUGEE CAMP AND THE REFUGEE CITY

Naba Al Assi

My experience may be strange to you. It's well known that to live in a city is better than to live in a Refugee camp. But it's also something strange that for me to live or to be in Dheisheh Refugee Camp is better than living in Doha City. And below, I'll try to explain why that is and also the differences between Doha & Dheisheh at the social level and the social relations.

When we think about the differences between these two places, we should think about the soul of the camp which the city lacks. And what is the soul of the camp? We can say it's how the camp became the symbol of struggle and how it declares the right of return. In the camp you can feel this warm condition with the people.

Also something missing in Doha especially in my neighbourhood is that we can't sit on the street freely like when we sit in the camp. Somebody will come to you and ask: what are you doing here next my home, but in Dheisheh all the people know each other and they are sure that there is no place for us to go. So the street in Dheisheh has

social life and relations between the people. On the other hand, in Doha, even though the Municipality builds covered bus stops for the pedestrians, the social connections are so weak that a guy came to one of the stops because it's in front of his home and poured dirty car oil on it to prevent people from sitting there.

Also in the term of the soul of social life, Doha lacks the social relations between people as in Dheisheh camp. We can see that in the social occasions in the camp, like if you have a wedding party or a funeral or party for the tawjehe students there are hundreds of people who participate even if you don't invite them. In Doha, only the people invited to a party will come.

When we think about good relations between neighbours, we can see the crowded homes in the camp and I think that homes crowded next to one another improve the neighbourly spirit in the camp. I miss it in Doha very much, because by being an active neighbour you can integrate with the people easily without any borders. The relations between the people in the camp are stronger than the city. And I think this absence of good relations between neighbours began in whole Palestinian community when the British mandate made the division of the holy days between Christians, Muslims and Jews in Jerusalem. That really affected

the relations between people.

In my case. my home in duha is like a hotel. It's just a place where I can sleep, because I spend my whole daysin the camp with my friends and my relatives. In this way, I can feel like myself because I can see that we are all at the same level, not like what happens in Doha. In Doha, there's always talk of luxuries, like fancy homes or fancy cars etc.. In Dheisheh, even if they have these things inside the camp they rarely speak about that.

For me, I can only describe the life in Doha as a new city missing the common traditions and habits because there were no original Dohians people there. They are all new residents and they don't know each other very well. Because Doha is a mixed city, it contains a lot of people from many camps in the West Bank, especially the camps in Bethlehem. And it's just an industrial area for factories and small garages of mechanics, car painting, carpentry, and iron works.

So I can't feel like myself in Doha. Even if I have a lot of friends, but most of them also goes to the camp every day. So why I should stay there? I think that there is no social life in Doha like there is in Dheisheh. Also there is no free social movement in Doha, no strong relations between people like the relations in Dheisheh. And also I don't

know a lot off people in Doha because we have
new neighbours every week or sometimes every
day.

It may be familiar to you that life in a city would
be better than in a refugee camp, but to me, be-
cause of the camp's social relations, I prefer the
camp. Perhaps that is strange to you.

View of a concrete factory in the centre of Doha

A TESTING GROUND

Brave New Alps

Could Doha, as an urban agglomerate built by Palestinian refugees who left their camps, be considered a sort of testing ground for the Return? Considering that the spatial arrangement of the living environment influences social dynamics and vice-versa, what does Doha's layout and mode of construction tell us about its social structure?

FOR THE RETURN?

What imaginary is driving the way Doha is built? What practices of commoning do the camps produce? How can the refugees imagine to take these practices with them in the moment the Return will be realised? These images were produced by superimposing the current urban situation of Dheisheh and Doha onto a historical photograph taken in 1952.

THE RIGHT OF RETURN IS A RETURN TO THE COMMONS. PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS

Isshaq Al Barbary

It is not important that everyone adopts the word 'commons'. What matters is that people understand that what we share together, as well as the way we share, is as important as what we possess individually. In an interview with Abu Atiff, a refugee and old man that comes from the destroyed village of Beit Jibrin, who has never attended school or universities but who gained wisdom through life experiences and his relationship with the others as well as with the land, said: "I want to return to the life I had in the village, where I can send food to my neighbor and have the plate back filled with food." Yet, he continues, "the life style of participation and sharing among ourselves, back in the days, entrenched in the mind. I carried it with me from the village to the camp and passed it on to generations to carry it back again to the villages and cities when they return." During Ramadan last July, the Israeli occupiers granted a big number of Palestinians permissions to visit the 1948 occupied land for a month. The big surprise on a personal level was the fact that a

vast majority of the people with a permit decided to return to the sea, museums, worship places and free markets rather than visiting the destroyed villages where they come from originally. However, this surprise explains that there is a clear distinction between community ownership and private property. Pictures that have been taken on the beach of Jaffa and in the old city of Jerusalem show and demonstrate that common land belongs to people. Such actions from the refugee community prove and demonstrate the theory, which states that the right of return is a return to the commons (property that belongs to the people) rather than the notion to return to a single house. Therefore, returning to the property could be based on the idea to common for collective matter under the cover "WE matters as much as ME".

A CONVERSATION ABOUT "GENERATIONAL COMMONS"

The Commons & Commoning Group

On Thursday, 4th October 2012, one part of the Commons & Commoning Group went for an excursion to the area of Solomon's Pools, south of Dheisheh. The idea of the visit was to walk around the more than 2,000-year-old water reservoirs that through a complex network of canals and tunnels provided the Bethlehem as well as the Jerusalem area with water. The walk was planned in order to reflect on physical commons that take the form of human-built structures or environments that are passed on from generation to generation over long periods of time. Arrived at the pools, we realised that they were in a process of being privatised by a foreign investment company. Neglected over the past decades, and potentially a dangerous place for children to play at, they are now fenced-in and watched over by a security guard. The proposed "development project" for the area foresees an architectural complex containing a convention centre, a shopping mall, a hotel and a historical museum in the refurbished Ottoman castle next to the first pool. The convention centre, the shopping mall and the museum are about to open to the public, while the hotel is still in the planning phase.

44
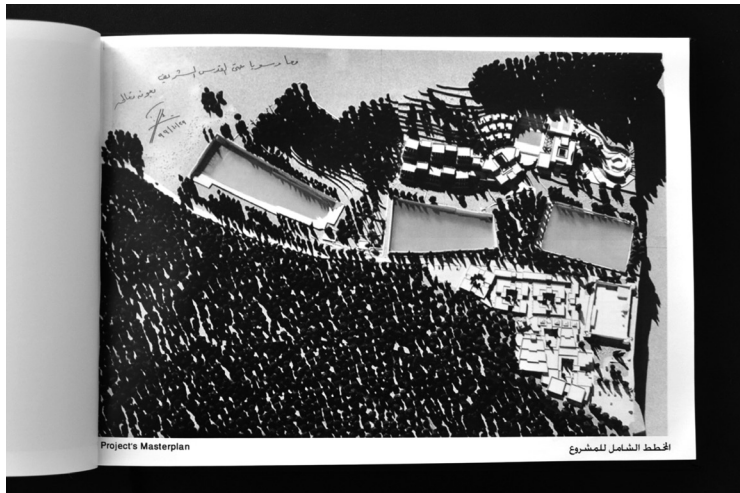
The model of the complex being built at Solomon's Pools.
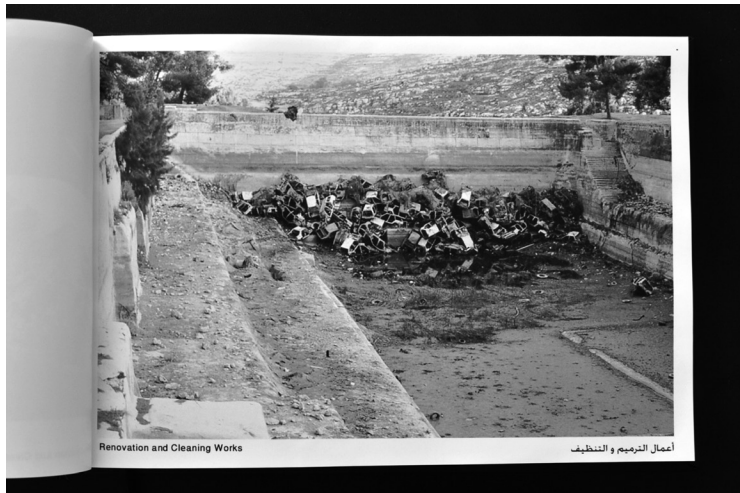Source: the Solomon Pools Resorts presentation book

The already built and soon to be opened convention palace
and shopping mall – October 2012

This visit spurred a discussion in the group about the dynamics surrounding "generational commons" and their enclosure. Following, there are experts of the discussion.

●

Fabio – The pools are now being fenced-in by the company that is renting the area. For us, this is quite a violent operation that reminds us very much of how things work normally in the capitalist system: there is a place that is owned by people in a collective way, but some people own it 'in a bad way' – they neglect the space, they trash it. And then suddenly a company comes from outside proposing to clean up the place, to make it into some sort of tourist resort and make it profitable. As making profit out of it is the whole point, the investors try to find some evidence that can justify this kind of operation that subtracts the resource from the people. Very often a narrative is constructed that justifies the enclosure through discourses of so-called sustainable development, of regeneration: "thank god the investors came and cleaned up the mess!" But, nevertheless, a piece of land that previously was owned and accessed by all kinds of people is taken away almost over night, becoming accessible only for people who have the money and who stick to the behavioural code of the enclosed space.

Renovation and Cleaning Works — أعمال الترميم و التنظيف

One of the pools trashed with cars before the start of the "development" project. Source: the Solomon Pools Resorts presentation book

Fenced-in pool — October 2012

[…]

Naba – (Showing a photo on the computer) I have a picture of the model that shows also the hotel that will be build on the other side.

(Someone in the group sighs)

Naba – If we compare this plan of the hotel [top right] with the picture I recently took of the Israeli Betar Illit settlement [bottom right], we cannot find any difference.

Isshaq – Yes, seriously what is the difference? What did they call it? "Proposed hotel design"…

Fabio – It is stunning that the form is the same, but what is more is that the process it represents and embodies is very similar as well. You start with a fence and you end up with an architectural monster. Flipping through the book of Solomon's Pools Resort, I find the computer visualisations, depicting the future use of the pools and the kind of people that are projected into them, especially interesting.

Issahq – I went with my father once there for a barbecue picnic and we sat freely under the trees next to the pools as so many other families, but after this fencing-in I could just imagine that I won't be allowed to enter anymore.

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Visualisation of the hotel to be built opposit the convention
centre. Source: the Solomon Pools Resorts presentation book

Settlement of Betar Illit – photo by Naba Al-Assi,
October 2012

Naba – You will be allowed, but you will need to pay fees.

Isshaq – Fees for whom?

Naba – Fees for CCC (Consolidated Contractors Company).

Isshaq – Did they buy the land?

Naba – I don't know.

Murad – Maybe they rented it for 100 years from the ministry of endowment [*waqf*]?

Fabio – Anyway, it is interesting that you and others were already playing in this area and the proposal of the development company is again showing people playing in the area. So something is happening in-between, the place is transformed for a use, which is almost equivalent to the use it had before, but with a completely changed situation and premises for access.

[...]

Murad – I have some experience about Solomon's Pools because there were political actions taking place. If you remember, there was a time when a lot of settlers with the army went there each day,

Dheisheians freely accessing the pools prior to their enclosure – photo by Naba Al-Assi, 2008
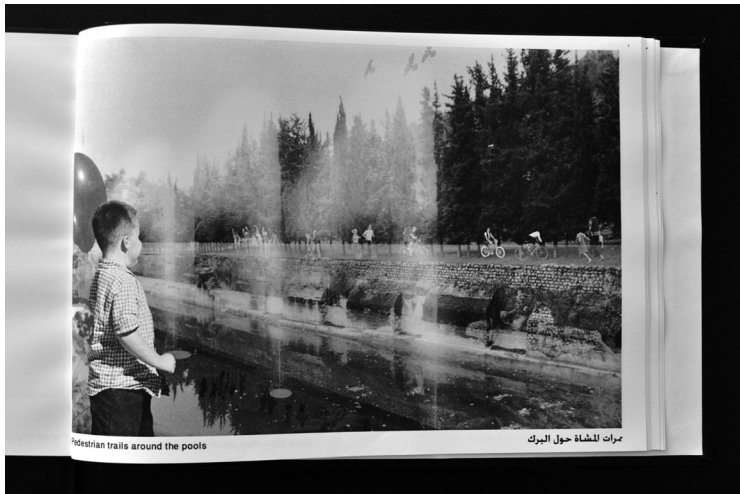
People using the area of Solomon's Pools as envisioned once the "development" project will be completed. Source: the Solomon Pools Resorts presentation book

each week, because they planned to take over all that area. So our action was to realise a project there in order to make it a free place, connected to the idea of the common. The project is still existing — the architectural plans were presented by the students of the Berlage Institute — but we found that the people who rented that land wanted a huge amount of money in order to realise it. So it seems they have a special strategy to work with that place and to control it.

Isshaq — I don't see much difference between what the settlers do and these actions done by private companies.

Naba — I just want to explain something for Isshaq and Murad: when we went there yesterday, we asked the people of the company if we can enter the old castle, and they say that we could, but that we were not allowed to take any pictures — and we were being watched all the time by the security guard. So that makes me angry like hell. This was a common place: everyone could go and maybe even sleep there, and now you are not even allowed to take pictures. But when the director of the location came and saw Fabio and Bianca, he allowed us to take pictures because they are foreigners.

[...]

