Impossible Glossary

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Impossible Glossary

In September 2013, when we received an invitation from the Irish agency Create to participate as members of the European Collaborative Arts Partnership Programme (CAPP), we saw this project as a unique opportunity to work on both the practice and theory of the notion of collaborative artistic practice in Spain.

With the support of Acción Cultural Española (AC/E), we created a national network in parallel to that of Europe, comprised of four Spanish art centers from different autonomous communities: ACVic (Vic, Catalonia), Centro Huarte (Huarte, Navarra), Medialab Prado (Madrid), and Tabakalera (San Sebastián, Basque Country). Together, we generated a four-year program that ranged from research residencies to workshops, seminars, and support for artistic production, in order to foster the development of links between Spanish creators and institutions, and their counterparts in other regions of Europe.

In initial conversations with our international partners at CAPP, we also realized that, in the English-speaking world, theories about these practices had been under development for years. This knowledge, however, had not yet fully reached the Spanish-speaking world. One important explanation for this absence of discourse on collaborative practice is the lack of Spanish translations of key texts from the English-speaking debate as well as an almost complete absence of English translations of Spanish writing on this subject.

This realization sparked the idea of accompanying the CAPP project's activities with a theoretical framework that would serve to reflect current debate on this type of practice in Spain. We invited a group of artists, theorists, and activists to review the subject from different standpoints and decided to publish the *Impossible Glossary* in two editions—Spanish and English—to give voice to the Spanish context in the international setting. It is our hope that this work will help contrast our debate with

that of other countries—both those within the CAPP network (Germany, Finland, Hungary, England, and Ireland) and the rest of the world.

In 2015, when we began our research for the *Impossible Glossary*, we found that interest in this subject had grown in recent years, especially since the emergence in current politics of certain ideas associated with the 15-M Movement (for example, calls for greater popular participation in political decision-making that have resulted in public and participative consultation systems introduced by Ahora Madrid and Barcelona en Comú in their respective cities). It is now common, almost across the board, to speak of collaborative practices and participative mechanisms in all areas of our society. In the area of culture, institutions have begun to launch participative proposals, and there is a tendency to underwrite collaborative art projects that will have social repercussions. At the same time, cultural agents and the educational and pedagogical avant-garde, business leaders, and, of course, supporters of direct democracy—both populists and progressives—have lately been speaking of collaborative or peer-to-peer practices, cooperation, and participation as the preferred approach to solving a multitude of problems. This jargon draws fundamentally on social and activist practices and on an interest in the commons. The result of this discursive interference is a surreptitious cacophony: while we may all appear to be talking about the same thing, it is not the case.

This is the consideration underlying the title of our publication. It is indeed a glossary, as at first glance it follows the classical format of definitions or references to words that are all related to the same specific subject or discipline. In June 2016, we presented a digital first edition with texts and interviews related to the terms *agents*, *autonomy*, *authorship*, *context*, *collaboration*, *work*, and *return*. This material constitutes the basis for the present print edition, in which some of the contents of the digital version have been modified and new keywords—*trust*, *failure*, and *institution*—have been added.

Our publication thus joins other glossaries and dictionaries such as Subtramas' *Abecedario anagramático* (Anagramatic ABC); *Toward a Lexicon of Usership*, edited by Stephen Wright for the Van Abbemuseum on the occasion of Tania Bruguera's *Museum of Arte Útil*; and the *glossary*

of common knowledge, co-edited by the Museum of Modern Art plus Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova (MG+MSUM). These last two arose within the framework of the European project l'Internationale. But our publication also contributes an important processual component by characterizing itself as "impossible." Our intention with this book is that the more than thirty voices contained herein, would faithfully reflect the discursive discrepancy surrounding this subject.

Our contribution to this budding debate is therefore not to settle matters with a canonical definition but rather to use the platform and resources generated by our participation in the CAPP network to offer a view of the breadth and variety of viewpoints and opinions held by creators and other relevant agents currently working in this field. We are confident that our effort in bringing together all of these voices in a single publication will help to structure future theoretical discussions on collaborative practices, and that the debate, which until now has been limited to ourselves, the authors, and the interviewees, will branch out and generate new conclusions and initiatives that, in the long run, contribute to create our own body of theory to complement that of to the English-speaking discourse. **(hea)**

Impossible Glossary

Collaboration

Visionaries, Authors, and Mediators: Approaches to Collaboration

hablarenarte

All the authors in this compendium were invited to participate because of their close ties to collaborative practices. But an attentive reading of the *Impossible Glossary* reveals the controversy surrounding the word *collaboration* itself. Despite differing and sometimes opposing concepts of this key term, another common denominator seems to appear: all of the authors share an interest in the social and in working with a given context, through there practice.

This form of working suggests an approach to groups of heterogeneous agents to generate shared work. In the texts that make up this book, we have observed that these approaches generally take three forms: some seek the greatest possible horizontality, defining their practice with a clear use of mediation and education. Others have a stronger sense of authorship and use collaborative processes to shape it. Still others want their work to generate social or political change that extends beyond the concrete project.

Collaborative practice in art contexts thus emerges as a "tool" customarily employed by an artist, institution, or, less frequently, a community to propose work with an "other" who normally comes from different social or professional strata. In order for this community of heterogeneous collaborators to become more than a artificially connected group of individuals, there has to be a basis of trust and a shared goal. At the same time, we cannot take this basis for granted as something intrinsic to members of such a group.

In order for a collaboration to bear fruit, therefore, its promoter must be capable of fostering this trust and interest within the group. As Christian Fernández Mirón points out in his interview, the person who initiates this type of process has to guide the events. "The goal is to create a trusting environment so that people begin to propose things, to contradict, and to question. That is when a collective or collaborative process can truly begin."[1]

1. These and all the following citations in this essay are from texts and interviews included in this book.

The individual who instigates or awakens those feelings in the group may not be the project's author, but he or she will undoubtedly wield authority. Of the three approaches mentioned above, two differ in their interpretation on this subject. The approach in which a defined author is most implicit, and the one that is most activist, are characterized by a very practical approach understanding of the idea of collaboration: this process is a suitable tool for meeting objectives. As María Ruido states in her interview, collaboration is proposed from the artist's perspective. Similarly, although from a very different ideological standpoint, Fernando García-Dory draws on an ethos of useful art to defend the idea that valid artistic practice consists of insuring that the resultant work has value and "real" returns—economic benefits, for example— in a determined social context. This approach is criticized by those who consider that the collectives involved are not taken into account as such, and are there only to insure the attainment of goals other than their own. But this criticism overlooks the fact that collaborations can also occur when there is an authorial vision—this is exemplified by Orquestina de Pigmeos' description of its practice. Moreover, as these two approaches are normally very concrete, with a practical conception and specific objectives, the problems are not ontological. Instead, they arise to a greater degree during the field work, when earlier communication between the artist and the collective breaks down.

