

Azamba publics: containment, care and curating in the “expanded private sphere”

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ABSTRACT

The lack of space, movement and even breath afforded to many communities cuts across seemingly mobile life trajectories, constraining and constricting even (and often especially) the movement of people across and within transnational borders. How do arts organisations and projects explicitly work against the violence of these forms of constraint? Where liberal models of the public sphere have underpinned many ideas of art in public space—particularly those based in the notions of appearance and the “general” public—it is from situated praxes originating from what Stahl and Stoecker have described as the “expanded private sphere” that poignant lessons can be learned of a community and curatorial practice dedicated to solidarity and support. In this paper, we elaborate a notion of art in public that refuses a division from the “private”, without straying unproblematically into the terrain of the personal or exploitative economies of care. We draw from our collaborative experiences in using creative strategies for countering the narrative containment of refugee groups in the face of UK media racism through the project *Conflict, Memory, Displacement* as well as the limitations we encountered. Using the concept of Azamba—a Malawan practice of community care and midwifery recently adopted by the women’s group Global Sistaz United in Nottingham, UK—we further elaborate how practices and narrations of care and community support might reconfigure our relation to ideas of art, curating and publics.

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Miwan Kwan’s (1997) essay “Public Art and Urban Identities”, she makes an important distinction between art in public places—highly visible art that today signifies gentrification as a *fait accompli*; art as public places—those art works and processes aligned with the corporate and managerial class in the redevelopment of parks and neighbourhoods; and art in the public interest or “new genre public art”, Suzanne Lacy’s term for art developed in collaboration with marginalised social groups.¹

These distinctions remain useful in determining the orientation of artists, artworks and their commissioners in today’s context where projects under the labels participatory, collaborative or community art can be deeply ingrained in the apparatus of real estate speculation and development, making a somewhat blurry boundary between work that supports community interest and work that distracts and “surrenders” communities from these interests.² For this reason and others, the notion of public interest bears a little more scrutiny in our current moment, particularly as explored in this special issue, in a world in which the questions of publicity and mobility are deeply intertwined.

In this paper, we probe the ways that “public interest” is often underpinned by a notion of the public sphere that privileges appearance over questions of social reproduction, care and other labours historically relegated to the private sphere. We argue that this has particular ramifications for migrant organisers and organisations who come into contact with a cultural apparatus often more focused on the “making public” of the experiences of people on the move than supporting their life-worlds and struggles and valuing the social knowledges they contribute. We argue that this mis-alignment at its worst stages a far too familiar extraction of community time and interest for the benefit of a public outside of these experiences. Equally, it can miss the opportunities for re-configuring art worlds based in solidarity and radical – rather than radically extractive – forms of care.

For the purposes of this article, when we refer to ideas of the public sphere based in “appearance”³ we refer to a general understanding of art’s social and political role as constituted by gathering bodies and presenting “public interests” in visible and designated spaces for viewing, deliberation and dialogue.⁴

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The idea of “appearance” regularly underpins accounts of art in the public realm in the art world.⁵ In the Tate Modern’s definition of “public art”, “public” is defined by visibility, on the one hand and political utility on the other.⁶ Equally, in discussions of the art world’s dialogic apparatus, which often falls under the heading of “public programming”, we hear discussions of the production of “public platforms”, in which debate and discussion are staged in the style of Habermas’ vision of the bourgeois public sphere, as dialogic spaces presented as though they are neither dominated by the state or market.⁷ Some cultural institutions go so far as to cite these platforms as neutral in the face of competing interests. Rarely do such platforms attend to the “unglamorous tasks” that underpin their production.⁸

While critics including Grant Kester, Suzanne Lacy, Paul O’Neill and Claire Doherty advocate for ‘dialogic’⁹ ‘community-embedded’¹⁰ “durational” and “de-spectacularised” approaches that surpass notions of the public based in visible and presentational modes,¹¹ and feminist artists, historians and curators have, for decades, insisted on the necessity of a reading of art that attends to the so-called “private” concerns of the domestic, of lived experience, and of less visible forms of social life, an emphasis on appearance persists in the commissioning of arts and culture.¹² While we may, on the one hand, celebrate the ‘relational’¹³ and ‘educational’¹⁴ turns for their work in bringing practices of public engagement to the fore, this prominence has not profoundly changed the ways in which the art field is organized, which continues to be dominated by highly visible, short term and spatially delineated projects that appear before a so-called “general” public (generally White, middle to upper class) and propel the mobility of a corporate, global elite.¹⁵ In the UK, Bernadette Lynch’s seminal report *Whose Cake is It Anyway?*, attests to the way in which twenty years of engagement with community on the part of UK galleries, has done very little to alter the organizational, governing structures or attitudes towards cultural production vis a vis marginalised community interests.¹⁶ More recent engagements with the historical projects of Suzanne Lacy, Mierle Ukeles, and others whose work centres on social reproduction, focus on their capacities to appear in exhibition spaces rather than engage with the long-term questions of care and labour that they are founded on.¹⁷

In this article, we argue against divisions of the public and private spheres in the way we approach the publicity of art in the public interest. We do not understand the private to simply mean the “domestic” or the “personal” as a motif that can be staged in public, nor do we mean it to signify the strict spaces of the home and we most certainly do not mean the world of “private

interests” dominated by corporations and business owners. We rather read the “private” as a set of capacities generated through the labours of social reproduction—the making and re-making of social and political life by attending to its material and immaterial conditions, and by virtue of this, the site of intense and important struggle.¹⁸ Where many art world trends positions “care” as a new frontier for exploration, when we speak about questions of the private sphere or care, we rely heavily on theories of social reproduction, mobilised in feminist movements such as Wages for Housework, which suggest that this role of making and re-making the social fabric of the world must be understood as a labour, a labour that, if acknowledged would deeply trouble the foundations of a public sphere underpinned by the logic of Capital born in the erasure of its value. As such, the private sphere cannot be thought of as the antithesis to the public, nor as either its sinister or utopian counterpart, but as the falsely separated and deeply unacknowledged work that been deemed unproductive and valuable for Capital. These labours of social reproduction—of making and re-making the bodies that work and their social relations, are significant because they have the capacity to both maintain the exclusions and problematics of the public and the capacity to change them.

The ramifications of an emphasis on appearance over the labours of social reproduction in public art and art in the public interest are multiple. They include the unacknowledged, under-compensated and dispensable labour of “backstage” workers, who are often Black, Brown, migrant¹⁹ and/or women. As seen in the response of many cultural institutions to COVID-19, where these labourers were often (harshly) the first to be let go,²⁰ the inability of many cultural organisations to maintain ongoing and meaningful relationships with their own workers, let alone communities they deem to be “of interest” posits an increasing distance between the governance of institutions and the topics they stage as urgent to *appear* in the name of public education, debate and indeed interest.²¹

In this article, we argue for an “art in the public interest” less rooted in notions of *appearance*. We argue that the conceptual framing of “public interest” through logics of appearance is particularly problematic for people on the move (otherwise described as “migrant communities”),²² for whom mechanisms of containment and mobility cut across controls of borders and detention, the public and domestic, the media and everyday life. Rather, we ask, what can the so-called “private” social and reproductive labours of people (and in particular women) on the move teach us about how art in the public interest might be organized otherwise?