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Isshaq – At the end of the day they want to convince us that this development is a needed and good action. And I think they are convincing us with these pictures (showing the pictures in the Solomon's Pools Resort book that make a comparison between 'before' and 'after' CCC cleaned the pools).

Fabio – This reflects the kind of language or narrative that Murad was referring to by talking about the videos made by the Israeli Ministry of Media when they speak about the conflict. They are selecting a few powerful things and just project those to the people in a clear and direct way. So how can we respond to this narration? We don't have any material evidence of how much people enjoyed going there freely to play football, have barbecues and so on, but they have material evidence of people trashing the place with broken cars.

Naba – I think if we discuss something like that we should think more about the place, how people were going there and spending their time, because it is maybe the only place in the area where Palestinians were spending their free time outdoors. And now it will likely be something closed for which you should pay. But I am paying taxes to the government, and I am a good citizen, or pre-citizen, for the government – if there is a government. Why should I pay to enter places like the

pools or the "public" park in Doha? I think these projects should be for free for the people. If the Palestinian citizens (or pre-citizens) are paying taxes to the government, why is the government intending to gain money through these projects? Why are they subtracting huge portions of the commons and occupying them to gain profit?

[...]

Murad – When people here in Palestine see projects like this their eyes shine. They see a beautiful project that lets them say, "Yes, we are developed. We want to be developed, we want to see Palestine become like this." But they are just missing a lot of points in this case. They are thinking individually, not collectively. If, for example, you consider Rawabi, it is very much destroying the Palestinian mentality: to be a citizen in that city will be crazy for the Palestinian traditional way. But the people here in Palestine are shocked with the new system and they want to look at Palestine as a very beautiful country, while deleting and cancelling all the other elements. I am sure, if we now take these images of the Solomon's Pool Resort and go in the street 100% of the people will like it.

Isshaq – Perhaps they don't know the hidden message behind this. What you said about these images is exactly what we can call the occupation

of the mind, which we are subjected to in every moment of the day and which seems to work very successfully.

Still common water spring at Solomon's Pools, October 2012

THE ERA OF
"CORPORATE COMMONS"

Mohammed Abu Alia

A few days ago we went on a trip to Suliman's Pools. This area in our opinion used to be an example of common place. During our visit I was overwhelmed to realize that in order to enter the area we needed permission from the Suliman's Pools Resorts tourism company. It was surprising that the place now has limited access to the public. I asked the security guard about this, and he (Mahmud) explained that the whole area was leased to the Suliman's Pools Resorts tourism company for the purpose of "development" and to initiate projects that can benefit the area. We obtained the verbal permission but we were told that we were not allowed to photograph certain parts of the property. Only because I know the guard personally he allowed us to take a few pictures.

The place, which previously hosted meadows and trees, has now turned into a beautiful architectural complex containing an area designated to become a shopping mall, a museum, and a restaurant.

Two out of the three pools were built around 2 BCE (Before Common Era). During the Turkish domination over Palestine a third pool was constructed and the whole complex of water reservoirs was called after the name of Suliman, the Turkish governor of Palestine. The three huge pools were used to collect water in winter and to store it in order to supply the Bethlehem and Jerusalem area. Close to the pools a small Castle was built for the Turkish guards who protected the pools. It is called Murad's Castle.

CCC (the Consolidated Contractors Company), which is renting the area for 100 years, has turned the Castle and the area around it into a historical museum and a restaurant. They are planning to construct a hotel close to the pools area. This means that the area will not be completely open to the public anymore. The plan is to "develop" the area and construct projects for the means of tourism that will yield profit that benefit the investors. In my opinion this is a clear example of privatization. One can define privatization as the domination over the commons that transforms these into portions of land under the ownership of individuals – amongst others, like in this case, using the excuse of "sustainable development". In this paper I will try to understand this transformation in the light of what we have been discussing at Campus in Camps.

The whole idea of the commons is that they should be available for everyone but without any ownership label. Suliman's Pools used to be an example of a common – the place used to be used for water collection and storage to supply Jerusalem and Bethlehem. So the whole project was originally established as a common (or at least as a fundamental piece in the water supply system, which as a whole is a common) – the quality of life of many people was depending on it – and then, when the water storage ceased to function, the area became a public getaway spot, an open park used by people in the area and not restricted or limited to anyone. I remember that while growing up we had many family trips to the area. We spent the day there, played, barbequed, and enjoyed the natural beauty of the area.

This change which is happening now, the restrictions and the limitations that I have noticed in my last visit only shows me the ways in which this place will be transformed into an enterprise that will mainly and hugely benefit the few investors. These investors will keep the area somehow accessible as long as this will yield more profit. So the area is being turned from a common into a private park owned and run by a private company. By all means, the restrictions imposed on the use of the area represent a problem if we want to continue to call the area a common and use it as one.

The privatization process has some advantages, though. The whole area is now extremely cared for – the pools themselves were cleaned from a lot of waste, which had accumulated over the years. Moreover, the modernisation and constructions did not make the area lose its natural and historical taste. The company argues that it was for the purpose of "sustainable development" that they took over. So one could say that the "sustainable development" of the commons should be taken care of by private entities, which are able to pay the high costs of maintenance but which in the same time benefit from their ability to establish economically profitable projects.

The privatization of commons, in which they become owned by corporate entities with the excuse of providing them with a better maintenance and development on the long run, leaves big questions unanswered – to begin with, is this privatization a fair process or not? Why did we reach a point where the ability to perform community tasks was taken away from the community and given to private companies? Where should a community draw a line between those places that can be left to be dominated by companies in order to sustain them and those places that a community should not bargain? Let's imagine places such as the Midan Al tahrer in Cairo, Almahd Square in Bethlehem, the Eiffel tower in Paris are being privatized,

restricted, and were transformed from a common, used and shared by everyone, into areas that are owned and run by companies that possess total control. And as we are discussing places and areas, shouldn't we try to examine the ways in which privatization of educational and healthcare system can affect us?

View of Murad's Castle's courtyard with the soon to be opened historical museum on the right-hand side and the restaurant on the left – October 2012

THE GATE AND
THE COMMONS

<u>Brave New Alps</u>

Commons, in order to continue to be commons need to be preserved, taken care of, maintained, protected. But they also need to be activated by people – in a sense, they need to "function". The community and its activities of commoning are key to the creation, conservation and expansion of commons of any sort.

In the moment in which a common is being fenced-in – both in a literal as well as in a figurative way – in order to prevent people from accessing and potentially ruining it, there is a sort of enclosure happening and the common is being downgraded to a lower level of property. Through physical barriers, the resource is being prevented from being activated. Rather, it is being dis-activated – entering a state of suspension, which only puts off any further "confrontation" between the resource on one hand and the community on the other. Moreover, the act of limiting access to an area, more often than not being an imposition on many by a few rather than a collective decision, is a typical utensil in the capitalist's toolbox. It prevents communities from becoming aware of

their responsibilities and it is just an easy solution to make sure that "stuff doesn't get broken". However, who decides to fence-in the commons, is often just a tick away from deploying other known utensils conceived to safeguard private property: regulation, surveillance, punishment.

THE
COMMONS

RESOURCES COMMUNITY COMMONING
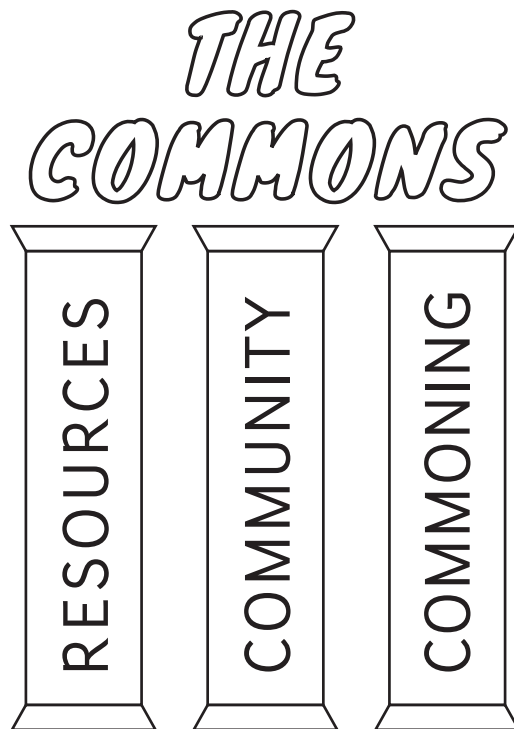
UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCES ABOUT THE COMMONS

Nedaa Hamouz

"Knowledge has no price" is one of the beliefs that I really mostly appreciate. The first time I realised that was when I started giving English lessons for the children of our neighbourhood; Tal-Al Safi neighborhood in Al Fawwar camp south of Hebron city. I felt I had many things to give for nothing, but my own passion and internal peace. I realised also how much better life is when people share whatever they have without the exchange of money.

In October 2011, a bunch of children came to my house for asking me to give them English classes for 50 NIS per month. I had never thought that I would do tutoring, but after a long thinking I decided to teach them English for no money, since they were orphans and my neighbours. They were five children of different ages, the eldest was fourteen and the youngest was ten. I thought it would be really difficult in the beginning since they had different levels, but I was wrong – we had rich classes full of different ideas and capacities. We used to focus on the four linguistic competences – listening, reading, writing and speaking. Some joy was also included in the lessons

since the pupils were funny and full of energy. For example, one day, we were explaining some meanings and suddenly one of the males brought a funny Arabic word which has the same rhythm and all of us fell in laughter. We did the whole work in a friendly atmosphere; we were friends more than a teacher with her students. We had two classes of two hours per week for the whole year and the summer holiday.

It was a rich experience that affects me positively. I learnt how to deal with the pupils and how I can vary my methods for giving more knowledge. I used this gained knowledge in my work later on since I've worked twice as an English teacher. One negative thing is that some of the children were not committed – they were present for one day and absent for a couple of days. I think that is because they did not pay for the lessons. I was thinking how I could motivate these kids for such an experience in which knowledge is shared for free, so I decided to have a conversation class about the concept of giving, so that they could appreciate what we were doing.

Another experience is the drawing lessons I gave to my relatives and neighbours when I was 13 years old. I draw well since my early childhood, so I wanted to share this talent I have with the other kids. I was so motivated! We held the sessions in

an abandoned room in our garden. We were all happy for having such experience full of imagination, cooperation and ambition. This experience taught me how passion can be a motivation into success and information sharing.

These two experiences are not different from my experience here in Campus in Camps, since knowledge here is shared freely and without any condition. One of the classes we have in Campus in Camps is a perfect example about what I am talking about: "House of Wisdom" by Mu'alim Munir Fasheh, as he likes to be called. I learnt from Al-Mu'alim that my knowledge should come from my personal experience rather than books or other academic resources.

My personal initiative in teaching English is totally different from any experience that could be held by an NGO since I have no reason behind what I'm doing except my personal passion. I have no conditions on the learners, they are here as my partners, my companions. It's an experience that grows the concept of cooperation and friendship. It motivates the learners and their teacher to work hard in order to put in the light the knowledge they can share. In addition, these learners will appreciate the importance of this experience of sharing and will apply it in their personal experiences when they grow up.

This past experience will have a great effect on my future project as a participant in Campus in Camps. There I'm working on creating a language and culture centre were different ages, including mothers and their children, can learn English in a communicative way. In this project, I will share again my knowledge in the language for more people, but with the same principle: "knowledge has no price".

The women, the first category targeted in the project, will get English lessons for free. I really admire their passion for the learning of a foreign language. When I and my partner, Ayat, asked women about joining the sessions they were really motivated. Their passion touched my heart, this was the first time I saw housekeeper women longing for English. I even felt that they are more motivated than their kids! Regarding the school children of the two genders, their learning will also be for free since we are not doing tutoring. As we noticed, the majority of the kids take private lessons to improve their performance in English, but most of them can't pay, so they stop. Because we believe that English is for everybody, we are thinking of other solutions that guarantee their right of learning, but make them partners in their learning too. If they don't have the money, they can help, for example, in arranging the plaza for each cultural activity. By this, we achieve a

kind of barter where everybody gives as he takes and becomes part of the learning process of the cultural center. Now, I believe that their kids, motivated by their mothers, will be happy for this experience and that their satisfaction will affect their commitment positively.

All in all, sharing knowledge is a precious value which is included in the concept of the commons since it can't be measured by any materialistic price. When you are giving without asking any-thing in exchange, you will do the work from your deep heart since passion and cooperation will be your motivation to work. However, a process of commoning need to be established in which everyone participating is giving and taking.

BAKING BREAD
WITH REBHEA ABU ALIA

The Commons & Commoning Group

On the 2nd October 2012 we all gathered at Mohammed Abu Alia's grandparents' home in Dheisheh for a baking-skills-sharing-session. We in turn baked traditional tabun bread with Rebhea Abu Alia in a typical electric oven.

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DHEISHEH'S COMMON GREEN

<u>Brave New Alps</u>

1952

One of the first and best known historical photographs of Dheisheh Refugee Camp was taken in 1952 from the eastern side of the camp looking north-westward in the direction of Jerusalem-Hebron Road. In that photograph – at the time Dheisheh was mainly constituted of tents with the first UNRWA concrete shelters appearing here and there – we cannot spot a single tree growing within or beside the already neatly defined plots into which the area designated to the camp had been divided. What was this area before the refu-

gee camp was established? It is said that the name Dheisheh (literally *the forest* in Egyptian Arabic) was given to the camp because a forest originally grew there. What kind of forest? One of those pine tree groves planted during the British colonial mandate by the Jewish National Fund and which can still be found here and there in the area? Or, as some people say, were fig and other fruit trees growing there? Or was this place in reality as rocky and arid as the hill opposite the camp, which can be clearly seen in the photograph and which today hosts the "refugee city" Doha?