The third formula for approaching a context consists of employing a horizontal methodology for stimulating a collective process that is incipient in the group. In this case, the invitation to collaborate is not just a *means* to an end; it is also an end unto itself. The possible problems presented by this interpretation of collaborative art practices lie in the initiative's necessary ambiguity during the initial contact, which seeks to stimulate a process but can also usurp it. This places the artist in the uncomfortable position of promoting a process that he or she seeks only to accompany. In his essay "Going Beyond Artistic Authorship," Diego del Pozo explains the considerations of an artist who finds him or herself in that situation: he or she has to be careful not to usurp the voice of the collective with which he is working, not to exploit his authority and become authoritarian, and not to use the process for his own purposes.

By constantly gauging his or her own position in the group, an artist can avoid these possible conflicts, but then they are assuming the role of a mediator or educator.

Now, the ambiguity that surrounds an artist in this situation poses two questions. One involves analyzing the artist's function as well as his or her capacity in relation to the social. The other calls for questioning the idea of collaboration as an *artistic* tool. With regard to the first, many authors insist that the artist possesses an ontological potential that affords him or her a certain capacity to resignify our way of seeing and doing. Even though the "stale romantic idea" of the artist as genius is generally rejected, and there is little support for the idea that "artistic" is synonymous with "creative," many of the *Glossary's* authors also insist that art is not limited to mere social functionality. As Jordi Claramonte observed in a criticism of the 2015 Turner Prize-winning Assemble collective, an interest in influencing or contributing to a context does not automatically cause the artist to lose track of the aesthetic potentialites. Good artistic practice endeavors to generate a composition that meets all requirements "somewhere between formal elaboration, political efficacy, and fucking fun."

From a methodological standpoint, the primary question about using collaboration as an artistic tool addresses the artist's conversion into a mediator. This transformation, as Javier Montero comments in his text "Vanishing Points," can fetter the artist's critical and transgressive potential. And this is especially conflictive in processes where the collaboration has been proposed by institutions or businesses. That is the context in which Diego del Pozo coined the term *neo-genius* to characterize the least radical version of the artist's function, "at times aestheticizing their most subversive aspects and at others merely supplanting them." In "Constellations, Glossaries, and Functions," Es Baluard's education team offers much the same criticism, but they defend the museum's interest in working primarily with artists, whom they view as "participating collaborators" rather than "unique creators." As such, the museum expects them to "contribute, from the perspective of their creative processes, to the collective pedagogical experience."

These two viewpoints encompass an entire debate about the pertinence of institutional participation in collaborative practices. The institution is a third variable added to a community-artist equation already burdened with conflicts, and it makes the process even more complicated. Formerly, it was the artist who approaches a community; now it is the institution that drives the project. Therefore, the institution should be the one to generate a relation of trust with the artist, who in turn must make this proposal their own in order to approach the community. But since the institution/artist relation is often not based on conditions of equality (whether material or ideological), there is frequently a degree of wariness with regard to the honesty of the motives behind this relation, to insure that there is no abuse of established authority and that the process does not itself become authoritarian. By way of an example, Fernando García-Dory points out this kind of constellation's dangerous tendency to perpetuate the status quo. And in DEMOCRACIA's opinion, projects carried out in this sort of quasi-preestablished framework can serve as simulacra for real political exercises: "bestowing a feeling of participation that is later denied outside the realm of art itself." When artists take on an institution's proposal as a very concrete commission, the relation can prosper, as Christian Fernández Mirón comments. But when they are more interested in a relation among peers, they become frustrated by the consideration that collaboration is being employed as the means to a greater end, which they have not foreseen as such.

Over the last four years, within the framework of the CAPP project, we at hablarenarte have learned that these problematics are real and can burden institution-artist-community relations, even when all parties begin with the best of intentions. Three of the four collaborative projects that we carried out as part of the CAPP program were two- or three-month residencies for artists from outside the local contexts in Huarte, San Sebastián, and Vic. We were interested in developing the idea of collaboration from a more horizontal approach, and we sought projects that arose from the very heart of the local contexts with which we were working. In order for a project to be meaningful for the local context, we drew on our local members to find locally rooted artistic counterparts that could catalyze relations between the artist in residence and the

social surroundings, thus strengthening common ground among local agents. When they were empowered and provided with ideas that arose from interaction with the artist in residence, these people would take over after the artist's residency had ended, continuing to work for their communities.

That, at least, was the theory. In practice we found that this idea did not always work out as we had imagined. Our role as the projects' delocalized producers, instigators, and financiers automatically thrust us into the ambiguous role described above: out of respect for the artists and the community, we did not want to overly intervene in the processes, but at the same time we saw that they often needed our mediation to continue moving forward. Moreover, our situation as financiers not only obliged us to keep track of expenses so that we could justify project costs to the organisms that were underwriting them, but also forced us to supervise certain aspects of the collaboration in economic terms. The projects arising from this initial approach clearly reflect this conceptual duality.

These experiences have led us to the conclusion that those of us working in this field as producers must either limit ourselves to simply financing independent projects or, if we want to play a more active role, must become participants who express our opinions, discuss, and build relations with the artist and with all of the projects' other collaborators. But this ideal is difficult to attain, quite simply, and sadly, because the level of personal dedication demanded by total involvement in the project is untenable in terms of both time and money. Our "independent" status confers us a conceptual freedom and a philosophy that in theory makes us ideally suited to accompany such a project, but at the same time we are obliged to function according to a working logic that makes it impossible to adequately respond to the idiosyncrasy of a social and horizontal collaborative process that requires other rhythms and tempos.