We make this argument by way of the project *Conflict, Memory, Displacement* developed by

ourselves in collaboration with sociologist Gargi Bhattacharyya, media theorist Kirsten Forkert, Italian migration scholar Federico Oliveri, and refugee groups including Birmingham Association for Refugee Action (BARA), Global Sistaz United, Implicated Theatre, and Cantieri Medici, from 2017–2020.²³ The project aimed to analyse and counter media narratives related to the so-called “refugee crisis”, which reproduce ‘white amnesia’²⁴ by systematically erasing the histories of conflict resulting from imperialism and neo-imperialism.²⁵ Within this analysis of media representations we, Victoria Mponda, who is the Head of Global Sistaz United, a self-organised refugee women’s group based in Nottingham, UK and Dr Janna Graham, now a researcher based at Goldsmiths, University of London who began her involvement in the project as a curator at Nottingham Contemporary, were involved in projects in which we asked how people on the move might “speak back” to the particular staging of public interest that renders their presence always already a crisis. In this work, we discovered a difficulty in incorporating narratives of self-organised community work engaged by women in Global Sistaz and other refugee groups, into both mediatic and artistic fields dominated by ideas of public interest rooted in public appearance. Here, it is our hope to tease out this difficulty to indicate some possible ways forward in thinking about how cultural, curatorial and artistic work undertaken in the name of “public interest” might support and learn from the strategies utilised by those regularly curtailed from access to the public sphere. We offer the term “Azamba public”, drawn from the practice of public midwifery practiced in Malawan village life and adopted by Global Sistaz United as a survival strategy in the UK, as a way of combining questions of social reproduction with the politics of the public a to re-configure the modes of “public interest” adopted by cultural institutions.

The paper is divided into three sections. In the first, we look at the way that public interest is often configured around the voices of people on the move. In the second, we look at how this interest is underpinned by historical divisions of labour that relegate some labours outside of the public realm and some within it. Third, we posit the idea and practice of “Azamba” as a form of “critical fabulation” conjoining the labours of social reproduction by way of the commons.

Appearance and the Grammars of Containment (or, the Stories we could not tell)

For many years, Global Sistaz United (GSU) has been on the receiving end of the UK’s media frenzy around the so-called “refugee crisis” in which terms like

“swarm” and “infestation” are used regularly to describe the passages of the group’s members, often at the hands of global conflicts instigated by collusions between corrupt governments and corporations with strong links to Europe and built on histories of colonialism. GSU attends to the consequences of untethered responses of both the media and the bureaucracies of border control within asylum seeking women’s communities in Nottingham, UK. Many members of the group arrive in Nottingham with no links to the community and live on a very limited income (in the UK, approximately £37/week), with no access to legal aid. Women join the group through word of mouth, especially if people share a common language, live in the same area or they meet on a school run. Global Sistaz members support each other by providing mutual childcare; collective shopping and cooking; buying food directly from producers to save costs and time; lending help with identifying trustworthy solicitors and communalising celebrations like birthdays. The group formed through the necessity to develop an alternative to the life of constraint assigned by the border agency, by media and popular discourse in Britain. Though GSU’s goals are not necessarily to “fit in” to the landscape of stereotypes and scapegoating, members are nonetheless often asked to “tell their story”, to make their experiences public—to generate public interest in the media, at the hand of artists, curators, researchers, charities, and of course, the border agencies and courts that define the material parameters of their lives in the UK. These requests require certain kinds of stories—“sad” stories, stories, of a before and after, of gratitude for the group members’ entry into the UK, regardless of their experiences here. The public’s interest in these stories operates in the framework of either charity or of judgment, both of which rely on their circulation in a particular form. Our broader research project suggested that members of the group are often afraid to identify times when they have had fun, or when life in the UK has been brutal, due to the fear that this could be used to undermine claims to be “deserving” of the right to stay and live in the UK. This expectation forces those seeking status to constantly retell their story in order to prove their case, not only to the media, to artists and researchers, to charity workers, but to every person they meet.

Claudia Aradau (2016) uses the expression “grammars of mobility”, to describe “the relations between mobility, security and subjectivity”, that is the ways in which different technologies of appearance serve to naturalise and reproduce divisions between those worthy and unworthy of movement. This grammar extends far beyond forms of containment in incarceration and detention and into the everyday ways in which certain stories are permitted to “appear” in everyday life more than others.²⁶

In 2017, the group set out to tell a different kind of story around the immigration crisis. GSU used some

of the conventions of public art—performance, media interventions, dialogue, counter-imagery to interfere in the repetition of the “sad” and “grateful” story required of them. The group worked with researchers on the *Conflict, Memory, Displacement* project, who conducted interviews with GSU’s members and those of other groups in the UK and Italy.²⁷ From these and from work with feminist sociologist Frigga Haug’s methodology of “critical memory work”, gest-like images were constructed from the everyday lives of people on the move, time-images of moments in which group members felt they had been constructed “as migrants”.²⁸ One of the findings of this work was that people are “made into migrants” by the government, the media and members of society,²⁹ and that the category of “migrant” is constructed actively as a means of erasing other identities and as a process of creating a new social identity that is demeaned and constrained by dominant governance.²⁹ Group members experience this “migrantification” as a trajectory of constraint—from the incarceration of bodies to the restrictions placed on how migrant stories are permissibly told.³⁰

These situational images, freeze frames of the social relations that underpin life in the UK, were used first to construct a counter-newspaper³¹ to sway public opinion and share experiences more widely. Called *The Double Standard*, the newspaper highlighted at once the way that media tropes around migration often construct villainous imagery of so-called migrants as criminals, scroungers, drug dealers and vermin, while at the same valourising those from elsewhere who have excelled at something that can be claimed as “British”.³² In re-imagining how to contest the demand for “sad stories” and rejection of anything that falls out of this narrative form, we changed the focus from individual stories to systemic ones: the stories of corrupt politicians and their corporate alliances, relational histories of colonialism and enslavement, double standards and the UK Border agency’s propagation of these historical relations. In the Sports section of *The Double Standard*, the group shared one such representation of Nigerian/British boxer Anthony Oluwafemi Olaseni Joshua whose contradictory representations had circulated as a joke meme amongst people on the move’s WhatsApp groups. In the newspaper, we also included a Lifestyle section, which made various references to living on £37/week, the monthly allowance afforded to those seeking asylum and, more seriously depicted what one of our members described as a “life in handcuffs”, one in which containment and constraint permeate all dimensions of life, even when not confined by the walls of the detention centres.

Questions of mobility and immobility profoundly underpin these dynamics—with women on the move, particularly those from the global south, subjected

regularly to what Martina Tazzioli describes as “containment through mobility”,³³ global forces of conflict that force mobility while profoundly containing it through logistical, narrative and social mechanisms of exclusion.