1948

Looking at the very first photographs of the camp taken in 1948, with the first Red Cross tents erected on a desert hill, it is hard to believe that this area was previously covered with trees.

1960s

R 462   R 463
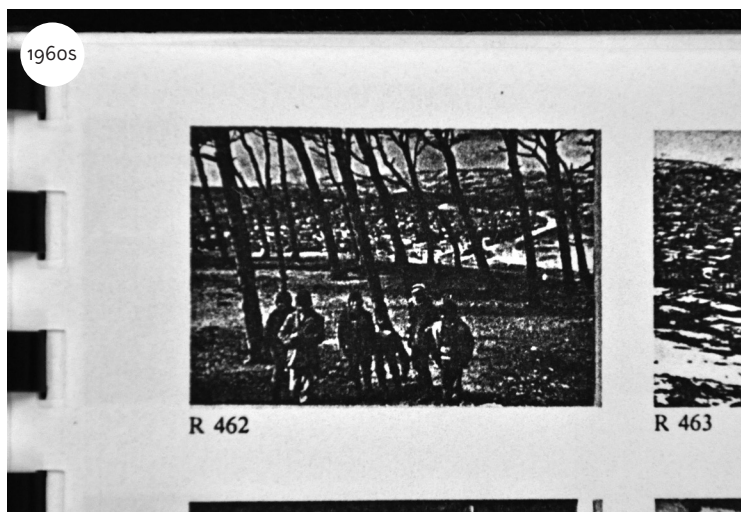
The only evidence we could find during our research of a forest-like assemblage of trees in the area of Dheisheh is depicted in a tiny reproduction of a photograph that is part of the UNRWA photographic archive in Gaza. Probably taken in the 1950s or '60s, the image shows a group of pine trees growing in the eastern side of the camp, where today Al-Feneiq Cultural Centre is located.

2012

Interestingly, some neatly defined parts of this rocky landscape on the other side of Jerusalem-Hebron Road are today still in their original state and do not host any construction. Here, the landscape is composed of wind-shaped boulders with little vegetation growing between them, mostly thistles and other small spiky bushes.

On the ground floor of Ibdaa Cultural Centre in Dheisheh, a small selection of historical photographs illustrates various stages of development of the camp. One of them, taken in 1959, shows us a camp that has a radically different shape than the one depicted in the 1952 photograph – almost all the tents have been replaced by concrete UNRWA shelters, tidily aligned along the northern side of the hill. Still, it is hard to spot any kind of green

between the constructions. Nevertheless, the fact that we cannot recognise any developed tree in the picture does not mean that trees had not already been planted.
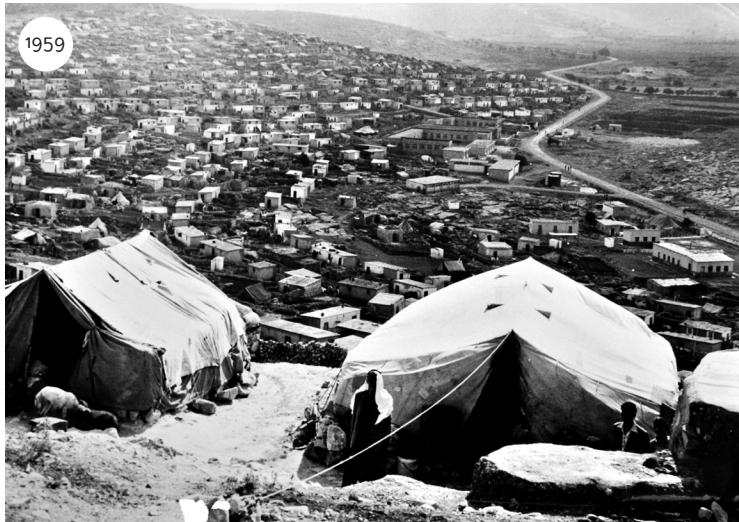
In fact, taking a look at a third photograph, shot in 1968 from a similar position and from the very same angle, we see a slightly more built-up environment with a great number of well-developed trees rising between the buildings.

1968

This is confirmed by yet another picture taken inside Dheisheh in 1973.

1973
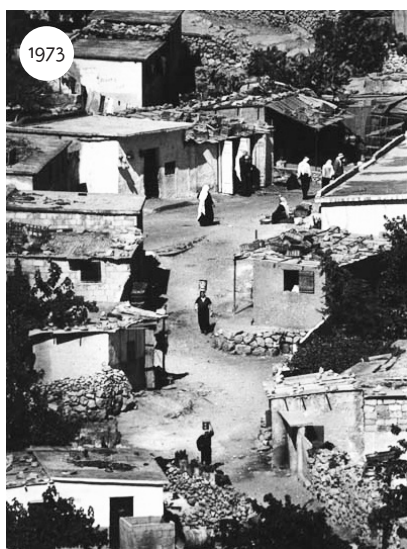
If trees were really growing on this land before the camp was established, these are the first images we could find documenting their return.

•

Fast forward to the present. Can we see the architectural shape of Dheisheh evolving over time? The concrete shelters disappear one by one – destroyed in order to give way to much larger and complex structures, or absorbed into them. The number of floors increases and buildings grow in size, beginning to intersect with each other. The little available space – mostly in the centre of the camp, where the majority of shops, schools and other institutions are located – is exploited as rationally and efficiently as possible. The space of the street, arguably the only physical common space in the camp, is increasingly eroded as an effect of the self-negotiated expansion of the refugees' properties. Step by step the camp becomes greener. The spread of the vegetation almost seems to go hand in hand with the architectural evolution of the camp. Trees and bushes – many of them producing edible fruits at different times of the year (figs, prickly pears, loquat fruits, olives, lemons, oranges, walnuts, grapes, red mulberries, almonds etc.) – are now cultivated in gardens annexed to houses and predominantly enclosed by walls that hide their trunks. Bushes and branches spill out from between houses or from behind property walls, sometimes in a glorious explosion of colour and scent. Various vegetables for personal consumption are grown. Climbing plants

take over entire unfinished buildings, while potted ones are filling windowsills and wall tops. Plants of different sizes grow in big and small improvised beds built out of bricks or concrete along the streets, outside peoples' homes. Vines grow on the shade-providing pergolas of the flat rooftops. In more than one location, the green spilling over completely covers the narrow streets, creating emerald tunnels over the pedestrians' heads. Therefore, in many ways we might say that Dheisheh, the forest, must be a name that was chosen to honour the future of the hill on which the camp was erected rather than its past.

Common Green

Although refugees living in the centre of Dheisheh often complain about the density of the built environment, the lack of space and the compulsion to build vertically when people need to expand their homes, a large amount of square metres is dedicated to plants of various sizes and uses. It almost seems that these plants enjoy a special status here and that nobody would ever dream of getting rid of green spaces for the purpose of extending a house. It feels as though plants have been planning their return and conquering their ground bit by bit. Interestingly, the habit of cultivating plants is seemingly equally distributed within the camp

– humble homes have gardens and green areas as much as richer and more extravagant houses do. On the part of the Dheishehians, possibly due to the fact that their ancestors were mostly farmers in their villages of origin, they show a great respect and care for their green. All the plants that can be found in the camp are kept inside private properties or are, in any case, associated to a specific house or family. Within the camp, there is no "public green" in a conventional sense, with a central authority taking care of it. Rather, it is the Dheishehians themselves who take care of the camp's green in general – each family contributing privately to its well-being and preservation. If the lower parts of the trunks and the root systems of trees and bushes are always located inside the borders of private properties, very often huge portions of the plants are shared with the rest of the community. This is the case not only for gardens that spill over from behind walls into the camp's streets but also for the plots of green that are more hidden from pedestrians, yet which nevertheless enhance the lives of people living in nearby houses. Aside from visually enriching peoples' perception of the built environment, the large amount of plants growing in the camp also plays a fundamental role in maintaining a cooler climate during the hot months. Without their presence, the camp, mainly built of reinforced concrete, would probably be much less pleasant for the greater part of

the year. Therefore, if some people complain about the fact that there are no "public green areas" in Dheisheh in the form of a public parks or gardens, we would argue that instead of one single public park in the midst of a concrete jungle, in Dheisheh there is a vast common green, homogeneously spread throughout the camp. In this regard, an interesting phenomenon is the construction of spaces to grow plants (varying greatly in size, from a few centimetres to a few meters in width) outside of peoples' homes, predominantly next to the main entrances, technically invading the common space of the street. However, in this case it is hard to speak of erosion of the common space, but rather of an attempt to improve and diversify it, of paying homage to it.

And finally, considering the amount of food that such vegetation produces inside the refugee camp, we can begin to speculate on how less dependent from the market this green renders refugees or on the informal economies of exchange it nourishes among them.
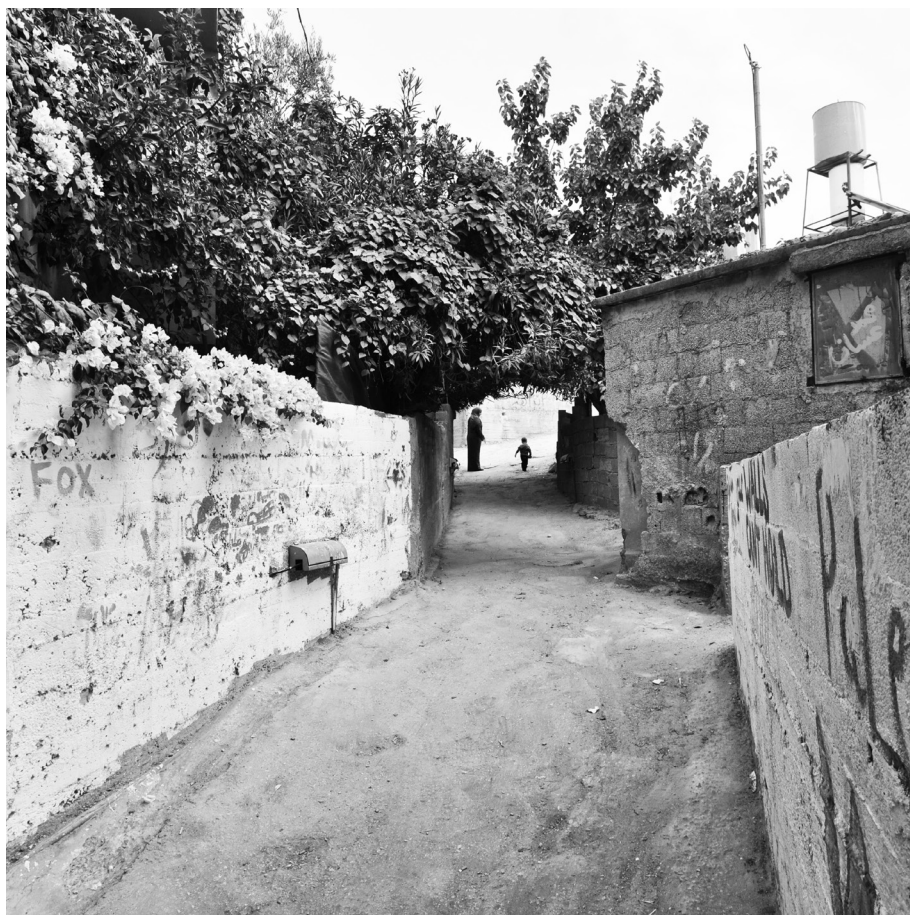
"We think these girls understand the commons more than anyone else in the world."

Naba Al Assi & Isshaq Al Barbary

APPENDIX H
NEW CROSS COMMONERS

Since February 2013, with Paolo Plotegher, Caterina Giuliani, Orsalia Dimitriou and James Holland, I have been organising a series of encounters in New Cross to explore the commons and practices of commoning in this London neighbourhood.[366]

See the following pages for:
- the poster announcing the first encounter, with a drawing by Caterina Giuliani
- a list of the activities organised so far
- materials to be transformed into a fanzine

To see more documentation about this process of exploration, visit:
http://newxcommoners.wordpress.com

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366 New Cross is the London neighbourhood within which Goldsmiths College is located and where I live.

Activities of the New Cross Commoners

February 2013

Saturday 9th, 1pm, NX Learning:

C'mon commoners! Join us to explore commons and commoning in New Cross – introducing the ideas behind this group, reading "On the Commons: A Public Interview with Massimo De Angelis and Stavros Stavrides" and mapping the neighborhood in relation to the ideas discussed in the interview

Saturday 16th, 1.30pm, Sanford Housing Coop:

Visit to the housing co-op and the Creekside houseboat community – accompanied by a reading of "The return of the housing question" by Stuart Hodkinson

Monday 18th, 7.30pm, Goldsmiths:

Monday-soup and continued reading of "On the Commons: A Public Interview with Massimo De Angelis and Stavros Stavrides"

Monday 25th February, 7.30pm, Goldsmiths:

Monday-soup and continued reading of "On the Commons: A Public Interview with Massimo De Angelis and Stavros Stavrides"

March 2013

Saturday 2nd March, 10.30 at Burgess Park Food Project:

Introduction to permaculture and community gardens – gardening and baking pizza in the garden's oven

Monday 11th March, 7.30pm, Goldsmiths:

Monday-soup and reading an interview by Max Haiven with Silvia Federici on food politics

Saturday 16th March, 10.30am to 6.00pm, Goldsmiths:

Circulation of the Commons – all day workshop to map the resources we could start to common within this collective and the neighborhood, introduced by a talk by Andre Pusey

Saturday 23th March, 1.30pm, NX Learning:

collective planning session – how to continue after the Easter break?