In the text "The Return Is the Common," Haizea Barcenilla mentions the Nouveaux Commanditaires model, which is based on a protocol established by François Hers. This proposes a strategy in which the

artist can free up his or her artistic potential without having to initiate a process and without having to work hand in hand with the institution. Instead, the artist simply takes part in a *collective* experience. The Nouveaux Commanditaire methodology seeks to return the initiative to the collective, suggesting that it guides the process and that it be the one to propose working with an artist. In order to avoid conflict in the balance between mediation and creation, this methodology proposes a third agent who is familiar with both the social and cultural world and who can mediate between collective interests and those of the artist.

The Nouveaux Commanditaire model is not devoid of challenges. First, such a project can only function when there is a financing body willing to cover all of the invisible and unforeseeable costs generated by this type of negotiation when it involves artist, collective, and mediator. At the same time, it is necessary to keep in mind known conflicts that can emerge according to the role this entity decides to adopt in the process. Second, and more importantly, if the initiative arises from civil society, the artist will only be able to act if invited to do so. But a community's decision to extend such an invitation implies that it has already reached such a level of awareness and strength that the social and transgressive impact of an artist's participation will not have any real political repercussions. The artist's actions are in danger of merely aestheticizing community desires. And yet, we must recognize that by returning the initiative to the community, this methodology sidesteps many of the problems mentioned earlier. Most of all, it affords the artist a degree of autonomy by inviting him or her to form part of the collective process while simultaneously exercising the freedom to adopt his or her own point of view. In this regard, Haizea Barcenilla speaks of "co-responsibility" rather than horizontal collaboration.

Some say that the choice proposed here is based on the old fallacy that, in order to be "true" artistic practice, it must enjoy an autonomy that is understood as independent of context. This point of view defends the idea that when an artist works with a community, rather than becoming a mediator, he or she interprets mediation as an artistic practice, so that autonomy emerges *through* his or her relation with the context. Diego del Pozo observes, in that sense, that artistic practice, research, and

mediation merge to form "a hybrid space overflowing with the production of knowledge and culture that does not correspond 'to being a specialist or expert in.'"

This philosophy has already been adopted by leading technological enterprises that preach the advantages of creating areas of trust where fear of ridicule or error does not exist and it is thus possible to brainstorm, discovering new ideas that improve processes or solve previously identified problems. It would hardly be news that Google and the like have appropriated the idea of collaborative practice and generated a mercantilist version of areas of trust, were it not for the fact that this illustrates the growing influence of the private sector in the production of free knowledge, which was previously produced almost exclusively in the public domain. If this mechanism is usurped by a small group of companies competing with each other and ultimately motivated to protect and increase the value of their shares, we can soon expect to lose free access to an important shared asset. From that viewpoint, it doesn't seem like a bad idea at all to insist on collaboration as an aesthetic practice capable of helping to recover trust in the interest of something as valuable as the generation of free knowledge.

Interview with Maider López

The work of Maider López (b. 1975, San Sebastián) revolves around public space and its transformation through the presence of human beings. Her artworks often require the participation and collaboration of groups of people, whom she subtly integrates into her proposals. They can play a more or less active role, but they are invariably the basis of her work, whether in the development of the artist's initial approach or by taking part in the construction of a final piece.

—www.maiderlopez.com

Nearly all of your works seek, or require, an active participation of a group of people in order to function properly. Yet the degree of participation can vary depending on the project.

Yes. First a project arises, and then the process. When it involves participation by actual people, I distinguish three levels of participation. Projects like *Ataskoa* (Traffic Jam), *Piscine Saint George*, and *Polder Cup* are examples of proposals in which the public forms an integral part of the work. A factor in which I lack a degree of control always comes into play at this point, because the participants/collaborators create a temporary community based on a proposal of mine. At the other extreme are projects like *Parkings* or *Crossing*, in which I act as an observer, focusing attention on the way in which we move or act in public space, transforming it through our presence. In these projects, participation may even take on an involuntary form. The participants are active agents insofar as they act in the public space, transforming it, but they may not be aware that they are doing so. Between these two extremes lie those projects in which I am also moved by this same interest as an observer, but in which I myself create a situation that expresses something about reality, such as *366 Sillas* (366 Chairs) or *Entrada libre* (Free Entry). These proposals require active participation. The people must perform a specific action (such as sitting in a beach chair located in public space, or picking up and turning on an illuminated umbrella), but because they are framed within other, specific or leisurely, contexts and are quite subtle, participants—even acting as active agents—achieve another degree of involvement in the project.

You use the words "collaboration" and "participation" almost as synonyms. Is there any qualitative difference between the two in your view?

They are terms that I use with my own personal connotations. It is difficult to enter into the game of dialectics, above all with commonplace words such as these, which are ultimately used in both theory and in artistic practice without

pp. 22–23: Maider López, *Ataskoa* (Traffic Jam), Intza, Navarra, 2005

having a clear definition. Therefore, it is preferable to use an example like the aforementioned work *Ataskoa*, which consisted of creating a situation based on getting 450 people to come to the woods in the town of Inza with their cars in order to produce an artificial traffic jam. In this project there were collaborators at different levels: institutions, which made the project possible at a logistical and budgetary level; and collaboration with the people of Inza, where the project was carried out. The entire town worked together to create the traffic jam and the social event surrounding it: the mayor frying peppers, a local neighbor brought cider... Everybody brought what they knew or what they wanted to and, from there, we all worked together.

Of course, there was also the participation of the people who came by car and created the traffic jam. Through the many different collaborative tasks with the people, small social communities were formed among the participants that, in turn, made up the larger temporary community. It created an emotional bond with the project that transcended the level of mere participation.

What does collaborative practice consist of in your view? Do you consider your work or any of your projects to include this artistic dimension?

In England, the social art phenomenon is very widespread and the term is used as if it were almost synonymous with collaborative art. Within this context, it is interesting to read the essay by Fulya Erdemci on my exhibition *Desplazamiento* (Displacement), at the Koldo Mitxelena cultural center in San Sebastián, in which he highlights that I do not make social art because I do not work with specific communities. In effect, what I attempt to create with my projects are unusual meeting points that also contribute to creating temporary communities, which can play an important social role by creating a space in which we construct a shared reality, at the same time respecting everyone's different realities. However, in the same respect, they have a clear formalization in mind, which is very important in my work. The works are based on an (at times intrinsic) idea in order to then achieve formalization. The work that is produced functions by itself.