The group did not feel, however, that it was enough to expose these forms of containment. GSU members wanted to represent their responses as active protagonists in broader systemic issues, as well as in the more everyday dimensions of containment to which they regularly respond. While it was relatively easy to mimic the newspaper’s sensational dimensions through mirroring the architecture of the headline and pointing to the corruption and collusion between high-ranking officials, colonial histories and the corporate profiteers whose conflicts produce uneven conditions of migration, the less visible, more everyday and sensorial modes of both constraint and resistance were harder to fit into this grammar of existing representations.

Attempting to get closer to a more micropolitical form of intervention, the group worked with members of Implicated Theatre, who use methods drawn from Brechtian approaches to the “gest” and Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed³⁴ to produce living images and scenes of the situations in which stories that migrantified people are asked to tell, function to contain and gate-keep access to particular sets of relations—everything from social service and medical support, to the access to informal and community social networks, employment, and to financial existence (for example, bank accounts, etc.) In one such scene, a woman who does not identify as migrant suggests that she will only give directions to a woman who does if she tells the story of her journey, another person on the move is shunned by members of her care worker training group when she tells a critical story of navigating the border as a refugee.

These scenes were performed publicly in community contexts such as Nottingham Refugee Forum, West Birmingham Community Centre and art institutions such as Nottingham Contemporary asking audience members from migrantified and non-migrantified backgrounds to enter these scenes and implicate themselves in thinking through the constraints and demands on the migration story within both official border regimes and the context of everyday life. Here, we distinguished between the strategic use of the story—the way in which those engaged in the asylum process might share their tactics of storytelling with one another to pass through border enforcement, and the dynamics of the story as it is played out—and worked through—in everyday social life. In one of the scenes performed—drawing from the “bus stop” scenario described above—non-migrantified attendees were invited to sit at an

imagined bus stop and themselves take on the role of a newcomer looking for directions to the reporting centre. After many attempts they realized they would only receive directions if they told a 'sad story'. Through this they began to reflect on their own desires for particular stories, even as supporters of people on the move. The actors then reversed roles, so that the non-migrantified attendees were given the role of the person giving directions. They reported that they were, through this experience, far more aware of the way in which they both solicit and expect particular kinds of narratives.

Within this work also, however, we reached a limit. While it was useful to make these versions of the group's lives "public", to workshop them, to bring the dynamics of the story to light, neither the newspaper nor the theatrical formats of publicness were able to tell a different kind of story, a story that related to the technologies of care that the group had established and extended, technologies that members felt others in UK society might be interested to know. The idea of a public interest oriented around learning from life and survival practices was the antithesis to what was available as the image of the "migrant" in the public imaginary, indeed how mechanisms of generating "public interest" were in themselves constructed. The group could not find a trope, nor a grammar nor a story through which to describe the interface between critical and collectivised care practices and the act of speaking back to the media by making counter-proposals in the so-called public sphere. This work was subtle, intricate, important and of vital consequence to the lives of GSU members but was at odds with the modes of practice, the mechanisms and infrastructures through which the group might generate public interest.

We saw that while our work was valuable, in order to pursue a publicness routed in appearance we had to turn our backs on infrastructures and modes of survival that constitute the group's practices of social reproduction. To compound this, while the project took place under the auspices of research, we nonetheless engaged with commissioning organisations such as Nottingham Contemporary, and Serpentine Galleries, the host of Implicated Theatre. Janna Graham, co-author of this paper and a co-researcher on the project, had—through her work as a curator in both these institutions—brokered the presentations of these stories within the framework of Nottingham's public programmes. Victoria—a refugee community organiser—and also co-author, was able to position the performances in relation to Nottingham's Refugee Week. This visible and performative dimension of the project fit into these modes of making public or engagement of the public sphere well. They were presentational, short-term, relatively

easy to communicate and not requiring of long-term commitments. Again, infrastructures of the temporary, the mobile, the fleeting programme of public moments of appearance did not allow space for questions of social reproduction of lives to come to the fore. Here we are not dismissive of modes of presentation, and recognise the importance of members and stories of the group being seen, heard and debated by those without direct experience of punitive migration practices. However, we also suggest there was a limit within this context, to what aspects of migrantified lives were easily relayed and expressed and how "migrant" and 'story' remained repeated tropes of identification difficult to break from.³⁵

Divisions of Labour

Why were stories that spoke back within established forms of generating public interest easier to tell than those generated in relation to the group's life-worlds, to their practices of resistance and social reproduction otherwise? To answer this, we want to briefly revisit some of the conceptual foundations of the public sphere that underpin both media and cultural modes of "making public".

For Hannah Arendt, the public sphere's original purpose in ancient Greek society was to provide an immortalised space in which common things might be negotiated and through which people could be seen and heard, to *appear*. This space stands in contrast to the private realm of the family; a space in which "personalities reign unmediated".³⁶

Habermas' articulation of the bourgeois public sphere—citing "common places" for opinion formation like independent publications, the coffee house, etc.—replicate this division between the public sphere and the private realm of reproduction. In readings undertaken by Calhoun, Fraser and others, while the public sphere draws from the private realm, enabling processes through which the concerns of the private may enter the public arena, its conditions and divisions of labour remain extraneous to the making and shaping of public opinion and public influence on culture.³⁷

Many have since argued against the separations of the public (as appearance and delineated space) from so-called private sphere. Authors Nancy Fraser,³⁸ Heston A Baker, Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge and feminist artists and authors,³⁹ have, for over twenty years, made compelling arguments against a conception of the public sphere that relegates the "private" to the shadows of political discourse, and agree that this conception of the public sphere is particularly problematic in not acknowledging the concrete practices of resistance born of the struggles against oppression by communities of colour and in particular women's groups within such communities.

The “private” for these authors cover a range of practices and spaces—from the verandas to churches, from kitchen tables to clandestine gathering spaces, to labours of care and organisation, to popular culture, collective song and friendship groups. Here, the private is not positioned as comfortable or utopian realm, but as the unrecognized space and labour to which those who are not entitled to full recognition in public life are relegated. These spaces and labours underpin the logics of exclusion to be found in the public sphere, but are also where resistance might be also organized.