Monday 25th March, 7.30pm, Goldsmiths:

Monday-soup and screening of a documentary on the Black Panthers

<u>April 2013</u>

Saturday 27th, 2pm, NX Learning:

    Workshop on how to brew beer (cancelled and converted to a discussion group)

<u>May 2013</u>

Saturday 11th, 11am at the New Cross Cutting:

    Visit to the local nature reserve and a workshop on visualizing the power differentials within the collective in order to become more aware where we could support each other

Saturday 18th, 11.30am, Deptford train station:

    A radical history work to the local area with the South-London activist blogger Neil from transpontine – accompanied by a reading of *The London Hanged* by Peter Linebaugh

<u>June 2013</u>

Saturday 1st, 12pm, Hilly Fields Park:

    Workshop on health and care with Coco Chang, accompanied by a reading of Silvia Federici's "On elder care"

Tuesday 4th, 3.30pm, New Cross Learning:

    In conversation with the architect and activist Doina Petrescu from AAA, learning about the processes behind the long-term sustainability of collectively organized spaces

Saturday 8th,10am to 5pm:

    We participate at *Organising in our communities, struggling for change: a practical day working towards mass grass roots resistance and beyond* in North London

Monday 10th, 5pm, Hobgoblin Pub:

    Discussion of a questionnaire made by the commoner Kasparas Pocius for a militant investigation he is conducting on self-organised groups throughout Europe

Saturday 15th, 3pm to 6pm, Polish restaurant:

    Organize the work for a small NXC publication

Sunday 16th, from 11.30am, Fordham Park:

    Mapping of places in New Cross that could be transformed into places of commoning

August 2013

Saturday 16th, 4pm, Hobgoblin Pub:

> Catching up and discussing the contributions to the publication

September 2013

Wednesday 11th, 7pm, Hobgoblin Pub:

> Planning session for an upcoming workshop

Saturday 14th, 2pm to 4pm, Fordham Park:

> Mapping needs that can be collectivized (during *Party in the Park* and in collaboration with *New Cross Community Survey*)

October 2013

Saturday 19th, 11am to 3pm, Hackney Wick:

> Visit to public works, where Andreas Lang introduces us to R-Urban Wick and the local micro-enterprises

Monday 21st, 7pm, Goldsmiths:

> Meeting with people from other local activist groups to plan a joint "anti-gentrification people's kitchen"

Monday 28th, 7pm, Goldsmiths:

> Planning meeting – can we get some funding to sustain further activities – especially in relation to the space that Alice and Lawrence are about to secure in the area?

November 2013

Thursday 7th, 7.30pm, Goldsmiths:

> Meeting with people from other local activist groups to plan a joint "anti-gentrification people's kitchen"

Saturday 9th, 4pm, Deptford Market:

> Scouting for possible vegetable donors

Saturday 16th, 3-8pm, St. James Community Centre:

> People's kitchen

Monday, 18th, 7pm, Goldsmiths:

> Discussing where to take the people's kitchen as a politicized space

<u>Plans for December 2013</u>

Saturday 14th, 3-8pm, St. James Community Centre:

    Second people's kitchen and launch of the New Cross Commoners fanzine

scopic drive haunts users of architectural pro-ductions by materialising today the utopia that yesterday was only painted."

"So true", thought Martin looking again at the wet rooftops that were glittering in the evening sun, two and a half hundred meters below him. "*The voyeur god created by this fiction, who like Schreber's god, knows only cadavers ….*" "Damned", cursed Martin, stopping his reading in the middle of the sentence, "this De Certeau was a such pessimist! I mean, he had every reason to be as in his time the birdeye view was homonymous to tall commercial buildings, authority and the concept maps of city plan-ners but… it is so hard to feel that way nowa-days, when enjoying the city from every pos-sible perspective from all the public terraces in the South."

Martin rose from his chaise longue and looked at the plaque in the wall as to verify his thoughts: "London's View is a Common Good. Shard's Public Terrace, Public, Network and Common Spaces, South London, 2013. Well it is not a long way since when you had to pay a ticket to enjoy this view… how completely

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absurd that was," he continued to think while descending from the top terrace. In the building he passed the workers cooperative platform and their nursery and decided to continue the descent using the lifts. Outside he picked up a pink common-use bike from the bike rack. He felt the pink suited the afternoon light while reminding him "only to think that back then you even had to pay to use a bike that was sponsored by a bank, people were nuts for putting up with it." "And now back to my everyday, ground level practice, Mr. De Certeau," thought Martin as he cycled towards Nina's house.

Laurie Grove House was similar to old style developments. Nina and her flatmates still had to pay rent, plus two of the owners had bought their flats, yet twenty percent of the building was common space as defined by law, plus their public terrace. Laurie Grove House tenants shared the garden, two communal living rooms and a small nursery. Martin found Nina in her favourite position, by the window, holding a small model that she had just made, as the number of scattered scrap material around her suggested. "This is for the future river floating co-op!" said Nina dropping the model in a bucket filled with

water. Martin could not but laugh at his friend's perpetual creativity. Sam and Lexi, who were also working in the room, were less amused by the splash that dangerously approached their laptops. "Nina, instead of playing with the model," remarked Lexi, "we should finish those plans. In a couple of hours we will have the Deptford meeting here and I certainly want to join them instead of drawing till dawn." "Right," said Nina while straightening up, "Martin what did you say you wanted?"

Carrying the plants that Nina gave him in his bike basket, Martin cycled towards the New Cross housing co-op, his home for more than ten years. Their garden was lusher than Laurie Grove House's one, but less edible, that's why he was bringing some tomato plants. The young jasmine that was on the basket was an extra gift for his little daughter. He thought again of the past when companies were allowed to monopolise common edible plants as their own property and he shuddered in horror. "Why on earth am I remembering those dark ages today? It must be the Shard's dirty commercial past," thought Martin, "It also happened to me when I visited the London Dungeon."

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He left the bike on the neighbourhood's cycling station and walked the last meters to the coop. He crossed the common kitchen and went straight to the garden. Ten set of eyes got immediately fixed on him. "You are late for the assembly!", said Christian. "I might be, dear," answered Martin, "but look what I brought for the garden! Am I excused now?" "Only if you cook your famous risotto for everybody tonight!", replied Christian. Looking at the assembly of his friends in the garden Martin thought "De Certeau would be really happy with our everyday practices! If only he had known that the future would be brighter!"

II

Nina and Lexi arrive together at the Old Sainsbury's, New Cross' biggest ex-supermarket. The supermarket had been occupied for ten years now, the roof turned into a communal garden and the carpark, drilled during the summer solstice night of 2015 by a local gang engaged in the reclaim the street/land/houses movement, is now covered in trees that destroyed the concrete with their roots. The forest has become

a sort of extension of the New Cross Cutting, opened now every single day. Vegetables, pulses and grain on the roof and fruits in the old car park: there's no need for supermarkets anymore.

The interior of the supermarket became initially the New Cross Free Cinema, where films from the looted collection of Goldsmiths audiovisual library were screened every night. Now the cinema is still active but the space is used as a communal kitchen and laundrette as well. There are also mattresses for people to sleep over. The use of the space is always rediscussed and under negotiation because it's important for people to use it in response to changing needs and desires. The meetings where those decisions are taken are not always easy, but people know how important it is for conflicts to emerge and to be able to deal with them. It wasn't easy at first, but this is something you learn to deal with, as Lexi and Nina know very well.

Initially the police tried to brutally repress the occupation but the occupiers resisted for months, mainly thanks to the massive solidarity of other neighbours, fed up with all that grey

concrete covering so much space in the very middle of New Cross. So, after a few months of struggle, Mr. Sainsbury saw himself forced to donate the property to the people of New Cross who declared it a common good.

Nina and Lexi climbed to the roof to meet Sam. They found her digging a bed of potatoes together with some other comrades. The three friends went back downstairs to take a trolley for a ride. Most of Sainsbury's trolleys had been transformed into something else: mobile gardens, mobile homes, mobile breweries ... For Nina, Lexi and Sam to take a trolley for a ride has become a daily activity, it is when they take time to be together, socializing with passersby or just chatting amongst themselves. Sometimes they bring their kids along. In the trolley they can carry around different things every day, sometimes food, sometimes books they read together, sometimes a range of medical herbs in case people they encounter need them. Nina, Lexi and Sam don't see these walks around the neighbourhood as a sort of social service. To carry food, books, plants to share is a way for them to get in contact with different people every day, black, white,

Asians, boys and girls, happy people, sad people, common people, little kids, dogs, cats and spiders.

During their walks it sometimes happenes that they find themselves with the trolley under a shadowy tree whilst no one else is around. This is when they often stop and kiss each other with great pleasure and joy.

III

  "Right, shall we check again we have everything?", asked Lexi. Sam reopened her backpack, bemused by, but also admiring, Lexi's organisational zeal. "Here I have: wa-ter, bread, cheese, matches, the leaflets, the books, another jumper, shopping bags, and my sleeping bag", she replied. "And I have: more water and bread, the cans, notebooks and pencils, some clothes and my sleeping kit: sleeping bag, ear plugs and face mask". Lexi, checking his pockets, added "and we both have our old documents, just in case". "We are ready to go!" Outside the house Lexi first checked the pink bikes to see if they were ready for a long

ride, and then they cycled down the street, the morning air refreshing their faces. After a few minutes they could see that a large group of cyclists had already gathered outside the Old Sainsburys Forest. Lexi felt relieved while approaching the group, "the comrades from the North will be happy to receive all this support". Soon the army of cyclists was speeding down Old Kent Road, gathering further cyclists along the network of Old Supermarkets Forests: the Old Aldi Forest, the Old Asda Forest, the Old Tesco Forest.

Different songs were sung by the group, but the voices grew increasingly silent as they approached Westminster bridge. All the bridges were known for being informal checkpoints in which the Northern Police controlled the comings and goings of the inhabitants of the South. It was better to keep a low profile when crossing the river, especially since events in the North were making the Government and the Market Authority nervous. A few blocks away from the bridge they decided to divide the group to attract less attention: some went to Vauxhall Bridge, some to Waterloo bridge. Lexi and Sam, and the rest of the Westminster group,

took out of their backpacks some shopping bags, filled them with food and hung them from the handlebars of their bicycles. It was a simple disguise for crossing the bridge: with shopping bags they could pass for legitimate Northeners, or as Southeners coming to sell food in the Northern Markets.

The crossing of the bridge went without major problems, they just had to follow the usual Northern procedure for the monitoring of citizens. They all had documents, carefully forged, ready for the long inspection: financial identity card, credit profile certificate and National Health Management membership card.

Once cleared the group regathered in Parliament Square. Sam looked at the buildings around the square. They were almost invisible behind the huge fences defending them from citizens. Only their roofs were visible, and the clock of Big Ben. Sam remembered the stories her grandmother used to tell her about the night when it all started in that square, how a specific protest against the commodification of education was aggressively repressed here, prompting a national revolt against the political system

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of representation that led to the formation of autonomous common zones across the country. Lexi brought her back to the present: "Sam, let's go, the group is moving on". Cycling through the central streets of the North was a strange experience these days, they were almost deserted, the air was calm and tense, as if something were about to happen. Soon they could see their goal, the occupied Harrods Department Store. The spaces around the building contrasted with the moonlike streets they had just passed by: a multitude of people were engaged in various activities. The building looked beautiful with many plants growing out of every window, the trees on the roof and its strange artworks hanging everywhere. Lexi and Sam parked the bikes against an Egyptian golden sphinx that seemed to welcome the participants. Sam looked at Lexi and around her. She clasped her hands in excitement. It was her first time participating in a General Assembly for the Commoning of North London and she had a lot to say.

NXC INTER—VIEWS:
—*NEW X LEARNING* —*ASSEMBLY* —*POETRY GROUP* —*CAHOOTS*

These are interviews with some of the many collectives and organizations in New Cross that contribute to the liveliness of the neighbourhood and who all experiment with forms of collective, bottom–up organising in an urban context. To publish these interviews is a way of making people know about their activities, to better understand what each collective is doing and where connections could be established.

NEW X LEARNING

"Because we can't pay—sometimes we can have up to ten volunteers in one day—if we were giving five pounds expenses to each volunteer …"

"We are at the moment at a crux because we actually have to find fifty pounds a week just for gas and electricity."

Gill Hart

What is the form of organization of New Cross Learning?
New Cross Learning is organised through a management group in which there are about ten of us. It's quite a variety of people. We have on our management group an accountant who keeps our finances in order. We have to have an audit each year. We have a constitution. We're right in the middle of applying for charity status which will be to our advantage because we can get bigger grants and maybe we can get funding for the sort of day to day running of New Cross Learning which at the moment is basically shared between myself and Kathy as co–chairs. But it would be nice if we had somebody who could take on that responsibility. There's the idea – that it's going to be a legacy.

Would you say it is a form of self–organization? How do you take decisions?
We're not governed by any 'body' we are governed by the management group of NXL. Kathy and I [co–chairs] will make day to day decisions; we'll sometimes make day to day decisions on quite big issues. It would be almost impossible to put every decision through the management. If there is a controversial issue it goes on to an email – how do people feel about this? Are we in agreement? Who disagrees? We take a consensual view, we don't just plunder into something and think 'that's what we want'.

How do you deal with formal and informal hierarchies?
The hierarchy is just that if you're on the management group you have a vote. Only people on the management are given the keys and are allowed to open and close up the library, we made that decision a long while ago. In fact we're now thinking of changing this rule but we can't decide that ourselves, we'd have to go to the group to decide that.