One example is *Polder Cup*, an event in which an announcement was made for people to participate in a soccer tournament in the polders of Holland,

dried-up marshes used for agricultural purposes, in which the soccer fields are crisscrossed by water channels. Polder Cup came about in response to an invitation by the Witte de With in Rotterdam to carry out an intervention on its façade. And this formal commission became the starting point for a broader project that created a temporary community. In general, my participatory projects arise from these sorts of constellations: a collaborative proposal between an institution and myself in which I transform its usual functions, using the project to force its social involvement to surpass the customary limits of an artistic institution. For example, the Witte de With Center was turned into a site for signing up and creating the teams for the Polder Cup tournament.

To sum up, obviously I am interested in all of the social actions taking place around the events I produce, and this year it has even been designed in such a way that the institutional and individual collaborators can contribute new perspectives as a result of the action. At this performative level, there is undoubtedly a social and collaborative facet to my work. However, there is also a very clear formalization that goes beyond just the specific dynamics of the project itself. This formalization is also meant to generate new perspectives, but through the objectual and formal in addition to the experiential. This two-faceted dimension of my projects is also reflected in their formalization, which could be summarized as *zoom-out and zoom-in*: aerial images that document the environment's transformation through activity, but also specific images of the social moment and the individualities that comprise it.

You have occasionally been defined as a "stage director" who carries out her work as if it were a "staged scene."

I can in fact be the stage director, as in, for example, *Piscine Saint George*, in which I set very specific guidelines. However, each participant's individual experience in the project is essential, regardless of whether I am directing the scene. The formal is what endures across time, but the foundation underlying it is this social "happening." And that foundation also has another life that is lived independently. The action does not end at any specific moment. Ten years after *Ataskoa*, people still remember and talk to me about why they took part. **(hea)**

Interview with DEMOCRACIA

DEMOCRACIA is a collective founded in 2006 in Madrid by its two members, Pablo España and Iván López. Their artistic practice is centered on discussing ideas and forms of action and in approaches engaged with social reality. In this way, they visualize certain aspects of our everyday lives and generate viewpoints and dialogues that invite viewers to become active participants and reflect upon issues of our surroundings. DEMOCRACIA regularly collaborates with different collectives to speak about the problems we face, proposing a production based on a concern for the increasing staging of spaces of coexistence.

—www.democracia.com.es

What role does collaborative artistic practice have for DEMOCRACIA, which also works collectively as an artistic agent?

Before answering that, we should make clear our position that, though it may seem somewhat maximalist, also defines our view of collaborative creation: every work of art is the result of a collaborative process that means more than just understanding production processes in which many different agents may have been involved, but also includes the reception of the work. In other words, if a certain artistic practice becomes relevant, it is because a specific audience or community places a value on that practice and appropriates it for itself, causing it to have meaning. This factor, which has to do with expectation (with public interest), is often ignored because of the import of the idea, which we don't share, of the spectator as a passive agent. It also has to do with this stale romantic idea of the author as genius. However, as we say, if there is a community that makes a specific practice its own and instills it with relevance, then the creative process is always collective.

Now, let us imagine that this question regarding collaborative artistic practice is more closely related to specific work with communities in which a project is being carried out and, in turn, the project involves a real interest among cultural mediators and managers in these types of practices. If this were the case, we would have to ascertain to what extent these practices act as surrogates for true political exercises, which become neutralized under the category of "contemporary art," with the intention of bestowing a feeling of participation that is later denied outside the realm of art itself. Take, for instance, actions sponsored by cultural entities that are given legal status despite being illegal when they are performed in everyday life, creating the paradox that an institution can provide legal walls to certain urban artists while at the same time graffiti is harshly punished.

DEMOCRACIA functions based on a solid core of two people who design the collective's agenda, but around them lie concentric rings of collaborators. The first ring of stable collaborators, related with the production of texts, design, video editing, music, and photography, maintain their own autonomy within the end goals of each project, while at the same time they form the collective itself and share its objectives. With the second ring of one-off collaborators we carry out a series of temporary activities that end with the completion of a specific project. This would be the case of the different communities or other groups with which we cooperate, who also play a role in aesthetic production.

Our work in the public sphere has led us to seek out collaborative projects with different groups, collectives, and communities that have a shared objective, but sometimes, after our field work, we end up taking action without them, because we determine that a consensus-based solution, the tendency toward which all collaborative practices lean, would have diminished the radical nature of the communicative action in question.

What role is played by this second ring of external collaborators in your work? I mean, in projects such as *Ne vous laissez pas consoler* with the Ultramarines of the Girondins football team of Bordeaux, or *Ser y Durar* (Being and Lasting) with parkour practitioners?

The role they acquire is that of direct collaborators, but the nature and degree of involvement varies, because there is not just one standard way to work that is then applied in the same way in all situations. It depends on the context. As for the examples you mentioned, with the Ultramarines, in effect, this turned into a full-fledged cooperation in which we sought out a language to reflect a shared ideology of an emancipatory nature. The Ultramarines collaborated with us to create the work at both the conceptual level—because they were being self-represented in terms to which they were not accustomed aesthetically—and the tactical level, because they applied their own communication tools when it came time to distribute the resources produced as merchandising items for soup kitchens.

We are not sure whether the case of *Ser y Durar* could be included within this category of collaborative art that seeks to delimit the community actually involved. In our collaborative work with the parkour group, we sought different goals, but we converged in an alliance of interests: on our side, there was, among other issues, an interest in introducing a political message into an urban subculture that regularly presents itself as being apolitical, whereas the parkour group had the need to produce an audiovisual product showcasing its activities.

To what extent do the collaborating agents of your projects actually form part of the work in which they are involved? Does it go so far that you could call it "co-authorship"?

Of course, there is always co-authorship, as in the case of the Ultramarines we just discussed, or the parkour project, because we adopted their own aesthetics and did not use something created by ourselves, in terms of both the uniform design and in the editing of a video that respected the cultural grammar of audiovisuals related with this urban sport. The whole reason for doing this is that we wanted the work to get disseminated within the community of that specific subculture.