Nancy Fraser, for example, proposed that there has never been a public sphere as such, or at least not one that includes the interests and participation of subaltern people. She defines the public sphere as the conflictual terrain of “counter-publics” whose differing interests and diverse modes of participation shape public culture and debate.⁴⁰ For her, the “where” of the common places of the public is less important than their mobilisation against hegemonic formations of power which necessarily spans divisions between the public and private realms. In Houston A. Baker Jr’s discussion of a Black public sphere, he argues for an account of the public underpinned by memories of enslavement and resistance. He suggests that modes of publicity straddle past and present, through attributes like oration and speech-making that are typically associated with the bourgeois public sphere, and embodied in figures like Martin Luther King, but also through hymns, poetry, quilts-, those practices often associated with the organisation of domestic, spiritual and communal life. It is in these “private” socially reproductive and/or “domestic” realms, he suggests, that both memory and defiance are deeply cultivated.⁴¹ Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge have also, many years ago, argued for a concept of the public sphere based in experiences, and in particular working class experiences of the home and everyday life as sites from which to organise autonomous political pressure.⁴²

From today’s vantage, the evocation of a public interest that emphasises appearance over social production misses the many ways in which public and private are already intertwined through biopolitical modes of governance, the labours of communicative capitalism and post-democratic conditions, in which the private is regularly evoked and manipulated to produce the feeling of “publicness” in the absence of a public sphere.^{2004b}

Where the distinction between the public and private in the contemporary might be based in collapse, resistance to practices of containment and oppression often remain divided along lines of public and private. From our collaborator, Gargi Bhattacharyya’s account of racial capitalism we can draw out the dynamics that underpin these divisions. In her book *Re-Thinking Racial Capitalism*, she opens with the idea that we,

“Imagine [racial capitalism as] a house with many storeys—an attic and a cellar, several annexes, that have no direct connections, main rooms filled with comfort and a maze of un-mappable corridors leading to all sorts of barely remembered wings, snugs and the occasional route outside to an isolated out-house. But mostly their movements are shaped by the place in which they find themselves and who they see and who they can be, delimited by the strange geography of the house”.⁴³

The implications of these disconnected rooms is, Bhattacharyya suggests, the artificial separation of those who may have otherwise worked in sympathy and solidarity. As Black Feminist authors are regularly at pains to point out, the wealth of industrialised nations like the UK: based on the enclosure of the commons, the introduction of primitive accumulation and the relegation of women to private and unpaid work, was most violently exemplified in the forced labours of the plantation house undertaken by Black, Brown and Indigenous women. The plantation house here underpins the social contract upon which the public sphere could emerge as the space where in which (certain) subjects could appear. As Bhattacharyya suggests, the separation between private and public labours is a powerful “dividing illusion,” through which the labours of some may appear and that of others disappears to the far annexes of the house.⁴⁴

From the perspective of racial capitalism, the idea of the public sphere as that which sits in opposition to the “private” life has mediated the inclusion and exclusion of those whose labours are worthy of recognition both by metrics of work, i.e. pay and valorisation and also by virtue of who can and cannot speak and under what conditions they might do so. The effect of this is not only one of exclusion, but, perhaps more profoundly, one of a separation between those who might share interest in working against the violence of extractive Capital and the forces of containment that underpin contemporary migrant experiences.⁴⁵

As Bhattacharyya states, “We live in this house, the one in which our geography, one in which we find ourselves regularly limited for options, where we have to fight for every aspect of survival and where our work is not recognised. One aspect of racial capitalism is the processes that grants “differential treatment to workers, almost workers and non-workers and the social relations that flow from these differentiations.”⁴⁶

Thinking the public sphere through the lens of racial capitalism we understand the public/private division as less affording a buffer, retreat or prelude to public life, and rather as a one of a number of devices separating practices of social reproduction—from more recognised and valued forms of labour and appearance.

It is here that—while we argue for the importance of social reproduction and racial capitalism for thinking through the public sphere—the recent appearance of conversations on “care” in the art world should be tread through carefully. While attempting to make this argument for a wider recognition of social and reproductive labour that is often relegated to the “private”, it is important not to stray into territory that eradicates the profound violence that care and the domestic can signify. This is the case for members of GSU, many of whom work as un- or underpaid care workers whose exploitation is underpinned by a globalised distribution of labour that deems their work and lives—be it paid care for others or unpaid work to care for themselves and their communities—of limited value. This valuation is tied into the very structure of mobility itself, which disproportionately constrains and restrains those who travel from elsewhere and those contending most urgently with the ruins of racial capitalism. Women in GSU speak of the way in which their visas for care and domestic workers are tied to employers such that they cannot leave exploitative and sometimes violent conditions of work in domestic settings. Undocumented people in the group, who are not permitted to work all, describe the impossible risks that gird their lives in the UK—in either attempting to live on the £35 per week issued by government or by selling their labour in unregulated economies, without any legal protections.⁴⁷ Definitions and divisions of who constitutes what kind of worker and non-worker underpins modes of public participation as they always have for racialised women.

This differential treatment of workers, some who are engaged in recognised “public” labour and others whose labours are relegated to the “private sphere” is still rarely acknowledged in relation to artistic projects undertaken in the public interest in arts organisations.

Accounts from members of GSU describe the ways that cultural institutions, researchers and funders are structurally unable to support their work as cultural agents and researchers. They do not conform to standard definitions, possess cultural capital or appropriate immigration status to be defined as artists, writers or researchers, nor do they possess the time resources required for the administration of this work. As such, they are rarely able to access funding for projects without mediation by and through agencies external to the group. While it is often the case that public art or art in the public interest dealing with such issues provide a platform or entry into the public sphere for groups like GSU, it might equally be suggested that their reliance on these spaces is less than ideal as cultural organisations often approach this support as compensatory,

covering over larger questions around the structural inequalities of the art world. This is especially important insofar as projects with so-called “migrant” groups often lend urgency to an art world hungry for relevant social thematics but—beyond short-term highly visible projects—are not often set up to meaningfully support those communities in the best position to speak and theorise about them.

When we began our project, the extension of “mobility through containment” of GSU’s work with cultural institutions, artists and commissioners, was something highlighted by GSU members, who have over many years, experienced the way in which the “public interest” in the experience of refugee women has had greater social and material benefit for their artistic and research collaborators than for the group itself. This experience of community extraction in which such “interests” are used to bring voices of others “into the public sphere” have in many cases been undertaken without accountability to GSU, consideration of the unequal valuation of labour conditions of collaborations (exacerbated by border controls that often prohibit earning) or within timeframes that allow for the ebbs and flows of precarious lives to figure into the format or compensational structures of work.

This regular call to “include the voices” of the so-called refugee crisis, a crisis manufactured by collisions of immigration agencies, media and the corporations that benefit from the carcerality of bordering, and in some cases, the charity industrial complex that surrounds them, rarely results in contributions that go beyond the moment in which it has been thematised. For groups like GSU, while sometimes providing “gig” income or small morsels of cultural capital to members, such projects do not attend to the longer term, more regular capacities and problematics that play out beyond representative or traditionally public modes of understanding. Public projects that tend to the work of long-term refugee solidarity in the arts, work that is firmly planted in the labour of ongoing survival and contestation of border control, are very often subject to the whims of de-funding and moved out of public art parlance in moments like the one we currently occupy, when the tide has turned to other sets of “public interests”. An example of this can be seen in the recent closure of Trampoline House, a long time refugee solidarity and support project co-produced by artists, curators and refugee groups in Copenhagen,⁴⁸ and in the ongoing struggles for support from groups like the Silent University, a migrant and artist-led self-education project set up in multiple European Cities⁴⁹ The structural dimension of commissioning—short durations, a theme-hungry art world that cannot commit to the groups and interests it “brings into public light”, and individualised notions of freedom and autonomy—produce a context in which arts

organisations often are unable to provide longitudinal cover, a fact that is even more problematic as the life-worlds of public art's marginalised collaborators are increasingly under attack.