Are the activities your organization engages with producing something like an income that would help sustain the project and the life of people taking part in it?
We don't have volunteers expenses, we just have food privileges and cups of coffee and tea. That's the only expense we pay. When we have volunteers here we always say, where do you live, do you live locally. We are at the moment at a crux because we actually have to find fifty pounds a week just for gas and electricity. A lot of that is by selling books in the bookshop and Paul is very good at selling books online. It's just one way of getting money but it is becoming big business for us.

A lot of our volunteers are on benefits. If they've got to go and sign on or whatever they have to do they can go and do that, there's no legal obligation that they have to be here ... and you know, they can keep warm here, they can eat here, it's like a shelter for them really. To be truthful it is for me too – coming out of the cold weather – if I was sitting at home I would run up a lot of costs on heating, or I would be cold. Cold, bored and probably going out of my mind!

Do you get funding from someone?
We're not funded by anyone at the moment. We have received funds for projects from a number of organisations. Telegraph Hill Ward Assembly kicked us off with £5000 pounds for projects which helped us to get people into the library and using the library. That lasted us almost a whole year. We were able to entice people in, use the money for arts and crafts projects, during holiday times, pay for street dance, pay for quite a few activities really – we used the money wisely. Then we did get a huge £10000 grant from New Cross Gate Trust and that was the first real 'funding' but when you have a fund you have specifications you have to fulfil. So we had a brief description of what it had to be – some of the funding went for publicity and that's why

we bought the printer. A lot of the assets were taken out of the library by the council when they closed it. The printer is another income generating thing for us; we get quite a bit of money from that. But we're also able to publicise what we do which is one of the conditions of that fund. We've had quite a few funds – one from the NHS healthy living fund – we'll apply for that again.

We've had funds from The Funding Network – an amazing organisation – we were chosen out of a batch of organisations. You have to appeal to people who want to give money to charity and they want to see how their money is going to be spent. We got over 5k from them. However you can't use any of this money to pay for utilities – they aren't funds for utilities. There are very few places that do funding for that so that's why you have to do your own fundraising …

How is your organization dealing with the control of the State/Council and with the competition and exploitation exerted by the market?
With the council it's a weird position we're in. The council have agreed we're supposedly going to get a lease. And with that lease we're also going to get a bulk of money that they ring–fenced when this place first closed. There is money that will allow us to get repairs done. We still have to pay the rent. When we get the lease the first thing we have to have is £2000 to pay the rent. So all the time we're selling the books Kathy and I are very aware that we have to get that £2000 along with probably another £800 a month that we have to find for utilities. There's a lot of money that has to be paid out on here. But when we get that bulk of money, when we get the lease, we can offset the repairs against the lease. But it's tight at the moment because we haven't got the lease and we are paying utilities although we're not paying the rent yet.

Apart from the fact that the council could deny us the lease they haven't got any power over us and what goes on in the building. They like to know what's going on in the building. We do have Lewisham Library services so they govern what goes on, just in as much as how we're still providing Lewisham library services. For example, we haven't got a computer that will do memberships at the moment. Those sorts of things there are huge restrictions on because that is part of a library service. But apart from that, no, we make the rules.

Regaridng competition, there is only competition with other community libraries, about statistics – how many books can we issue and how many people can we get in. As far as the market goes there's a charity shop which sells books for a pound each but we sell them for 20p. We've got thousands and thousands of donated books ... so no, competition with the market isn't really a problem.

What are the aims of New Cross Learning?
Well it's very much a growing project and always has been. When we made the constitution we decided it is definitely a place of learning, that can actually share skills and learning qualities of anything really – for all ages all cultures and all languages, so you know, it's more like a community hub. It is a place where people just know they can come. We have tried to make most of our activities totally free, the idea of charging doesn't appeal to us.

What do you feel you have achieved, and what are the problems you face?
What I think we've done is we've proven this place to the council as a necessity. There are no other facilities in New Cross Road, and, it looks nice. This could have been a pound shop – what would that have done for the area really? We've stood the ground and here it is. From that lots of things can grow – like the exhibition at the moment [Black

History Month display]. It's always fantastic that something else happens here, that it's not just a library. Before we took it over it wasn't open as long hours as we are during the week, it didn't look as clean in here, it didn't have as many people working here – you couldn't expect a staff of three to do what goes on here now.

Are there any past projects/models which have inspired you?
The original model that we liked was the Pepys resource centre, which is a social enterprise under the direction of Darren Taylor of Eco Computers – he'd taken over the building at the Pepys resource centre on the Waterfront – a beautiful building. We kept going there because we loved it, we thought, 'we could have that in New Cross.' Now, in fact that's sort of dissolved over the past two years, they've just started it up again as a library down there, but I think that would have been the idea behind us taking a library over and working with volunteers which is what we've done.

What are the hopes for the future?
It is a growing project and it has to be a legacy for the future, with increasing input from local residents for what they want.

What are the potentials New Cross has in order to increase the collectivization of resources like knowledge, housing, food, health care and so on?
The mix of cultures and ethnicity is something so great about New Cross… I think what will happen in the future is that for all those things mentioned we will need to be a collective rather than being individual. I think it's going to lead to people bonding with each other out of necessity because they have to have certain needs met and if those needs aren't met they have to turn to somebody else for them and maybe in that, I see New Cross as leading the way, because of what a vibrant community we have here.

ASSEMBLY

"From our direct experience, we sit at the juncture between common resource for collective use over privatization and enclosure of land and resources. Our activities strive to increase collective access to resources, whilst at the same time operating from within privatised and enclosed land."

What are the aims of the project you are involved in?
Assembly's main aims are to form relationships with local people and the creative community and to harbour these collaborations to utilise the Old Tidemill School as a kind of physical creative commons. We understand the intrinsic value of a space that has unspecified use, one that can morph, change and evolve. We would ultimately like to retain the space in this way, to avert the commercial privatisation of this place. The garden on the land is invaluable as a green space in an otherwise dense and deprived urban area. The garden, playground and the school itself has the opportunity to become a test bed for social action, positive change and community ownership.

What do you feel you have achieved, and what are the problems you face?
Our achivements could be summarised like this: successfully securing funding for a number of projects from a number of government schemes; local engagement, forming relation-ships with the local community, organisations and groups; positive change, improved perceptions both of ourselves from the outside community and from ourselves to the local area; education, skill sharing within the local area, promot-ing social action and empowerment through positive change; motivation as a voluntary organisation, being able to balance paid work and voluntary work to still reach a level of autono-my and longevity.

Our problems could be summarised like this: ownership (our own situation and being able to give ownership to the wider community); communication, wider perceptions, lack of support and strength through partners; conflict in time, living and working in same space, actually making a living from the project.

Are there any past projects/models which have inspired you?
There are various projects and models that have inspired us, such as the projects of Department 21 (*department21. net/?page_id=1919*), Open Sailing (*sites.google.com/a/open-sailing.net/www/contribute/syntax*), The Invisible Committee. Our work has broadened, covering many models/methods: permaculture, arts collectives such as Griezdale Arts, enter- prises such as Arcola Theatre etc.

What is the form of organization of your collective, would you say it is a form of self–organization and how do you deal with formal and informal hierarchies?
We find ourselves most aligned to a model of meritocratic adhocracy. Below is a diagrammatic thought about how this process might manifest itself. This model may change and adapt over time.

Our linear hierarchy allows us to all work from the same level, with equal responsibilities and inputs naturally across time. As projects pop–up and certain skills are needed for those projects, or if we collaborate with certain other groups, that person/group will lead their project and we will act as a support platform and network holding them up, should they need it and for the duration they need. This way of organis- ing is completely adaptable on a project by project, day by day basis.

Another important question is that of economical sus- tainability: how do you support the work financially and what impact does this have on your project?
We support our project through publicly available and com- munity organization grants. We have had continued support from charities, and picked up on local resources available. However up to this point the funding received has only been able to be used for materials, project development, etc. and

adhocracy equal /
structureless hierarchy

adhocracy developed.
free form support struc-
tures used to solve prob-
lems develop projects.

hasn't been able to be used on payment for the persons organizing or running these activities. The majority of our work with the school space still remains volunteer based. We are looking into social enterprise models that could be taken on once certain funding has been attained. For example a social sports club that has been funded and equipment/resources have been purchased with the funding, can we now charge a small fee for use of the club to see its continued opening and even possibly pay someone to work at the club during its opening hours?

What is your relation with the local government and with market conditions like competition and exploitation?
As our relationship to the space we inhabit is predominantly in the form of 'tenants' it would make sense to talk about our relationship with local government in these terms. Our formal title in this landlord/tenant relationship is that of 'guardians'. A word with connotations relating to custodians, stewards of the land. These are misconstrued titles for what is actually quite a precarious living choice. Our rights are less than that of a normal rental agreement between tenant and landlord. There are no deposit protection schemes to speak of or nationally recognised safeguards in place to protect the position of said tenant. As it is stipulated in the contract: "The Licensee and 'the company' agree that this agreement does not give exclusive possession to the guardian, nor does it create the relationship of landlord and tenant between him and 'the company'. The guardian shall not be entitled to an assured tenancy or statutory periodic tenancy under the provisions of the Housing Act 1988 or any other statutory security of tenure at any time."

We effectively deal with 'middle men', a property guardianship company who are given buildings from local councils to ensure protection and maintenance through occupation. The collective we now call 'Assembly', formed out of

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this group of guardians. So although we operate from the space with an intention of commoning the site and want to open up a platform for creative exchanges to take place, we work beneath a tangle of hierarchical controls that we will probably never be able to infiltrate. We use a term from the philosopher Brian Holmes, 'the power of small agencies', to describe the capabilities of small grassroots movements with regards to wider state ownership and control. His frequent collaborator and wife Claire Pentecost, elaborates on this concept, describing a 'radical intimacy' in terms of the evolution of simple cells structure. Some theorists suggest, a cell nuclei was first formed by one simple cell ingesting another. This did not destroy the cell, but instead became host to its new inhabitant. The nuclei then became a force from within, creating a mindshift in the cell, altering its perceptions and choices. This, we believe, is the position we take within this hierarchy and on a macroscale, of grassroots movements in relation to the state.

According to your experience, what are the potentials of Deptford/New Cross area in order to increase the collectivization of resources like knowledge, housing, food, health care and so on?
From our direct experience, we sit at the juncture between common resource for collective use over privatization and enclosure of land and resources. Our activities strive to increase collective access to resources, whilst at the same time operating from within privatised and enclosed land. Our aspirations to live and work collectively are diametrically opposed to the evolving system of the enclosure of vacant and underused property. Sanford co–op, Londons oldest co–op housing is sited close by, its situation is very different from ours. Sanford had the teachings and guidance of John Hands, author of 'Housing Co–operatives' and founder of the housing co–operative movement. We have the precariousness of guardianship living, with the glimmer of hope that

being resourceful enough to form a Community Interest Company or other social enterprise may elevate us to the point of having the ability to seize privatised land through 'community asset transfers' and social investment. They are very different sets of tools to operate with a multitude of challenges to deal with in comparison to the 'traditional' squatting to gain ownership model.

As opposed to housing co–ops of the past, social enterprise's, community interest companies and the concept of the civic society are perhaps an evolution and formalisation of the tools of the past. Perhaps better equipped, and necessarily so, to face legislative changes and laws that actively encourage enclosure of the commons. The physical resources we have to offer include a school building, a concrete playground and a landscaped green space. The potential of these material resources are greatly increased when knowledge, innovation and creativity are shared through cooperation and collaboration. The same goes for any space in a state of change or in limbo, it takes the power of 'small agencies' to alter their path towards a true commons.

And finally we would like to ask you: what are your hopes for the future?
Our pinnacle would be to take tenure of the school and land and retain the space for the wider community in the long term. Failing this, we believe we can at least save the garden as vital green space and common resource for the whole community. As Alan Kay said: "The best way to predict the future, is to invent it."

POETRY GROUP

"We organise on the horizontal – there are no leaders. We share our scribbled pamphlets and books, the sounds of words and our voices. The group started with three who put up posters about New Cross and hoped people would come. And they did and do. Some occasionally, some the once, and a body of us meet weekly in intimate conference. We developed in an organic way – sans a pre-plan other than, let us do poetry! Yerr."

Financially, we are independent from any State and Market system. And are glad. We share what we have with each other – our books, our poetry, our knowledge, our care for each other. We investigate different art movements – take our love of Dada and write our own – Che,che cheioo Woo Wawoo CHO chiiyiime me me me yimes.'

We meet at the New Cross People's Library (now called New Cross Learning, but we hate that). The library was not permitted by the council to be called a library! After they shut it down in the first instance against people's wishes. We are in a precarious position and at the mercy of Lewisham council who may pull the rug out from under us at any time. But the library has become a major resource for local people where we meet and hold events. The council might not dare! But if they did they would have one a hell of a fight. And I feel certain we'd win.

There is a great strength of community in New Cross and we feel very part of it. The New Cross Commoners have also sometimes met at the library, and two of our poetry group are members and all of us share an interest in local as well as wider politics and would like to reclaim spaces for the people. People over profit etc. Sainsbury's carpark is a massive space unused for instance. And Goldsmiths is not using all the buildings it owns. Land to grow food and a space to share food would be desirable. Self sufficiency beyond the market. Free books free knowledge free beer.

The poetry group has been a terrific success. We all share an interest in literature, of course, and bring in our different books to read, so that we are constantly learning and being inspired. But it has gone way beyond just that. We are like a little family or something – there is a real caring for each other. People have their various problems and these are shared along with the books. We have had some wonderful

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poets bring in their work to read for us from all over London. They love New Cross when they come! We hope to make our own publications soon, and that could inspire some art beyond the words. It would be good to learn some cheap methods of knocking up books/booklets – homemades that we don't need any kind of publisher for other than ourselves.