There are also certain processes in which a portion of our production is used by other collectives for social purposes. When they appropriate it for themselves, they add new layers of meaning: for example, in Mexico, our *Estado Asesino* (Killer State) and *Libertad para los muertos* (Freedom for the Dead) signs were used in the "Marches for Peace and Justice with Dignity" in Ciudad Juárez; our logo for the *Sin Estado* (Stateless) project was used by the CNT in Jaén to make T-shirts for their self-managed entity, and in Manresa, the Bages per a Tothom association produced an episode of its television program by evaluating the impact of the *Subtextos* (Subtexts) project in the city along with the local Moroccan community. This was quite interesting because, though Subtextos was created without the Arab-speaking community's collaboration, the way in which they perceived the intervention helped add new levels of significance to the project. **(A.G.A)**

Context

Walking in Ice:
Artistic Practices in Context

Francisca Blanco Olmedo

Francisca Blanco Olmedo, (Murcia, 1979) is a producer and a cultural researcher. Since 2007 she is part of the curatorial team of Intermediæ Matadero, where she carries out experimental collaborative art projects. Between 2003 and 2007, she was the coordinator of Medialab Madrid, a precedent of Medialab-Prado, where the dialogue between art, science, technology and society generated innovative cultural and social research processes. She has a degree in Art History (UM, 2001), a Master in Contemporary Art History and Visual Culture (UAM, 2016) and a Master in Cultural Management (UCM, 2003). She is researching the genealogy of art understood as a social praxis and its relationship with the new forms of cultural production.

The Collective Condition of Context*

Working within and with context would seem to be one way to rethink the question of the social function of art and its place in the public sphere.[1] Art practices responsive to setting are called upon to address the problems and issues of life in the city, which, according to Manuel Delgado, is the space where "individuals and groups define and structure their relationships with power; submitting to it, but also disobeying or ignoring it through all kinds of self-organized formations."[2] As such, art practices can contribute to the creation of these formations or micropolitical spaces capable of generating locally based action areas committed to reality and to its transformation. Furthermore, generating a context is creating a place for articulation where connections and networks can be established through which new imaginaries are created. It is also an experience of new forms of organization that can be transformed into experiences of citizen empowerment. Art practices can thus participate in the reactivation of the collective imagination, mobilizing and producing political subjectivities that challenge established narratives and contribute, for example, to the participation of local residents in decisions about the place they live.

When we speak of *context* within the field of art, we are referring not only to a physical environment but something much broader, which ultimately has to do with the social fabric and its cultural construction. Working with context can thus issue a call to an entire neighborhood as well as to a social movement.

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*I would like to thank Olga Fernández López and Santiago Barber for helping me shape this text with her comments and corrections.

1. The title of this essay was inspired by Werner Herzog's text *Of Walking in Ice*. With respect to the title "The Collective Condition of Context," I am referring to its collective nature, which is the result of the social and cultural constructs of people, communities, and the networks that inhabit this context, or, in other words, context as the "collective production of social order." See Isaac Marrero, "La producción del espacio público. Fundamentos teóricos y metodológicos para una etnografía de lo urbano," *(con)textos. Revista d'antropologia i investigació social*, no. 1 (May 2008), p. 74.

2. We understand the city in a broad sense, as a population center with its own administrative authority, regardless of whether, given its size, it may be referred to by another name. Manuel Delgado, "De la ciudad concebida a la ciudad practicada," *Archipiélago. Cuadernos de crítica de la cultura*, no. 62 (2004), p. 9.

To describe this in terms of the discipline of art, we could allude to the "outside" of the art institution, an outside that broadens, extends, destabilizes, or even dissolves the traditional idea of the art space, and resignifies it through new relationships with its social context.[3]

As Jesús Carrillo points out, "Collaborative work in situ would seem to allow for an effective articulation of art practice in the social space, providing a way out of the dead end to which late modernism and postmodern cartographies had arrived in their aesthetic reflections on space."[4]

However, far from being a utopian territory where art leaves behind its self-absorption and rejoins life—in sites with no real place[5]—working in dialogue with context means addressing the challenges, contradictions, and tensions that permeate a specific place. But just merely treading the slippery ground of collaboration does not in itself legitimize it; for this, one must experience and critique the collaborative practice itself.

The past thirty years have witnessed in Spain a gradual legitimization of collaborative art practices, the development of which can be situated within critical and public art, social and educational shifts, and the new institutionalism. Although the precedent for these practices can be found in the first act action groups of the late sixties and early seventies, typically expressed in terms of political or activist art,[6] it was only in the nineties that the notion of collaboration came into more frequent use with the emergence of a series of artistic and cultural experiences, both individual and collective, that would renew a desire to impact actively on a given territory and social context from a critical approach.

While outside of Spain a wide range of terms has been used to refer to this kind of art, such as Suzanne Lacy's "new genre of public art," within Spain the term most commonly used by academics, artists, and institutions is "collaborative practices," together with the terminology that identifies these practices with a context.[7]

Thus, in searching for an appropriate term, was coined "arte en contexto" (contextual art), suggested by Jordi Claramonte in his book of the same name, to refer to socially and politically articulated practices "that could be characterized by the care put into the productive and political contextualization of their work." Contextual art would be shaped by the modes of relations it generates.[8]

Also with a specific focus on contextual practice and addressing a range of collaborative practices are the publications by the Transductores collective, particularly their third book. This volume provides a broad range of experiences in Spain, and seeks to share methodologies and tools for location-based work from fields traditionally seen as rather distant from one another, such as academia and centers of art, and through different layers, such as production, mediation, curatorship, and research.[9]

From New Social Movements to Citizen Initiatives

The significance of art practices that adopt collective processes in order to address certain social issues can be found in the political dimension of intervening in public space. In this sense, and as a reflection of underlying power relations, public space remains a crucial arena for contemporary aesthetic debate, a space for action and reinterpretation, and a laboratory for new forms of criticism and revindication through diverse means. In Spain, most of these forms of protest are found within the historical culture and in the creation of a dissident space, to which, in one way or another, artistic practice now belongs.

The 1990s saw the emergence of new social movements as well as the resurgence of community-based organizations that were threatened and weakened during the Franco era and that remained in a fragmented state

3. In order to visualize political, social, and financial systems that often remain invisible, hidden, or unknown, useful tools do exist, such as Bureau d'Etudes' *An Atlas of Agendas: Mapping the Power, Mapping the Commons* (Eindhoven: Onomatopee, 2014), or other visualization projects such as "Visualizar" by Medialab Prado, <www.medialab-prado.es/visualizar>.
4. Jesús Carrillo, "Espacialidad y arte público," in *Modos de hacer. Arte crítico, esfera pública y acción directa*, ed. Paloma Blanco et al. (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2001), p. 135.
5. "Utopias are sites with no real place," from Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias," trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1986), p. 24. Originally a conference given in French entitled "Des espaces autres," Cercle des d'études architecturales, 14 March 14, 1967, and published in *Architecture Mouvement Continuité (AMC)*, no. 5 (October 1984).
6. See Nina Felshin, *But Is It Art? The Spirit of Art as Activism* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), pp. 8–29.