What Comes After Appearance?

If the valuable attributes of the public sphere upon which certain notions of art in the public interest—dialogue, debate, appearance—are founded lies upon the “differential treatment of workers and almost workers”,⁵⁰ on what concepts of publicity might public interest be re-formulated?

As we have learned, the crisis of the refugee is a constructed one, where the crisis of public sphere—upheld by gendered and racialised divisions of labour that relegate the care and repair of life to a place outside of the sphere of action—is a pressing one. For theorist Angela Mitropoulos, however, Arendt's distinction between *oikos* and *polis* (domestic and political/public realms) has never been stable. Re-visiting Arendt, Mitropoulos suggests that “the contradiction between the private and public [...] has been a temporary phenomenon”,⁵¹ and argues equally that the history of the performative, its connections to labour and its erasure of the work of the household, should be contextualised as part of a longer history of contractual and organisational relations around the domestic that she describes as “*oikonomia*”.⁵² As she suggests, the household, precisely in its gendering and allocation of divisions of labour, has played a strong political role, in, for example, the project of the frontier and American imperialism, where the legal form of value was defined and imposed through distinctions of legitimate labour, i.e. wage labour, slavery and authorised reproduction, situating, “the household as the intimate sphere of a sentimental and self-managed equivalence.”⁵³ Even prior to the neoliberal erosion of the division between the spheres of intellect, labour and action, these “contracts” between the household and more seemingly public aspects of life were in regular negotiation, proliferating limits and upholding the genealogical order of *oikonomia*. For Mitropoulos, the relation between public and private is not then a binary, nor is it a dialectic between “captured” entities and non-alienated essences. Rather, it is “the unreliable entanglement of contracts and contagions.”⁵⁴

Isobel Lorey also reframes this division, in this case turning to Hannah Arendt's writing on freedom, suggesting that, rather than focusing on appearance as the framework for “making public”, the stake in the public sphere—the notion of freedom from the rule of the state and corporate apparatus—has always been rooted in a notion of collective action—that takes place through sociality, not only through public appearance, vocality, deliberation and debate. Freedom, in her reading of Arendt, comes from “acting together” which opens the possibility of a politics that is based not on the individuated figure (or group) of competing speaking subjects in the public

sphere, but in collective actions that operate through “logics of care”.⁵⁵ Lorey argues, through a discussion of the work of the Madrid-based migrant women's group “*las Precarias a la Deriva*”, that a focus on care valorises the work of social reproduction differently, dealing with gendered inequalities that lie at the foundation of an economy that values the vocal and individualised sovereign virtuosic worker over the social, the commons or their reproduction.

Lorey's approach has important implications for the rethinking of art in the public interest because through it we can move beyond questions of celebration/mourning and towards a “negotiation of common affairs” constituted on other grounds. For art in the public interest, this would be in many ways a direct reversal of the current *modus operandi*, and a movement away from appearances of art and public that actively obscure conditions of care, affect and intimacy. As Angela Mitropoulos suggests, to redress the unacknowledged labours of social reproduction our notions of the public must shift to questions of common, living infrastructures: “a politics of the household turns on that most materialist of propositions: we are how we live”.⁵⁶

These two proposals—one for a notion of politics that emerges in and through logics of care, and the other, for thinking through common infrastructures of how we live, have important implications for the radical rethinking of art in the public interest and the curatorial practices that produce them. Specifically, they provide an expanded possibility for attending to the less obvious moments of publicness through which groups appear and more to the questions and practices of care that need to surround these encounters. They also provide a more complex set of circumstances from which to imagine how art in the public interest might rather be used to produce “processes through which affinities take shape or not” rather than foregrounding existing relations of power. It is in this very grounded context that we might ask of public artistic praxis, “what forms of attachment, interdependency, and indebtedness are being implemented, funded, obliged or simply and violently enforced; and what tender possibilities are foreclosed?”⁵⁷

Azamba publics

This re-working of the public that begins from the labours of life and elaborates a commons has begun to emerge in a number of practices in the fields of contemporary art that replace “public” with the idea of the “commons”. The art space Casco, drawing from histories of feminist artistic practice and questions to decolonise the arts, recently re-framed from an art presentation centre to a practice of “Working for the Commons” is an example of this. Casco has engaged in an infrastructural re-organisation to reflect an emphasis on issues of social reproduction

“values such as mutual maintenance, care, sharing, and cooperation” and use the practice of building the commons as a “visor” through which to approach questions of art.⁵⁸ While Casco commissions artistic practices they do so in relation to key issues that support the shaping of their own location in Utrecht as a commons for artistic and community use but also the commons that exist in the local area. For example *The Museum of Forgotten Skills*,⁵⁹ a participatory mobile museum, developed by local artists, curators and ecologists, explores agricultural heritage in urban areas cultivating knowledge and skills for ecological, resilient living. They see the presentational side of their work as an open invitation and encouragement to those who attend to become involved in building commons when they have the capacity to do so, instigating longer term involvement of local and transnational constituencies over time. They have recently opened a web portal through which people can fund or support with their labour the ongoing elaboration of socially engaged artistic projects in the local area to ensure their extension beyond frameworks of presentation and appearance. Here, the mode of publicity is not necessarily the streets nor the cafe but the acts of maintenance and social care required to run an art space as a commons and to contribute to the production of new commons in their community.

At a more modest but exponentially important scale, the ongoing alliance between London-based curator Louise Shelley and the campaigning group, Voices for Domestic Workers, is another such example, in which labour excluded from earlier conceptions of the public sphere has not only been highlighted through exhibitions and moments of speaking in public, but rather through a sustained politics and commitment of organisational support. Artists and curators in this light have worked alongside community organisers in the production of banners, fundraising campaigns, the preparation of food and provision of meeting space.⁶⁰ This attention to the ongoing tasks of social reproduction that underpin the work of counter-publics and engagement in public life spans institutions and the event temporalities often associated with public art commissioning. The emphasis here is not only on the places in which art appears but the processes that make organising around social reproduction possible.⁶¹

Finally, MACAO, an arts and cultural space based in an occupied building in Milan, has attempted to realise feminist artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles’ Manifesto for Maintenance art (oft referred to as the “Care” Manifesto⁶²) as an operational principles which place questions of maintenance (cleaning, etc.) on par with practices of production, creating a basic income available to all those involved in the space who take part equally in

care, administration, collaborative decision-making and programming work. For this act of commoning the resources of the space move “beyond public and private”.⁶³ Here again, presentation of art works, performances for large audiences are not excluded but de-emphasised as the core function of cultural organizing. They are placed on par with Ukeles’ proposition for a world in which the labours of social reproduction not only appear on the gallery walls but in the organization of its own production.⁶⁴