CAHOOTS

"The amount we each pay is below average market rates for the area, and will stay the same, even as market rates rise. As our loans are paid off in the future, our rents will go down (to almost nothing, eventually), making this a sustainable long term alternative to the profit driven housing market where house prices and rents are increasingly unaffordable and those on low incomes are forced far from the centre of the city, from workplaces, family and community, or into unsafe, precarious or overcrowded housing."

How is this project organised?

We are a housing co–operative. In 2011 the landlord of our 14 bedroom house in New Cross decided he wanted to sell. The tenants living in the house at the time offered to buy it from him, collectively, to start a new housing co–operative; that is, a home for many, with no landlord, owned and run collectively by the people who live in it. Our aims are to pro-vide safe, secure and affordable housing for queer and trans people and allies with specific recognition of queer/trans people of colour and queer/trans people with disabilities, and to work toward an anti–oppressive ethos in our home.

At the moment we are in–between two legal statuses — not quite a house of multiple occupancy and almost a housing co–operative. In a true housing co–operative no individual owns the house, no individual makes decisions about the house, and no individual profits from it. We have not yet bought the house, so we do still have a landlord, but we try to organise ourselves as if we do not. We make our deci-sions collectively, by consensus, which takes longer, but means that no–one is ever forced to live with a decision they disagree with. We share the workload of running the house amongst ourselves as equally as possible.

How do you support the work financially and what impact does this have on your project?

To buy our house we are taking out a mortgage for the majority of the cost, and raising the rest in 'loan stock'. Loan stock is investment into the house, from individuals or organ-isations, over a fixed amount of time and at an interest rate determined by the investor (up to 4%). It allows us to borrow money at a better rate than we would be able to from a bank, and is a very safe, ethical and financially worthwhile invest-ment opportunity for people looking to invest their money. In order to repay these loans, each member pays their monthly rent. The amount we each pay is below average

market rates for the area, and will stay the same, even as market rates rise. As our loans are paid off in the future, our rents will go down (to almost nothing, eventually), making this a sustainable long term alternative to the profit driven housing market where house prices and rents are increasingly unaffordable and those on low incomes are forced far from the centre of the city, from workplaces, family and community, or into unsafe, precarious or overcrowded housing. Our hope is for the project to create a safe, sustainable and affordable living situation that is immune to the effects of the market, with the aim of reducing living costs considerably for those who are part of the co–op now and in the future.

How is the organisation you are part of dealing with the control of the State / Council and with the competition and exploitation exerted by the market?
Co–operative housing exists outside the rental and property market; if the value of our house in 10 years time is double what it is now, our rents will not be affected and the house cannot be sold for–profit – even if all 14 members voted to sell, once debts have been repaid any surplus has to go to another co–operative, though once housing is co–operatively owned, it tends to remain so.

Our home is truly a 'commons', neither privately/individually owned, nor publically/state owned, but owned and organised by those who use it. It has taken a long time and a lot of work to get to the point we are at now, both practically (legal, financial), and in terms of working as a group to find a system for communicating and making decisions that works for us in this situation.

What are the hopes for the future?
The next big aim is to complete the sale of the house, which will happen as soon as possible, definitely within the next year. The change in legal status once we own the house will

bring some changes to our collective workload and how we are structured, so we need to negotiate that transition period. After the house is ours we have loads of plans, like building an accessible meeting house/resource centre at the end of our garden! Ultimately, we would like to see co–operative housing proliferate in New Cross, and want to use everything we have learnt during the process of setting up this co–operative to get more and more housing out of private, and into common ownership.

PLACES OF COMMON—ING

IN NEW CROSS

Rustling plants, the sound of a train somewhere nearby, walking down a narrow path, working our way through grass and flowers that come almost to the height of our shoulders, intense shades of green everywhere. Stepping through the gate of the **New Cross Cutting** *nature reserve means travelling miles away from London within two minutes time. Open only once a month, this little space along the railway tracks fuels our desire for more wild, green space in the city. Not well-managed lawns but carefully supported wilderness.*

Black history month, language exchange, poetry club, Save Lewisham Hospital, Party in the Park, mystery walks, make some noise to save our NHS, entrance: the most lively window front on New Cross Road. Closed due to the cuts in May 2011, since July 2011 **New Cross Learning** *is run by local activists of all ages. Making space for a wide range of probable and improbable activities, this library-of-sorts spurs our desire for more self-organised spaces from which social transformation can take place.*

Thatcher, Reagan and Heseltine: racing with evil smiles around the world on nuclear bombs. The giant blue mural tells us that this row of houses must have hosted rebellious ideas for a long time. In fact, since 1973, the inhabitants of the **Sanford Housing Co-op** *have built a support structure for lives that don't want to conform to individualised, high-pressure lifestyles. Here decisions about housing are taken together by 120 inhabitants,*

rents are kept low, while the houses and their surroundings are continually improved in terms of environmental soundness. Furthermore, conventions about compartmentalised living are partly broken down, for instance by keeping the back-gardens as one enormous piece of green in which to socialise, rather than opting for neatly compartmentalised prison-style backyards. This place lets us desire to also use our resources in ways that create enabling residues, that allow us to build structures which also people coming after can draw on when wanting to live lives that are not dictated by the need for ever more money.

*From New Cross Gate to the Thames, this is the area of London where intense class struggles and intercultural encounters have a long history in the city. The shipyards that once were to be found around Deptford Creek were places of violence and exploitation, but also places of resistance, transgression and hope. They were the places where workers built up their own micro-economies around the waste produced by the shipbuilding industry: by appropriating (as well as strategically producing) wood-chips of all sizes that could be used for everything from building shelters to cooking, they sustained themselves beyond the meagre wages they were paid. But the shipyards were also the places where slaves would flee their ships, touch British ground, be free and contribute to the lives in the area. Being reminded of this **radical local history** of the area we live in, fuels our desire to contribute to it and to continue its line into the future.*

NEW CROSS COMMONS

This map came out of a mapping workshop at 'Party in the Park', a festival organised by local groups in New Cross this summer. The workshop was a chance for us to think and discuss with others who live in the area, about the common resources that we have in New Cross, as well as those we lack. The ideas that came out of those discussions have been brought together in this map; the images in the centre/in colour show "what we have", common resources, self-organised collectives, activities and places where sharing and collectivisation take place; the images in grey show enclosure, places of state or private control and ownership; the images and writing around the edge show suggestions of "what we are missing", resources that might be reclaimed for common use and ideas for ways to negate the influence of the market, privatisation, gentrification.

free tool Shed / Workshop

Free Community Space With Kitchen Toys Books Sharp Brewing

clean public compost toilets

"Schenkladen" (free shop)

Access to Goldsmiths library for local people

FREE EDUCATION!

Sanford Housing CO-OP

fordham Park

Assembly

NEW CROSS CREDIT UNION

170 community project

GROW WILD

Eat a Rainbow

C'MON COMMONERS

New X Learning LEARNING

GOLDSMITHS

Art House

No. 178

178 Cafe

Sainsbury's

Cahoots

Resource Youth Centre

Allotment

Common Growth

New X Cutting

Telegraph Hill

New Cross Gate Family Farm

Fun Fairs

Bridge over the road

OPEN herb garden!

COMMUNITY CHICKEN BACKYARD

COMMUNAL SOUND / VISUAL THEME PARK INSTEAD OF SAINSBURY'S CAR PARK

Affordable, good housing for everyone.

Swimming pool please!

Make Laurie Grove Baths Public Again!

A free CINEMA!

There is also an online map of the New Cross commons, to which anyone may add, available at http://newcross.rhizomaticdesign.net/.

This map was produced with the information gathered during a mapping workshop at Party in the Park, a festival organized by local groups and associations in New Cross in September 2013. Together with the local community we were thinking about:

What we have in New Cross
resources to share, self-organized collectives

What we are missing in New Cross
resources to reclaim and to be organized collectively
A massive communal sound - visual trip theme park instead of Sainsbury's park // A swimming pool where Laurie Grove Bath is now, the building is owned by Goldsmiths but it used to be a public bath and it should become public again. // A bath house – skip pool – saunas – hot tub – recycled wood // A 24 hour craft – art – workshop space // Run New Cross as a collective commune // A New Cross family farm // A community chicken backyard to get eggs // Clean public compost toilets // A bridge over the main road with a garden on the top // Tobacco growing // Schenkladen – free shop // Protection on rent – rent cap – good housing for everyone // Free education // A place for cultural encounters and exchanges // A free community space with kitchen, toys, books, sofas and a brewing set // Cheap good beer // Cooperative cafes // A free cinema // Fun fairs // Bauwagens // A community tool shared workshop // Access to Goldsmiths library for local people // Commitment based work sharing // Open herb garden allotment useful plants for medicine culinary - Container growing – Recycling, make it yourself ...

newcross.rhizomaticdesign.net
We have also made a digital map of commoning in New Cross, using the material gathered in the mapping workshop. Everyone can add new material to the map to indicate resources to be shared, resources to be reclaimed and self-organized activities in New Cross.

SELF—ORGAN—ISED LEARNING

X

ACADEMIC LEARNING

The way knowledge is constructed and valorised today is largely defined by institutions where learning is organized hierarchically and according to the rules of the market. The New Cross Commoners was partly formed in response to of a frustration with academic knowledge production, often self-referential and detached from the life and issues of people living in London and New Cross. Many of us had or are having experience of learning in academia: with this mind-map we attempt to trace some of the differences between learning in academic institutions and a self-organized learning not only from texts but also from the life of a neighborhood.

SELF—ORGANISED LEARNING

ACADEMIC LEARNING

BODY&MIND

Δ using common sense

Δ intuition and emotions are important parts of the learning

Δ right brain

Δ muscle memory

Δ engaging the body and the mind

Δ reason

Δ body is poorly engaged in the process of learning

Δ left brain

SYSTEM

Δ there is no final exam

Δ there is no judgement over how well you do

Δ there is (generally) less bureaucracy involved

Δ equality

Δ there are no established hierarchies: everyone is always a learner and a teacher

Δ non containment

Δ free association

Δ neoliberal management fucking up the teachers

Δ competition: who is the most clever of the kingdom?

Δ privatization of knowledge and learning

Δ heavy bureaucracy and control

Δ restriction

Δ hierarchy of value

Δ hierarchies masked by informality

Δ judged/graded

Δ examination

Δ containment

Δ enclosure of knowledge

Δ qualification through fees

CONTENT

Δ learning to take care of each other

Δ reading and discussing without having to perform in a certain way, without having to compete with others

Δ learning whilst playing

Δ learning about life skills

Δ you need to improvise much more, which makes the whole thing more exciting

Δ learning through experience

Δ situated knowledes

Δ you have a rather immediate feedback on whether what you learn makes any sense when applied to a specific context

Δ a greater diversity of knowledges can be valorised

Δ learning embedded in living becomes knowledge

Δ what you learn is not an abstraction but it is always concrete and messy - just the way life is

Δ the power of academic rhetoric: eloquence means power, even if you don't have anything to say

Δ writing

Δ a gap between our everyday-lives and learning programs

Δ learning whist picketing

Δ quick gathering of information

Δ fake politics: blablabla ...

Δ directed/channeled

Δ learning by occupying the university

Δ constriction

SPACE

Δ you can very often work with interesting spaces that allow for the shaping of unusual learning experiences

Δ you can learn while walking, being in the rain, sitting in the sun, which makes not only our minds but also our bodies happy

Δ reading and discussing not for its own sake but in relation to the life of the neighbourhood and to our experiences

Δ learning whilst meeting people and exploring places

Δ there is maybe less "safe" place for playing with short-term ideas as you always enter into relation with people and raise expectations

Δ learning can happen everywhere

Δ learning in and from the street

Δ learning in corridors and courtyards rather than in class

Δ academia

Δ 'political' institution

Δ classroom is an uninspiring laboratory

Δ building

PEOPLE

Δ learning from people very different from ourselves

Δ what you do might have nega-tive repercu-ssions that you did not intend to produce

Δ learning from people engaged in local struggles

Δ learning at demos and activist meeting

Δ the group of learners is less homogeneous

Δ you can't withdraw so easily just because you are fed up with it or exhausted

Δ learning from friends rather than from teachers

Δ learning in the context of a local community

Δ it is less easy to stay at a distance from what you learn

Δ it is easier to become friends with fellow learners

Δ learning from people who resist inside of academia

Δ organizing as students

Δ learning solidarity across stu-dents and staff-teachers, admin, cleaners...

Δ students as customers

TIME

Δ free time

Δ time of learning is flexible

GOAL

Δ learning towards a career that does exist only for a few privileged

Δ careerism

Δ directed towards outcome

NEW X COMMONS *GLOSSARY*

This glossary includes some of the recurring terms we have used in our collective inhabitation of New Cross. Each term has different entries, responding to different understandings, sensibilities and specifications, in some cases contrasting ones. This glossary does not seek the fixation of meaning in the vocabulary we use, but rather begins to articulate our wishes and desires concerning what a word can come to mean, how a word can come to be used, how a word can affect our practice.