7. Some of the most commonplace terms are "community arts," "participatory art" (C. Bishop); "collaborative art," "socially engaged art" and "dialogical aesthetics" (G. Kester); "relational aesthetics" (N. Bourriaud); "littoral art" (B. Barber); "collective artistic praxis" (M. Kwon); "social practice" (E. Gold); "placemaking" (J. Jacobs, W. H. Whyte, W. Berry); "useful art" (T. Bruguera); "contextual art" (P. Ardenne); "Kontext Kunst" (P. Weibel); "post-autonomous art practices" (N. García Canclini); "situated practice" and "connective aesthetics" (S. Gablik).
8. Jordi Claramonte, *Arte de contexto* (San Sebastián: Nerea, 2011), p. 93. Though published in 2011, the issue of what was to be understood as collaborative art practices had been under discussion since the late 1990s and early 2000s. One of the most interesting examples is the Reunión 03 seminar (Universidad Internacional de Andalucía [UNIA], 2003), at which over thirty collectives and people working on "art practices of social interference" come together, and at which was held one of the first conferences dedicated to collaborative art, organized by La Fiambrera Barroca (Curro Aix y Santiago Barber), entitled "Ora et colabora. Mesa poliédrica en torno al arte colaborativo," <www.ayp.unia.es/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=193>
9. Antonio Collados and Javier Rodrigo, *Transductores 3. Prácticas artísticas en contexto. Itinerarios, útiles y estrategias,* Antonio Collados and Javier Rodrigo eds. (Granada: Diputación Provincial de Granada, 2015).

during the 1980s. Citizen movements were thus reborn, and in particular the neighborhood movement, which would play an important role in sharing its experiences in civil action, a role often ignored by official narratives.[10] At the same time, a new wave of squatting and self-organized social centers coincided with increasing numbers of nonprofit associations and organizations as well as independent art and cultural centers. These last would gradually introduce a more collective, socially oriented focus to art and would come to play an important role, functioning more or less free from governmental influence.[11]

Out of this breeding ground, where there was an urgent need for the revision of the dominant discourses of the institutions and where diverse means of resistance and of creating conditions of possibility—of "doing not waiting"—were flourishing, emerged a rich landscape of artistic initiatives that sought a greater connection to context. Paloma Blanco has described how in the 1990s a large number of collaborative practices "articulated new forms of intervention in the public arena with varying degrees of effectiveness and importance."[12] It was here that artistic practices found a development path with an enormous critical potential, which meant identifying the context via social movements and initiatives and finding expression within them; in other words, forming part of their structure of protest and revindication as well as their constituent processes. On one side, strategies were adopted from social movements that helped to more effectively articulate their practices, while on the other, these movements were influenced through their way of working and the introduction of new discourses and symbolic frameworks.[13] As a result, as pointed out by Marcelo Expósito, collaborative practices have been identified as one of the two critical currents in the repoliticization of aesthetic practices in Spain since the mid-1990s, specifically the reestablishment of ties between the art world and the reorganized social movements.[14] In this regard, it is interesting to see, for example, the connections to some of the arguments used by the autonomist movement, such as the demand for direct participation and horizontality in

order to achieve a social activation of political power, a mistrust of institutions, or many of its strategies and tactics developed in dialogue with the specific realities of their context. The truth is, however, that collaborative practices searching for an effective implementation in social space are stimulated by methodologies and tools from outside the art world, not only from the activist community but also from other disciplines and modes of cultural production, or those that are produced through exchanges with other fields of knowledge. Some examples of art's convergence with social movements can be seen in the work of collectives such as Agustín Parejo School in their action *Sin vivienda* (Homeless, 1991), in which the group demonstrated alongside Vecinos sin Vivienda, an association representing residents without a home, in the streets of Málaga; and La Figuera Crítica, Barcelona, which was born from a collaboration with the Plataforma Cívica d'Associacions de Veïns (Civic Platform of Neighborhood Associations) to protest against the Barça 2000 project. Another example worth mentioning is La Fiambrera in the modalities of Obrera (Madrid), Barroca (Sevilla), and Garrofera (Valencia), whose work has meaningfully stimulated these movements. La Fiambrera's participation in different antiglobalization demonstrations attests to their identification with the notion of the context as well as their intervention within it through the concept of creating a global public sphere.[15] And yet, most of their work is expressed in a commitment to their most immediate and everyday context, a space also dominated by capitalism and its urban policies and speculative ventures, and where they develop some of their most important strategies of denunciation and articulation. Experiences such as those of *El Lobby Feroz* (The Ferocious Lobby, Madrid, 1998), together with Mar Núñez, Nieves Correa and Hilario Álvarez, or *Alameda de Hércules in Seville*[16], represent interesting examples of a social mobilization to combat a problem affecting an entire neighborhood, and which consisted of distinct actions and artistic interventions in public spaces as a means to publicize conflicts and denounce urban speculation.[17]

10. See Vicente Pérez Quintana and Pablo Sánchez León, eds., *Memoria ciudadana y movimiento vecinal. Madrid 1968–2008* (Madrid: Catarata, 2009).
11. An interesting example is Espacio Tangente (Burgos) that, since 2002, organizes the *Foro Arte y Territorio*, which is a discursive space addressing issues such as territory in the creation of identity, or artistic and political interventions in the urban environment, and with a scope of work that embraces questions such as citizen participation in art actions within public space. See <www.www.espaciotangente.net>.
12. Paloma Blanco, "Prácticas artísticas colaborativas en la España de los años noventa," *Desacuerdos,* no. 2 (2005), p. 192.
13. La Fiambrera have argued this position on different occasions.
14. The other current would be that of biopolitical production through the analysis of gender and sexual difference, although this does not mean that the two currents are mutually exclusive, as can be seen in the examples of the LSD collective or the Radical Gai group. See Marcelo Expósito, "La imaginación política radical. El arte, entre la ejecución virtuosa y las nuevas clases de luchas," *Desacuerdos*, no. 2, p. 148.