Our project follows many of these examples, but begins from within the worlds of women’s organising rather than from the concerns regarding the transformation of art and its public role. Many of Global Sistaz’ members, regardless of the extensive education they may have received in their home countries, end up doing care work in the UK for agencies, cleaning, taking care of regularised UK residents. These jobs are exhausting, take place in many sites and are incredibly isolating. As members often say, the structural parameters of this kind of care work, make it truly “impossible to care”. As an alternative, members of our group have endeavoured to engage in mutual care and support beyond the kinds of jobs they get or must do. While fighting for the adequate compensation of care work, they also understand care as beyond the wage, as that which undermines the wage relation itself. They understand why care work makes it impossible to care, as to really care would be to undermine the wage relation, the relegation of their labour to the shadows, the social order based in the production and maintenance of racial capitalism. To care would be to create the conditions through which the group can determine how to live and resist collectively, and how to propagate these knowledges and through this re-working the story as we know it. Even if members need care sector jobs to survive, they refuse that these conditions define notions of how to care for one another. The group instead produces a horizon of hope and a practice of being together within and beyond current conditions by doing care otherwise. Members ask, how do we operate as a village in spite of the kinds of social isolation, despair and disrepair that as so-called “migrants” and “refugees” we have been subjected?

In recent years, Global Sistaz has adopted the Malawan practice of “Azamba” (the term for “midwife” in Chichewa) to characterise this approach. Azamba is both a project—that involves training people in the group to become doulas in order to support women from refugee or ‘made migrant’ communities during pregnancy and after childbirth—but it is also an ethos. Azamba doulas do not only care for individuals but play an important role in articulating the value of cooperative care practices within their communities. In adopting these practices in the

UK, the goal is to work with groups in the wider community—formal and informal health care workers, teachers and communities to teach other kinds of care and social being. For global Sistaz United teaching care practices as a way to generate resources and sustainability for the group, but also to extend the idea of “village care” to the wider community of Nottingham. The group have made a handbook for Azamba teachers in the community: agencies—health, community support, maternity, hospitals, schools, to produce alternative infrastructures of care. Members want this to be ongoing and sustainable to move out of the project-to-project mode of working that refugee and asylum groups operate on and that funding bodies currently necessitate.

While this process is in its earliest stages, only through this deep, resistant and collective practice of care that Global Sistaz United see access points to the production of art in the public interest. Here, the so-called “private sphere” is not sheltered away from the public but re-positioned as its very base.

What we are describing as Azamba, is a different point of departure, one that begins with the needs and survival of people in their everyday lives, and draws from technologies of culture and care to form the basis for the work of art in the public sphere. Azamba poses an alternative to the characterisation of the private as separate from public as in the case of Arendt.

However, there are also dangers in basing our project in the realm of care, with its long histories of attachments to racism and colonialism. As Henry Giroux’s points out in his discussion of “public pedagogy” a politics based in the “private” “renders all social problems as biographical in nature”.⁶⁵ Giroux suggests it important to counter the “neo-liberal obsession with the private” that both “furthers a market-based politics which reduces all relationships to the exchange of money and the accumulation of capital, but also de-politicizes politics itself and reduces public activity to the realm of utterly individual practices and utopias, underscored by the reduction of citizenship to the act of buying and purchasing goods.”⁶⁶

Giroux’s characterisation of the private as a site of extreme marketisation here cannot be disputed. Equally, the idea that care be undertaken collectively in the absence qua negligence of the state, is also dangerous in echoing the Big Society, a policy in the UK that sought to valorise voluntary approaches to service delivery as a response to the defunding of public resources undertaken at the onset of austerity policies the UK.

However, as Lorey and Mitropoulos suggest it is precisely for their existence on the fault lines of neoliberalism that the attributes of the expanded private sphere be inhabited, interrogated, collectivised

and, indeed, turned against dominant forms of value production. In this attention to care and infrastructure, the voice, dialogue and speaking out have a role to play, but in focusing on the production and reproduction of life, we begin to move away from the solutions of single subjects in negotiation and towards committed, collective, localised and affinity-based forms of publicity. These approaches might be more in keeping with Giroux’s recent calls to the collective production of sanctuaries from the current “democracy in exile”, than a return to the public sphere in its moment of collapse could ever provide.⁶⁷

Azamba fabulations

The question of appearance, of how such a practice—located in community, within networks of care and support—become visible within the broader context of public culture is not unimportant, but working with Azamba asks us how to position the stories of people on the move differently. The Azamba project has, to date, been supported by contemporary cultural institutions, including Nottingham Contemporary, Primary (Nottingham) and refugee artist support groups. The project takes place around the edges, in the margins of publicity. Where mainstream practices of contemporary art, in which vocal “leaders”—artists, curators, etc., often shape the meaning of cultural projects in relation to their perceptions of a “general public”, these projects attempt to begin the story from elsewhere, from within the life worlds of our members and the way in which we try to re-shape relations in the everyday lives of our communities.

One such project, developed by the group and supported by Primary, an artist run centre in Nottingham, is telling of this. The Gallery provided a space in which women in the Azamba project could gather for an ongoing project of banner making. Banner-making, for the women in the group, particularly for those from Malawi, is a community practice that starts before children are born. It is undertaken by the mother and her friends and family in the child’s community, who weave the detail of the child’s journey onto 14 banners—the first to be presented at the baby’s welcome and naming ceremony and the other 13 to be presented each year from the child’s 13th birthday. These banners are hung around the house or the child’s room to tell the tale of their journey or their history. GSU has staged making sessions of such banners for the telling of their own stories, involving others in the community, those who have and have not been on the move—teachers, playmates, supporters, would-be allies, to construct narratives and practices of alternative kin relations, chosen families, extended communities both

actualised and visualised in the making of banners together. The banners also figure in short stories written by group members. The logic of the banner reverses that of appearance - of private lives entering into public and rather understands the public as a commons, as a group that shape and care for lives, the visual as its remnant. While the production of the work takes place in public, or group settings, its exhibition and appearance locates itself in the home, where the implications of this larger sphere of people are felt and worked through. Far from the “sad story”, this story is one of common care for life, the telling of an imaginary of collective praxis.

Within Azamba praxes, cultural workers and institutions play a different role in re-shaping this public imaginary, one that is based less in the visible masses or on visitors to hegemonic and universalising notions of what is important to see and discuss and more as support and infrastructure for the ways and means of actualising other stories qua ways of being together.

When considering the question of art in public spaces, attention to the attributes of the private sphere cannot produce a form of value production that is exterior to labour, but rather must dramatically shift both the orientation and modes of engagement towards questions of sustaining and promoting other kinds of life over questions of sustaining the institutions and structure of culture in their current corporate and marketised forms.

In his book, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* Aldon Morris suggests the importance of what he describes as ‘Movement Halfway Houses, cultural “houses” that were not sites of the spectacles or mass demonstrations, nor were they the platforms upon which speeches are made. Instead, the houses were places where groups could “develop a battery of social change resources” and through which smaller groups could align around particular problems and build the capacities to engage in larger scale movements.⁶⁸ The “house” of the halfway house is not necessarily a space, but a context in which groups can assemble, build up histories, skills, and plan future trajectories. The house-keeping here is the shared and reproductive work of maintaining spaces and practices through which people can develop new commons and alliances for survival and resistance - ones that valorise the work of social reproduction. This is akin to what Stall and Stoecker describe as “municipal house-keeping”, a mode of community organising often developed by women-of-colour centred movements in which an “expanded private sphere” replaces or radically appends the public sphere in locating the tools for change in acts that centre other modes of living and working which value those which are routinely and violently undervalued.