Circulation of the Commons	*I) Keeping in motion what we share openly.* *II) The need for different experiences of commoning to relate and sustain each other, also beyond local contexts.* *III) Commons are all about the connections. When they begin to close off they easily become isolated, sterile and exhaust the people involved.*
Commoning	*I) The activities through which a common is constituted and maintained, through which a resource, material and/or immaterial, comes to be used and organized collectively. These activities imply conflicts, negotiations and care. The conflicts are both antagonistic towards the market and privatization and towards the control of the State. On a different level conflicts and care take place amongst the different people using the resource.* *II) Sharing a certain knowledge, thing or skill with people openly and with pleasure: Suzy thinks that commoning is not a concept but an embodied activity that needs time, space and care.* *III) Any act through which you remove yourself (mentally, financially, socially) from the grips of State control and Market control.*
De-proletarianisation	*I) Process that allows us to free ourselves from the slavery of the wage labour by learning how to do things together for ourselves, how to live together collectively, how to self-organise our lives.* *II) It is about gaining the knowledges and skills for going about our lives without constantly needing to rely on the market. In this sense, it is about taking back knowledges that we have exteriorised, but also about finding out what new knowledges and skills we need for our contemporary lives.*

Desire

I) A force that transforms how things are. For example, a desire for transversality brings together different kinds of people without erasing their differences, constituting non-homogeneous communities.

Enclosure

I) Originally a term used to signify the process of land enclosure that preceded the industrial revolution.
II) Enclosures are not just land enclosures, they are privatizations of all kinds of resources. For example Goldsmiths is enclosing knowledge by making students pay (very expensive) fees.
III) We can talk about enclosures also in relation to subjectivity, when what constitutes ourselves (skills, inclinations, desires) gets privatized, that is, exploited and sold for the profit of the market, instead of being put in common. We can speak of the enclosed subjectivities of capitalism.
IV) Public spaces without benches are a form of urban enclosure.

Engagement

I) Being an active part of the story.
II) Political engagement refers to taking part in processes of social and political transformation, no matter the scale of this engagement.
III) To be involved in activities and to allow yourself to be changed by them.

Mapping

I) The fact that any map as a representation of space is open to reconfiguration, intervention, contestation.
II) Through a collective mapping you can analyze and make visible power structures and dynamics taking place in a specific territory, but also, starting from the discussions the mapping involves and the material manipulation it triggers, you can create possibilities to transform a territory.

Resources

I) *They can be material (e.g. water) or immaterial (e.g. knowledge); they are what allows us to reproduce our livelihood.*
II) *Resources are vital for our lives. It is good to experience that many immaterial, but also material resources, can be shared without actually making our lives worse (as we are constantly made to fear).*

Rurban

I) *It is a concept of injecting the rural logic of living into the urban environment in order to support the exchange of local knowledge, resources and aesthetics.*
II) *To conceive and practice the rural not as opposed or external to the urban.*
III) *It is about acknowledging that much of the rural lifestyles are today becoming ever more similar to those in urban settinings.*
IV) *A conceptual tools to struggle against the commodification of life by reclaiming rural modes of doing and being against capitalist ways of life.*

Sharing

I) *An activity that makes you happy if it encounters some kind of reciprocity.*
II) *The act of exchanging resources without necessarily expecting anything in return.*
III) *A collective way of relating to objects and ideas that seeks to remove itself from the logics of appropriation, theft, colonisation, profit making.*

Sustainability

I) *Social, economical, ecological, affective factors that have an impact in the continuation of any collective process.*
II) *When you embark on a collective project like the New Cross Commoners sustainability means to make sure to function according to the energies available without burning out.*

WORK—
SHOPS:
  — *POWER
SHUFFLE!*
  — *HAVING/
NOT
HAVING*

We borrowed these workshops from Jane Quin, a commoner from South Africa we met at a *Free Education Network gathering* which gave us a lot of enthusiasm and encouragement to set up the New Cross Commoners.

— The *POWER SHUFFLE* exercise was found as free source material on the web by a colleague of Jane in South Africa with whom Jane taught on various *Social Justice Education* courses for teachers. The version Jane used in London was mostly a new set of questions adapted to purpose and context. This version was adapted for a New Cross Commoners session that took place at the New Cross Cutting.

— The *HAVING AND NOT HAVING* activity was developed by Jane for a course called *Social Identities and Oppression in Education and Development.* Jane was looking for a way to facilitate reflection to develop awareness around the co-incidence between personal motivation and experience with political positioning. This second activity was also re-adapted for the commoners to think of collectivization of resources in New Cross. We publish this material here so that you could make use of it and re-adapt it in turn.

POWER AND RESOURCES SHUFFLE *QUESTIONS*

HAVING AND NOT HAVING *(NEEDS AND DESIRES)*

If power and inequality are maintained through the access to resources ... what is power and what is privilege in our lives? Where does it come from? How is it maintained? ... and challenged? by whom?

Power Shuffle is an activity to help consider these questions

Process Instructions
Step backwards (**1<**) or forwards (**1>**), according to the instruction

Take note of how you feel as you respond, as well as noting the movement of others

It just helps us to reflect on what actual/potential power we do/don't have … to … within … with ...

Power shuffle list of STEPS
Take **1>** if you are fluent in English; if English is your home language

Take **2>** if you are a British citizen

Take **1>** if you are an EU citizen

Take **1<** if you do not have permanent residence rights in UK/EU

Take **1>** if you have a full-time job

Take **1/2>** if you have a part-time job

Take **1<** if you do not have a part-time or full-time job

Take **1>** if your parents (can) help you with money; if you have a place 'to go back to' if everything fails

Take **2>** if you would be able to provide for you basic needs if you lost your job (ok but for how long?)

Take **1S<** if you are a primary supporter of one or more dependants

Take **1>** if you own your own home; have your own car; are White; are Male; are under 65; are over 30; have a stable support network in London

Take **1/2>** if you have a stable support network somewhere else

Take **1>** if you have friends of different ages

Take **1>** if you have a large kitchen; if you have a large garden; if you have an extra bed or sofa to host people at your place

Take **1>** if you have positive experiences of collective action; if you have access to like-minded communities of praxis; if you believe in the possibility of social transformation; if you believe in effect from your own critical agency

Take **1>** if you are good at growing vegetables; repairing toasters, sinks, computers, bikes and so on; building huts (in the wood); telling stories – with words or images; playing an instrument; cooking; healing people in some way; listening; cycling; sawing and mending.

Think what it is like to have...and not to have.

Process Instructions
Think of something that you have/have a lot of ... that makes your life better/more comfortable/safer/easier ... that only some others generally also have – it can be something material or immaterial, a resource or a skill.

Take a few minutes to DRAW it! it doesn't have to be a representational drawing, it can be just a symbol, something visual and concrete.

Δ   How do others see you because you have it?
Δ   How do you see yourself because you have it?
Δ   How does it make you feel to have it? ... slightly superior? Slightly guilty?
Δ   How does having it advantage you in other ways/areas of your life?
Δ   How do you feel about sharing it?

Now try the opposite ...
Think of something you don't have and would like to have – something like a skill or resource that other people could share with you

Δ   How do you see yourself because you don't have it?
Δ   How does it make you feel not to have it? ... slightly less? Angry? Ashamed? Disadvantaged? ... freer?
Δ   Do you feel like it's okay for you to have less than someone else, that you sort of expect to and/or deserve to?
Δ   How does not having it disadvantage you in other ways/areas of your life?
Δ   How would you feel about getting an equal/more than equal share? What would you do/give up to get it?
Δ   How would you feel about somebody giving it to you? With or without strings attached? How would you be towards them?
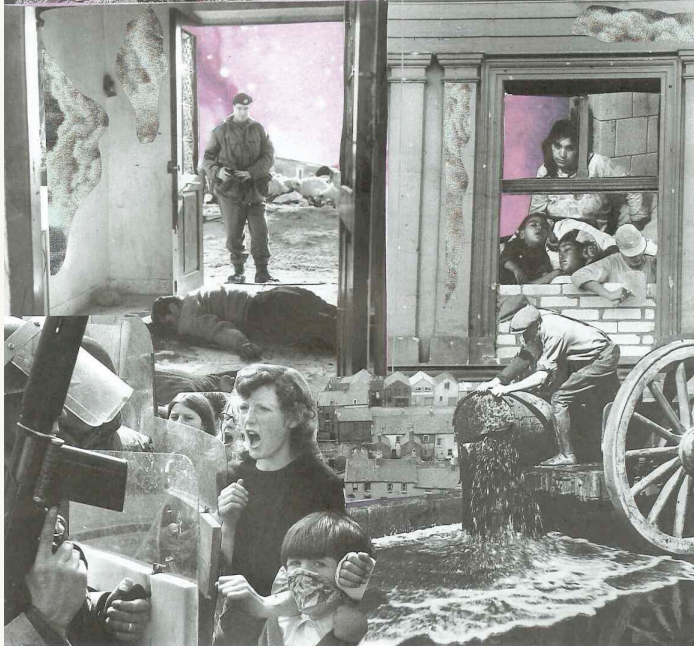
Discussion
What do we do with our needs and desires?
Have a round to introduce the drawings done - what we have and what we don't.
Group or match different people's needs and desires whilst they present their drawings.
Questions? What comes out of this? Ideas for future activities?
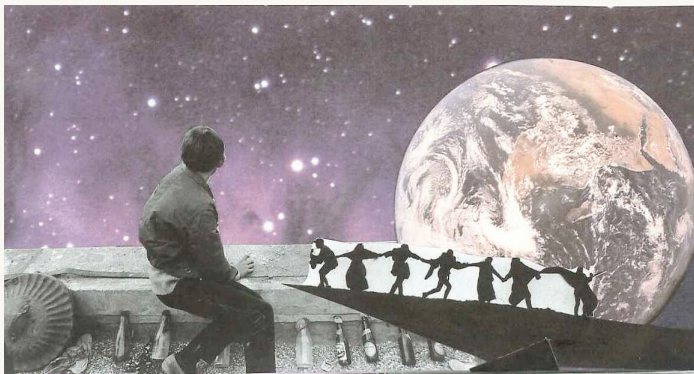
INTELLIGENT LIFE 2

Is your intellect subsidised and who are the
consequences
who are uncritical   who are disastrous
consequences of a system

I don't think I can be sustained   I am   sur
plus   are you   sur   plus
are you sus   ten   ance

I don't know what you are talking about   there
no such thing as a
Fire station

Hos   pi   tal   is that were there are
gathering

Hand me a sharp critique   no make that a hammer
Are you lying to our fa   ces   is your very big
house sub   si   dised

Is my little room surplus   I had some things in
there and people stayed
I have since lost all of the things   and the
people were   sur   plus

C'MON COMMONERS!

JOIN US TO EXPLORE COMMONS AND COMMONING IN NEW CROSS

_____

New Cross Commoners is an open group of people learning from the neighbourhood and from each other ways of collectivising skills and resources. How do we sustain our lives together in these difficult times? How can we live, eat, care and learn together against the privatization of the market and the hierarchies of the State? How can we do so across the individual, the family, class and race, and in such a way as to respect and enjoy our diversities? Join us and we'll find this out together!

_____

NEWXCOMMONERS.WORDPRESS.COM

See the following pages for:

- a timeline of the public presentations made about this research, which are not mentioned in other places of this document

3 March – workshop: "Collective Futures" with Bethany Wells at Graduate School Symposium, Goldsmiths College

| JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUN | JUL | AUG | SEP | OCT | NOV | DEC |

2011

28 January – presentation and workshop at the
Occupy Design week-end, London

27 February – presentation at "In the Fold,"
Camberwell College of Art, London

14 March – presentation at "Red Tape Discussion,"
Royal College of Art, London

21 March – presentation at postgraduate open event,
Goldsmiths College, London

26 June – presentation at "Graphic Design Exhibiting and Curating,"
Faculty of Design and Art, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano

| JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUN | JUL | AUG | SEP | OCT | NOV | DEC |

2012

24 February – presentation at "Friday
Sessions," at public works, London

15 June-30 September – research exhibited at the
exhibition "Panorama 4," Franzensfeste-Fortezza (IT)

26 January – presentation at "Thursday Club,"
interdisciplinary PhD seminars at Goldsmiths College

13 June – presentation at "Designing Alternatives"
symposium, University of Edinburgh

27 February – presentation at Leeds
Metropolitan University

26 March – presentation at the conference "How does design
function in a recession," V&A Design Culture Salon, London

26 April – presentation at "Design der Zukunft II" symposium,
Faculty of Media Design, Duale Hochschule Ravensburg (DE)

5 August – hand-in of chapter for the book "Learning to/
from/by Design," eds. Giorgio Camuffo, Maddalena Dalla
Mura and Alivse Mattozzi, Bozen-Bolzano University Press

20 August – hand-in of chapter for the book
"Design der Zukunft," eds. Cornelia and
Holger Lund, AV Verlag

| JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUN | JUL | AUG | SEP | OCT | NOV | DEC |

2013

18 October – presentation at "OCADU/Goldsmiths - Lightning Talks
Virtual Graduate Symposium," Goldsmiths College, London

21 October – workshop at the Graphic Design Department,
University of the West of England, Bristol

21 November – "Uncertain Outcomes and Production Strategies in
the Collaborative Process" symposium, Camberwell Space, London

See the following pages for:

- a selection of the learning activities that were important for me in constructing the trajectory of this research and making sense of the issues worked through

Courses attended

<u>2012</u>

- *Agriculture & Resistance* (taught by Vivien Sansour), Campus in Camps, Al Quds University/Bard College, PS

- *Mapping Capitalism* (taught by Alberto Toscano), MA in Sociology, Goldsmiths College

<u>2011</u>

- *Practices of the Culture Industry* (taught by Matthew Fuller), MA in Culture Industry, Goldsmiths College

Seminar series attended

<u>2012-2013</u>

- *Foucault and the critique of our present: reworking the Foucauldian tool-box* (seminar series organised by PhD students of the Department of Politics, Goldsmiths College)