15. The best-known example of this is Las Agencias (2001), which used the entire art production apparatus to demonstrate against the summit of the World Bank in Barcelona.
16. See Santi Barber et al., *El Gran Pollo de la Alameda. Cómo nació, creció y se resiste a ser comido. Una docena de años de lucha social en el barrio de la Alameda* (Seville: Consejo de Redacción del Gran Pollo de la Alameda, 2006), which shows some of the strategies and actions used and knowledge generated by the collectives, social movements, and people in this district of Seville. More information on the Gran Pollo de la Alameda (Freaking Out on the Alameda) can be found at their website: <www.nodo50.org/granpollodelaalameda/pollo.html>.
17. La Fiambrera maintain that "Anything that wants to go by the name of a context-based practice today has to be conceived as work that collaborates with the social and political movements that structure the social space where the 'work' is to take place…. It's not enough to make poetical allusions to kind people or folk—you have to shape a space where you are complicit with people who know how to make a political stand. Whether the social movements this happens in are highly structured or spontaneous, our work has to be effective and have a virtual political impact, while we maintain the rigor of formally realizing it in such a way that adds to its strength." *Fuera de. Revista de Arte*, n.s., no. 2 (Spring–Summer 2000), p. 44; reprinted in "Documentos," *Desacuerdos*, no. 8 (2014), pp. 309–12.

The platform Salvem el Cabanyal is another example of a social struggle to save an urban neighborhood, this in Valencia, threatened by the implementation of a development plan that deliberately caused its degradation and disregarded citizen demands. In a similar style, and since 1998, they organize the festival *Cabanyal Portes Obertes*. A broad collective of artists and residents participates in art interventions that invite people into the neighborhood streets and homes to educate them not only about the conflict but also about life in the area. These experiences, along with *reHABI(li)TAR Lavapiés* (Restructure and Inhabit Lavapiés)—organized by social movements in Lavapiés, a district in Madrid, and other groups within the Red de Colectivos de Lavapiés such as La Fiambrera, Zona de Acción Temporal, Cruce, and Public Art—represent some of the most important instances of self-managed public art in the Spanish context. In parallel to this, and in response to the possibility of working within public space, one can envision the increasingly common presence of festivals that attempt to break out of the logic of the public monument to incorporate more contextual, participatory projects.[18]

These groundbreaking experiences organized from a broad social base became catalysts for action, not only bringing communities together but also contributing to their construction and definition. A celebration of public space is a reclamation of a common spatiality in which art functions as a generator of the public sphere. It is a relational space in which rather than an inspiration for a formal proposal or a representation, context is understood as a commitment to the social, political, and cultural dimensions of this space. They are projects that treat art as a critical gesture planned on the ground, developing direct actions based on the participation and collaboration of a population awakened by a problem that directly affects them. Art thus comes to represent an act of citizenship, and through the empowered image of traditionally stigmatized neighborhoods makes it possible to resignify urban space. And yet while artistic practices contribute to a symbolic restructuring and a mobilization of public opinion, one cannot assume that this is an ideal framework of emancipation. In this sense, it is essential to reflect on who capitalizes on, and in what way, the work and

productivity of this community, along with what other agents, languages, and methodologies come into play in these processes.

As we said at the outset, there has been a proliferation in recent decades of initiatives open to dialogue with contextual problem areas, whether through calls for public art (Idensitat, Intracity, Mad, Madrid abierto) or through institutional programming (Medialab Madrid, Medialab Prado, Intermediæ Matadero). There also exists a wealth of critically oriented collaborative artistic practices (Democracia, Left Hand Rotation), cultural platforms that develop dialogic strategies in collaboration with agents and associations networks at the intersection of art, critical pedagogies, and community work (Transductores, LaFundició, Sinapsis), and groups that are especially focused on audiovisual production (Subtramas, ZEMOS98, Sitesize). Also making their presence felt are architecture collectives that labor with a consideration of social context and that work extensively in collaborative processes (Recetas urbanas, Todo por la praxis, Basurama, Zuloark, Hackitectura, El Vivero de Iniciativas Ciudadanas, Hiria Kolektiboa). In recent years, in fact, projects related to architecture have proliferated more than others in Spain, as evidenced by the presence of over ninety such initiatives from our country alone, albeit many with a transdisciplinary focus, affiliated with Arquitecturas Colectivas, an international network that promotes the collective construction of urban space.[19]

These collaborative practices occur within a broad field of action, reclaiming public space through ironic proposals that denounce or give visibility to problem areas, such as the neglect of emblematic neighborhoods and buildings and, in general, the effects of gentrification. Also common are projects for the planning of infrastructures for citizen use attending to certain specific social needs; the creation of situations and the facilitation of processes that promote the formation of political, sharing, and educational communities; and the production of spaces, whether through long-term interventions or through temporary strategies for artistic occupation that often turn into stable projects for the micro-transformation of urban areas. In these practices, context is the site not only of the action, intervention, or presentation, but also of experience, process, and reciprocal exchange; the artistic work comes

18. One example would be Idensitat, the first edition of which took place in 1999 under the name *Art Públic Calaf*; following an international call for projects that understand creation as "a work process connected to a particular space, and a specific context, which advances proposed mechanisms of involvement in the social sphere." <www.idensitat.net/en/what-is-id>.

19. See <www.arquitecturascolectivas.net>.

together with a multiplicity of sensibilities, knowledges, needs, and expectations. They create complicities and commitments, meaningful relationships and experiences of which perhaps the most interesting are the possibility of involving a variety of agents and organizations, from grassroots initiatives to institutions, not only from artistic or cultural fields but all those that play a role in a specific context; and the ability to create alliances out of the many facets of collective experience, and in which, finally, the commons takes on a significance.