1998 Stall and Stoecker) Such practices can be heard in the work of the women in the housing movement Pico Alliso in the Boyle Heights struggles against art-washing and gentrification, through mothers taking control over neighbourhood safety and betterment against the incursion of politica and developers.⁶⁹

Our final proposition is then a tentative one and one with which we are only beginning to work. If we are to imagine cultural practices that begin from the “expanded private sphere” of Azamba, that lie in the everyday practices of this working and making commons together, how might we return to the context of the story we could not tell with which we began? How can our notion of art in public both practice the production of a commons based in infrastructures of community care, while at the same time proliferate stories of what and how we learn? How can “the public” be re-constituted through alliances of practices, rather than through platforms of endless and exhausting propulsion of thematised content?

In her 2008 essay “Venus in Two Acts,” and her later book *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*, theorist Saidiya Hartman introduced the concept of “critical fabulation” as a response to the lack of representation that Black women had in historical archives. To engage in critical fabulation is for Hartman, “to tell an impossible story and to amplify the impossibility of its telling,” to reconstruct “what could have been.”⁷⁰ “Fabula”, as she describes “denotes the basic elements of story, the building blocks of the narrative.” For Hartman, critical fabulation is a way of re-writing the past in the present.

Drawing from the living archive of our experiences of care, we propose a material fabulation that allows us to tell the story as we go, to share it with fellow travellers and to inspire collective of action.⁷¹

Rather than the “sad” stories required of migrant communities, and the relations that ensue, Azamba fabulations—like the production of banners—can be translated from one person to another—holding people in social relations, documenting strategies for survival, as they are in process. Through transversal relations between people on the move and their networks in schools, amongst health care professionals and others, we are able to think more about how we spend our time, how we can circumvent the abstraction and devaluation of labour that divide us, that cultivate public enemies more than public spheres. From the grounds of an expanded private sphere and the practices of municipal housekeeping, and with the proposal for cultural institutions as halfway houses, rather than the post-democratic ruins of the public, we might propose a fabulated production that exists at the limits of the stories we already know, opening new ones in the possibilities of collective allyship and care. This kind of fabulation is not easy, it is a re-working of historical relations of

power, it is a reckoning, a never completed reparation and must be led by those most dis-advantaged by the current stories we tell. It lies in equitably funding attempts at building a commons. It is one in which we narrate the fictions and frictions, and set the balance of value straight by spreading the words and experiences of those whose labour lies in surviving a radical global devaluation of their existence. Azamba fabulation is the story of how we take the next step.⁷²

Notes

- Miwon Kwon, "Public Art and Urban Identities," in *Kunst auf Schritt und Tritt (Public Art is Everywhere)* Hamburg: Kellner, 1997, pp. 95–107. (Kwon, 2002; Lacy, 1995).
- For an example of this in London's Elephant and Castle Neighbourhood, see "Empowerment for Surrender: People's Bureau, Engaged Art & The Elephant," in *Southward Notes*, accessed 20 May 2021, <https://southwarknotes.wordpress.com/art-and-regeneration/empowerment-for-surrender-peoples-bureau-engaged-art-the-elephant/> and Samantha Hill and Ed Woodham, "Social Practice Artists Ran Out of Town: NEA Funded Mill Hill Artist Residency is Art Washing," accessed 7 June 2016, <https://us2.campaign-archive.com/?u=59738127bacb34e4346674bbc&id=c3f922b326>.
- Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1958).
- Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of the Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1991), 206. Though both Habermas and Arendt articulate a public sphere distinct from the private and focus on visible gatherings outside of domestic realm, it must be noted that they have very different notions of the public sphere, Habermas' largely based in the formation of public opinion, visible in the coffee house, print culture, and arguably without great acknowledgement of the exclusions that underpin who is able to enter such arenas. Arendt's, alternatively, is based in the appearance of public space, of plurality and the production of a common realm of deliberation. There is more to say on the nuances of these arguments, but for the purposes of this text, the focus is on the implications of these rather blunter definitions adopted by arts institutions focused on appearance.
- Fergal Gaynor, "Art, Politics and the Public Realm: Towards an Arendtian Perspective," in *Enclave Review* 07 (Spring 2013, from a talk given at the National Sculpture Factory, as part of the Frequencies series, August 2012), <http://enclavereview.org/art-politics-and-the-public-realm-towards-an-arendtian-perspective/>.
- "Art Term: Public Art," Tate Modern, accessed 20 May 2021, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/p/public-art>.
- See more on this use of public programming in Janna Graham, Valeria Graziano, Susan Kelly, "The Educational Turn in Art: Rewriting the Hidden Curriculum," in *Performance Research* vol. 21:6 (December 2016): 29–35.
- This is the case, for example, when artists included in the exhibition "Hope to Nope: Graphics and Politics, 2008–2018," at London's Design Museum withdrew their work in protest against the Museum's venue hire to a defence industry company during the run of the show, to which the Museum responded "we cannot take an overt political stance as some activists would like us to do" and cited Charity legislation as the reason they must remain "neutral". (J. Pes. 2018; Quinn, 2020), <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/artists-withdraw-works-design-museum-directors-blame-professional-activists-1328003>.
- Grant H. Kester, *The One and The Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2011).
- Suzanne Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Seattle, Washington: Bay Press, 1995).
- Paul O'Neill and Claire Doherty, *Locating the Producers: Durational Approaches to Public Art* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Antannae, 2011).
- There are, of course, many examples, including Mary Kelly's *Post-Partum Document*, Meirle Ukeles body of work on care and maintenance, Faith Ringgold's *Story Quilts*, all of which draw attention to the public role of the work of social reproduction
- Nicolas Bourriaud. *Relational Aesthetics*. Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2002.
- Irit Rogoff. "Turning". *e-flux journal*, 1, E1-E10, 2008.
- An easy example of this can be found in Pedro Reyes' staged therapeutic project *Sanitorium*, in which short slots are given to gallery goers in which to engage in a therapeutic encounter. More on the project to be found here: https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/visualarts/2014/07/03/pedro_reyes_sanatorium_gives_us_therapy_as_art.html
- Bernadette Lynch, *Whose Cake is It Anyway?*, Paul Hamlyn Foundation in 2011, accessed 20 May 2021. (Lynch, 2009) <https://www.phf.org.uk/publications/whose-cake-anyway/>.
- Examples here around the Suzanne Lacy's re-enactment of the *Crystal Quilt* performance at Tate Modern focused on the "event" of inter-generational women's conversations rather than the gallery's support of longer term work on women's issues, and recent exhibitions of Meirle Ukeles work have rarely taken up the points of her Care Manifesto.
- Camille Barbagallo and Silvia Federici, "Introduction," in *The Commoner: Care Work and The Commons*, Issue 15 (Winter 2012): 1–21, (Federici, 2004) https://www.academia.edu/4580791/Care_work_and_the_Commons_Vol_15_Edited_by_Camille_Barbagallo_and_Silvia_Federici
- See here campaigns of cleaners at the Barbican in London, <https://precariousworkersbrigade.tumblr.com/post/49134280966/the-cleaners-at-the-barbican-step-up-the-campaign> and Tate's layoff of front of house workers disproportionately affecting Black and Brown staff here <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2020/jul/26/tate-faces-protests-over-job-cuts-impact-on-bame-staff>
- See Nora Sternfeld's work on the "unglamorous tasks" of the—predominantly female arts educator in "Unglamorous Tasks: What Can Education Learn