- *Austerity futures? Imagining and materialising the future in an "age of austerity"* (ESRC funded seminar series organised by a group of academics based at Lancaster, York, Durham and Goldsmiths College)

Online courses followed

<u>2011-2012</u>

- *Commonwear – Da Marx all'operaismo*, Uninomade (http://uninomade.org/marx-operaismo/)

- *Reading Marx's Capital Volume I with David Harvey* (http://davidharvey.org/reading-capital/)

- *Reading Marx's Capital Volume II with David Harvey* (http://davidharvey.org/reading-capital/)

Reading groups

<u>2013</u>

- *Intersectionality Reading Group*, initiated by Sara Farris, Department of Sociology, Goldsmiths College

Research groups

<u>2013</u>

- *Feminist postgraduate research forum*, initiated by Sara Ahmed, Centre for Feminist Research, Goldsmiths College

Conferences attended

<u>2013</u>

- 30-31 January: *Migrations and militant research: borders, migrants' practices and the critique of the migratory regime*, Department of Politics, Goldsmiths College

<u>2012</u>

- 08-11 November: *9th Historical Materialism Conference: weights like a nightmare*, SOAS, London, UK
- 8 June: *Situationist Aesthetics*, Falmer University, UK
- 11 May: *Feminist Genealogies*, Departments of Media and Communications and Sociology, Goldsmiths College
- 9-10 February: *Designing and Transforming Capitalism*, Aarhus University, DK

<u>2011</u>

- 10-13 November: *8th Historical Materialism Conference: Spaces of Capital, Moments of Struggle*, SOAS, London, UK
- 01-02 October: *Toblacher Gespräche: Wohlstand ohne Wachstum* (*Wealth without growth*), Akademie der Toblacher Gespräche, IT
- 14 May: *Just do(ing) it: artist-led and self-organised cultural activity as resistance to Capitalism*, RadicalAesthetics-RadicalArt, Sheffield, UK
- 16 March: *The ethics of graphic design?*, University College London, UK
- 19 March: *Radical publishing: What are we struggling for?*, ICA, London, UK
- 12 March: *Academia and Activism*, SOAS Graduate Student Conference, London, UK

Talks attended

<u>2013</u>

- 11 November: *Managing race: from the wages of whiteness to the production of difference* by David Roediger and Elizabeth Esch, Department of Sociology, Annual Lecture, Goldsmiths College

- 4 October: *The challenge of precarious work in Europe* by Sonia McKay, London Metropolitan University, London, UK

- 17 October: *Values Beyond Value? Is Anything Beyond the Logic of Capital?* by Beverley Skeggs – London School of Economics, London, UK

- 10 October: *A Case for Feminist Futurism (with reference to doing smart media smarter)* by Sarah Kember – Centre for Feminist Research, Goldsmiths College

- 4 October: *Homo Laborans?: The "French Utopian Socialists" View of "Work"* by Diane Morgan, Senate House, London, UK

- 12 June: *Wick Session #12 – Informal & In-Situ* with Thorsten Deckler, Eric Charles Wright, Alex Warnock-Smith, White Building, London, UK

- 11 June: *Perspectives on Architecture: 'Building Co-operation: 1844-2012' and 'Caring through new common objects'* with Stephen McCusker and Kim Trogal, RIBA, London, UK

- 30 May: *Factories of Knowledge, Industries of Creativity* by Gerald Raunig, Goldsmiths College

- 20 May: *Critical theory in a post-human era* by Rosi Braidotti, Goldsmiths College

- 29 January: *Is making stuff back on the agenda?*, Design Culture Salon, V&A, London, UK

- 30 January: *The making of a debt resistors' movement: From Occupy Wall Street to Strike Debt* by George Caffentzis, Goldsmiths College

<u>2012</u>

- 4 December: *Bottom Up Spaces: Collaborative Networks and the Politics of Co-Working Berlin*, Urban micro-economies series, Goldsmiths College

- 13 November: *Continuing the feminist critique of Marx: primitive accumulation, technology and the war on women* by Silvia Federici, Centre for Possible Studies, London, UK

- 12 November: *From Commoning to Debt: micro-credit, student debt and the disinvestment in reproduction* by Silvia Federici, Goldsmiths College

- 27 October: *Anarchist economics with David Graeber, Iain McKay and Michael Albert*, Anarchist Bookfair, Queen Mary, London, UK
- 31 May: *Maurizio Lazzarato: Indebted Man* - Conversations in Political Economy, Centre for Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths College
- 7 January: *Mark Boyle and Nick Rosen*, Bank of Ideas, London, UK
- 6 January: *A Co-operative Economy: an alternative to capitalism* by Cliff Mills, legal practitioner working in the co-operative, mutual and public sector, Tent City University, OccupyLSX, London, UK
- 6 January: *Narrative For Social Change* by Corinne Squire, Professor of Social Sciences and Co-director, Centre for Narrative Research School of Law and Social Sciences, University of East London, Tent City University, OccupyLSX, London, UK

2011

- 10 December: *P2P and the commons as new paradigm* by Michael Bauwens, P2P foundation – Tent City University, OccupyLSX, London, UK
- 11 November: *2011 Deutscher Memorial Lecture: David Harvey*, Friends House, London, UK
- 6 May: *Self-organising: Self-organization and community*, Queen Mary, University of London, UK
- 13 June: *Scarcity Exchanges: Saskia Sassen on fabricating scarcities*, University of Westminster, London, UK
- 1 June: *Scarcity Exchanges: Iain Boal and Lyla Mehta on Concepts of Scarcity*, University of Westminster, London, UK

Workshops/retreats:

2012

- 1-2 December: *Sustaining Alternative Universities*, Free University Network, Oxford, UK
- 5 June: *Organising as an open source* with Valery Alzaga, Casco, Utrecht, NL

2011

- 12-14 July: *Free Slow University Warsaw Summer Camp*, Kartuzy, PL

Exhibitions visited

2013

- 20 October: *Mierle Laderman Ukeles: Maintenance Art Works 1969–1980*, Arnolfini, Bristol, UK

2012

- 4 November: *The Individual and the Organisation: Artist Placement Group 1966-76*, Ravenrow Gallery, London, UK
- 18 September: *The social insurgents*, Deptford Town Hall, London, UK

2011

- 4 June: *The Grand Domestic Revolution*, Casco, Utrecht, London
- 5 December: *Postmodernism*, V&A, London, UK

Career service sessions

2011

- 25 January: *ICCE Salon with Ben Finn from Sibelius*, Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship, Goldsmiths College
- 16 February: *Find out about freelancing?*, Career Service, Goldsmiths College
- 23 February: *Creative Coops Workshop*, Co-operatives UK, London
- 9 March: *Setting up your own creative business*, Career Service, Goldsmiths College

Museums visited

2011-2013

- *People's History Museum*, Manchester, UK
- *Working Class Movement Library*, Salford, UK
- *Co-operative Archive*, Manchester, UK
- *Armley Mills Industrial Museum*, Leeds, UK
- *Museum of London Docklands*, London, UK
- *Museum of Cooperatives*, Warsaw, PL

'Project spaces' visited

2011-2013

- *The Nonformal University of Teremiski*, Teremiski, PL
- *Warsaw Food Coop*, Warsaw, PL
- *Emma Hostel*, Warsaw, PL
- *Goldex Poldex*, Krakow, PL

- *LOLA, gruppo d'aquisto solidale (CSA)*, Milan, IT

- *Teatro Valle Occupato*, Rome, IT

- *L'entreprise culturelle*, Paris, FR

- *Rosenkratzgade 1*, Aarhus, DK

- *Frauenbibliothek*, Bozen, IT

- *Cube Cinema*, Bristol, UK

- *Islington Mill*, Salford, UK

- *Hotspur House*, Manchester, UK

- *The Common House*, London, UK

- *56a Infoshop*, London, UK

- *What will the harvest be?*, London, UK

- *Prinzessinengarten*, Berlin, DE

- *Tempelhofer Freiheit*, Berlin, DE

- *...*

And of course the anti-cuts protests and Occupy LSX have been important in informing the thoughts and actions of this research.

APPENDIX K

ECONOMY OF THIS RESEARCH

See the following pages for:

- elements that constituted the economy of support for this research

Overview of the main financial resources that supported this research

Design fellowship from the Design Department at Goldsmiths College, London, UK:

- £40,770 living allowance over three years (£13,590 per annum)
- £11,700 tuition fee over three years (£3,900 per annum)

The fellowship stipulated that I work 180 hours yearly for the Design Department. I worked most of these hours teaching on the MA Design & Environment, which then gave me the possibility to attend and graduate from the PgCert in Management of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education free of charge. Moreover, it is important to note that this bursary had been co-funded by the Research Office at Goldsmiths in order to improve the Design Department's PhD completion rate.

Museion Art Prize, Bozen, IT (awarded through the Stiftung Südtiroler Sparkasse):

- €5,000 for residents' fee
- €5,600 for residents' production budget
- €1,400 for residents' travel budget
- €7,000 for hosting institution
- €1,000 for admin costs of awarding institution

A large amount of the production budget was channeled into supporting the socially and politically engaged practitioners we met during our time in Warsaw. This was done through the fees for the research sessions that we ran. Moreover, the money not spent on our research activities was used to produced 1,000 illustrated cotton bags for four collectives we met during our time in Poland. One-hundred of these bags also went to the Cantiere per pratiche non affirmative and the sale of them allowed us to cover a series of travel costs for our members. The travel budget of the residency was shared with our co-residents.

Amt für Deutsche Kultur der Autonomen Provinz Bozen-Südtirol, IT:

- €3,000 towards the residency at Careof DOCVA (*Cantiere per pratiche non-afferamtive*)

This money paid for the seminars by Hervé Baron and other production costs, such as food, (self-)catering for events, posters, B/W toner, etc.

DE.MO./MOVIN'UP 2012, IT:

- €2,100 towards the research in Palestine

This money covered travel, housing, food and local transport.

Campus in Camps/Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Palestine/DE:

- €4,500 fee to share between Fabio and I as project activators

Further financial resources that supported activities within this research

Department of Design, Research and Enterprise Committee, Goldsmiths College, London, UK:

- £500 *Designing Economic Cultures* seminar series
- £360 attendance of the conference *Designing and transforming capitalism* in Aarhus (DK)
- £1,000 New Cross Commoners research group
- £200 towards attending the seminar *The art of struggle* in Palermo (IT)

The money for the seminar series was spent on fees and travel costs of speakers.

The money covering my travel to Denmark was shared with Caterina Giuliani, with whom I co-presented at the conference.

The money for the New Cross Commoners was spent on fees, workshop materials and the printing of 250 copies of a fanzine.

Amt für Deutsche Kultur der Autonomen Provinz Bozen-Südtirol, IT:

- €400 towards travel expenses for the participation in the group exhibition *Panorama 4*

Casco, Utrecht, NL:

- €300 for travel expenses for three people attending a workshop with labour-campaigner Valery Alzaga and a presentation of *Designers' Inquiry*

Connecting Cultures, Milan, IT:

- €600 travel expenses for all the members of the Cantiere and cost of an *A tavola con...* event to present the report of *Designers' Inquiry* at the Triennale in Milan

Leonardo Programme, EU:

- €2,486 for a member of the Cantiere to do a three-month internship with me in London during which, among other things, we designed the report of *Designers' Inquiry*

This internship came into being because this member of the Cantiere could not find anyone to do an internship with, so rather than letting the bursary be wasted, we decided to come to this agreement. This exchange was further made possible by a friend hosting this member in a flat at below market-price rates.

Public presentations:

Most presentations within this research – see appendix I – were supported by the inviting institutions covering travel expenses, overnight stays and a fee paid of about £100 per person.

Selection of in-kind support made available by institutions

Design Department at Goldsmiths College, London, UK:

- studio facility January 2011 to June 2013
- B/W printing
- library
- workshop facilities
- seminar rooms

Amt für Deutsche Kultur der Autonomen Provinz Bozen-Südtirol, IT:

- In-house printing of 500 copies of the nine edited interviews
- In-house production of the display system for the exhibition

FDV residency and Careof DOCVA, Milan, IT:

- curatorial support
- residency space
- project space

<u>Fundacja Vlepvnet and Exyzt, Warsaw, PL:</u>
left-over wood

Selection of support made available through our social network

The research was further made possible through a network of support from rela-
tives, friends and friends' friends and socially and politically engaged practitioners
through which a whole series of supportive economic and social resources were
contributed. I can only cite a fraction of these instances of support here, as they are
all pervasive:

- socially and politically engaged practitioners sharing their expertise
- free over-night stays at our friends, friends of friends or other practitioners'
  homes during research visits in Aarhus, Berlin, Bristol, Leeds, Manchester,
  Palermo, Venice, etc.
- the Sikorski family hosting me in London for a month for free until I could find a
  room to rent
- free use of my and Fabio's parents' homes whenever in Italy (inclusive of food,
  rent, utility bills, etc.)
- use of my mother's or Fabio's father's car for transport whenever in Italy
- below market-price rent in London through arrangements with friends and
  friends of friends
- Polly Hunter, Bridget Conor and Bethany Wells proof-reading my English writing
- Paolo Plotegher, Bridget Conor and Kasparas Pocius reading my first full draft
  and giving feedback on it
- use of the risograph printer at *The Common House* in London
- use of machinery or left-over materials offered by friends
- affective support from the people around me
- …

This itemised list clearly represents only a partial unfolding of the support and
chains of support that enabled this research. Producing this list is, however, – as
a tentative form of feminist Marxist accounting – a way to acknowledge the ele-
ments which protect parts of our lives from the disabling effects of precarious work
arrangements.