- from its Political Traditions?” Nora Sternfeld. e-flux journal #14. March 2010 and an account of the multiple instances of the dismissal of education workers at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic by Gareth Harris’ in the article “Wave of museum educator redundancies worldwide sparks open letter,” published on the 23rd of April 2020 in The Art Newspaper. <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/open-letter-educator-redundancies-at-museums-worldwide>.
21. Yesomi Umolu describes the moves that cultural institutions must make to close the gap between the issues they deem to be important (referring to the event surrounding the Black Lives Matter uprisings of summer 2020) and practices of empathy, solidarity and support, in her words, the need for advocacy “for basic rights to life, safety, shelter, well-being, and economic and intellectual sustenance” in “On the Limits of Care and Knowledge: 15 Points Museums Must Understand to Dismantle Structural Injustice” in *artnet*. 25 June 2020. <https://news.artnet.com/opinion/limits-of-care-and-knowledge-yesomi-umolu-op-ed-1889739>. Last Accessed April 25 2021/
 22. We will use the term “people on the move” where possible in this text as an attempt to highlight and de-naturalise “migrant” as a constructed concept based in the logic of separation that underpins classes of mobility i.e. in the distinction between terms like “ex-pat” for middle class movers versus “migrant” for those from lower income and seen to be less “desirable” locations. In our book, we describe the terms “migrantification” to describe this process. See Kirsten Forkert, Federico Oliveri, Gargi Bhattacharyya, and Janna Graham, *How Media and Conflicts Make Migrants* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020a), accessed 25 April 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv10h9g34> for further explanation.
 23. More on this project can be found here: <https://conflictmemorydisplacement.com/>
 24. “white amnesia” is a term developed by Barnor Hesse in “White Governmentality” (1997). It refers to the lack of will or capacity by former colonisers to recognise how longer histories of colonialism shape contemporary global politics including global inequalities, violent conflicts, conflict-related migration and border controls. More information on this matter can be found in Hesse’s, “White Governmentality: Urbanism, Nationalism, Racism,” in *Imagining Cities: Scripts, Signs, Memories*, ed. Sally Westwood and John William (Abingdon: Routledge, 1997a), 86–103.
 25. Forkert, Kirsten, Federico Oliveri, Gargi Bhattacharyya, and Janna Graham, *How Media and Conflicts Make Migrants*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).
 26. Claudia Aradau, “Political grammars of mobility, security and subjectivity” in *Mobilities*, 11:4, 564–574. (2016)
 27. More on this matter can be found in “The Processes of Migrantification: How Displaced People are Made into Migrants,” in *How Media and Conflicts Make Migrants*, 134–42.
 28. Frigga Haug, “Memory-work as a Method of Social Science Research: A Detailed Rendering of Memory-Work Method”, <http://www.friggahaug.inkrit.de/documents/memorywork-researchguide17.pdf>
 29. Kirsten Forkert, Gargi Bhattacharyya, Federico Oliveri, and Janna Graham, *How Media and Conflicts Make Migrants*, 12.
 30. Ibid, 179–205.
 31. “Resisting Migrantification,” Conflict Memory Displacement, accessed 20 May 2021, <https://conflictmemorydisplacement.com/online-exhibition/resisting-migrantification/>.
 32. Examples of media depictions analysed in the project can be found in *How Media and Conflicts Make Migrants*, 134–42 and on the project blog
 33. Martina Tazzioli “Containment through mobility: migrants” spatial disobediences and the reshaping of control through the hotspot system,’ *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no. 16 (2018a): 2764–79, [10.1080/1369183X.2017.1401514](https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1401514).
 34. Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (London, UK: Pluto Press, 1974).
 35. It should be mentioned here that both Nottingham Contemporary and Serpentine Galleries have longer term engagement programmes, indeed Implicated Theatre is a long standing programme supported by Serpentine. In both cases these kinds of programmes are profiled and funded to a significantly lesser degree than the exhibition practices—in both cases, funding is, for example, not considered to be core funded activity and fundraised for separately to core exhibition programming. Where support for the more reproductive dimensions of these groups does exist, it is often out of the hands, passions (and pockets) of educational curators operating in less central roles.
 36. Hannah Arendt “The Human Condition” 104–6 (Arendt, 1958).
 37. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 170–72
 38. Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” *Social Text*, no. 25/26 (1990): 56–80. (Fraser, 1990a).
 39. Silvia Federici’s *Caliban and the Witch*, Ukeles Manifesto for Maintenance Art, Wages for Housework. (Baker and Collective, 1995).
 40. Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking The Public Sphere: A Contribution To The Critique Of Actually Existing Democracy,” *Social Text*, 25/26 (1990): 56–80. (Fraser, 1990a).
 41. Heston A. Baker Jr., “Critical Memory and the Black Public Sphere” in *The Black Public Sphere: A Public Culture Book*, ed. The Black Public Sphere Collective (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 5–38.
 42. Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere And Experience: Toward An Analysis Of The Bourgeois And Proletarian Public Sphere*, trans. Peter Labanyi, Jamie Owen Daniel and Assebja Oksiloff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) p 202.
 43. Gargi Battacharyya, *Rethinking Racial Capitalism: Questions of Reproduction and Survival* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018): 1.
 44. Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016): .
 45. Battacharyya, *Rethinking Racial Capitalism*, x.
 46. Ibid, ix.
 47. Forkert, Oliveri, Bhattacharyya, and Graham, *How Media and Conflicts Make Migrants*, 12–24

48. (Trampoline House, 2021), <https://www.trampolinehouse.dk/>
49. <http://thesilentuniversity.org/>
50. Battacharyya, *Rethinking Racial Capitalism*, x.
51. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, quoted in Angela Mitropoulos, *Contract & Contagion: from biopolitics to oikonomia* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2012a): 115.
52. Mitropoulos, *Contract & Contagion*, 40.
53. Ibid, 103.
54. Ibid, 18.
55. Isabell Lorey, *State of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious*, trans. Aileen Derieg (London: Verso Books, 2015a): 129.
56. Mitropoulos, *Contract & Contagion*, 18.
57. Mitropoulos, *Contract & Contagion*, 114.
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