These experiences are taking place concurrently with and influenced by a notable shift in the social and political context in Spain. In recent years, the reality of a more greatly mobilized society propelled not only by such meaningful phenomena as 15-M but also by contemporary experiences of citizen empowerment represent new stages and possibilities of action for collaborative artistic practices. We live in a time when debate over the public sphere is proliferating, and we are witnessing increasingly more initiatives and spaces for citizens to meet, revealing a spirit of social collaboration unknown just a few years ago.[20] These social spaces provide a network of possibilities yet to be identified, and a location where new links between artistic and social practices can be projected. These are new modes of thought and political action that serve to burst the banks of the social, artistic, and urban.[21]

The social practice of art, with a long tradition outside Spain, was until just few years ago a marginal issue, frequently ignored by critics and practically nonexistent in institutional programming. While in the 1990s and the first decade of the new millennium these practices existed on the margins of the accredited art world as exercises critical of its hegemonic structures, and often closely related to activism and at times becoming precisely that, today the opening up of art to social issues and

collaborative practices seems unavoidable. Furthermore, a body of theory is now taking shape, although this still suffers from the absence of a genealogy that would allow a dialogue between present developments and the most relevant experiences from previous decades. This shift to the social and collective clearly represents not only an opportunity but also a commitment by and a challenge to both artistic practices and institutions to amplify their significance in the public sphere.

20. The website of Vivero de iniciativas ciudadanas (<www.viveroiniciativasciudadanas.net>) has a long list of some of these experiences that have taken place in Spain. In Madrid, the platform Los Madriles (<www.losmadriles.org>) has a digital map (civics.es) showing over a hundred neighborhood initiatives. One of the most recent, relevant social initiatives in Madrid is Espacio Vecinal Arganzuela (<www.evarganzuela.org>), a group which brings together different social movements and residents of the Arganzuela district to reclaim the self-management of the Legazpi fruit and vegetable market. Since 2014, when the group began, it has made a significant contribution to articulating and reflecting on similar experiences in other contexts, actively collaborating with other initiatives both locally and internationally. Similarly, the first Encuentro de iniciativas ciudadanas (Meeting of Citizens' Initiatives) of the Red de Espacios Ciudadanos <www.espaciosciudadanos.org> in January 2016 brought together La Casa Invisible (Malaga), LaFábrikadetodalavida (Santos de Maimona), the Ateneu Popular 9 Barris (Barcelona), and CSC Luis Buñuel (Zaragoza).
21. See Andrés Walliser, "New Urban Activisms in Spain: Reclaiming Public Space in the Face of Crises," *Policy and Politics* 41, no. 3 (2013), pp. 329–50.

Interview with Orquestina de Pigmeos

Orquestina de Pigmeos is an experimental collective formed by musician Nilo Gallego, audiovisual creator Chus Domínguez, and different members who collaborate on each new project. The actions they propose are linked to the moment when and to the place where they are carried out. Through them, they intervene in the space in an ephemeral way, often involving the local population. Their creations use elements drawn from different artistic disciplines, primarily sound art, performance, film, and music.

—www.tea-tron.com/orquestinadepigmeos/blog

Your work has been described as "site specific" in the sense that it is carried out in specific contexts. But the term also suggests certain formal characteristics that condition the practice to some extent. What does the term *site specific* mean to you? Would you define it differently? How do you work in relation to it? How do you enrich or how are you enriched by those "sites"?

We started using the term *site specific* quite innocently at first, as a label that allowed us to refer to ourselves without using too many words. But since then we have had many interesting discussions on the subject, among ourselves and also with other colleagues. To put it simply, in each project we like to work for and with the specific context in which the piece is going to be presented, and that includes the human aspects as well as the landscape and spatial elements. Therefore, we always make several visits to the place where we are going to work, trying to understand it and its people over time, and looking for collaborators, ideas, and elements that would never be part of the piece if it were presented somewhere else. This way of working comes naturally to us: integrate the local, explore and learn with the place, generate real exchange and collaboration. And we have been able to make room for this approach even when we work in theatrical contexts where it is usually more difficult for the "site" to make itself felt. The term is not important to us, it actually makes us uncomfortable now, but the work of the Orquestina is always going to be situated in a specific context.

In many cases, your pieces are staged only one time. What is the value of those performances and of the experience of the people who witness them? How is all that material turned into experience? Would repetition destroy that link to context?

Our work in relation to audiences is essentially experiential. We approach the development of the pieces with the idea of bringing about potentially

transformative experiences. This may sound a bit pretentious, but it can be as simple as giving you the opportunity to pay attention to the space that you move through each day. In the end, our work consists of causing a slight shift in our frame of observation and listening, allowing us to perceive everyday life as if we were encountering it for the first time.

The Orquestina de Pigmeos is now at a point where we can envisage a transition from ephemeral pieces to works that could potentially be repeated. One of our foundational, pre-Orquestina works was *Felipe vuelve a casa con las ovejas sonando* (Felipe Goes Home with the Sheep Soundind)—the normal concert of a shepherd and his flock of sheep returning home from the fields each day. This piece was picked up by the media and we considered repeating it, but in this case repetition would have meant a change of format that would basically have turned it into a commodity. At the same time, the Orquestina is strongly influenced by action and performance art of the 1960s, with its emphasis on the essentiality of the moment, almost like a dogma. But whether as a result of our natural evolution or of external elements related to programming, the fact is that we now find ourselves working in theatrical contexts in which repetition—gigs, a tour—is an option. And we are starting to think: Why not? We have always enjoyed experiencing new places, so why not give it a go and see how we function outside our ephemeral comfort zone.

During the process of getting to know the environment in which you are going to work, how do you decide what stays and what goes? How do you create a particular imaginary? Does your methodology change according to whether you work with specific third-party projects or your own ideas?

We do a maximum of one project per year and we try to draw out the process as much as possible, six months if we can. We know that the final stretch will be intensive and increasingly stressful, so we try to strike a balance by starting out slowly, enjoying ourselves, discovering, experimenting… We let intuition guide us and we don't think about the final format, only about avoiding repetition and finding something new that attracts us because it is unfamiliar. We walk around, talk to a lot of people, get carried along, until at some point we begin to get an idea of what we would like to do. Then, little by little,

with our new collaborators, we create a kind of constellation that starts out chaotic and will somehow have to come together. We develop our own ideas in collaboration with the host organization or venue, which usually provides broad guidelines and enough room to move freely.

Your works usually revolve around everyday life or seemingly inconsequential subjects. Commenting on your piece *Ningún Lugar* (Nowhere to Go), which takes its name from his book *I Had Nowhere to Go*, Jonas Mekas talked about the significance of the personal, the small, the real. Why do you think it is important to work on that scale?

We think it's important to open channels rather than close them, to let time leave its mark, to fail math class, to do things we have no idea about, to allow contradictions in which the big is small, and vice versa. Jonas Mekas taught us to appreciate the small and seemingly insignificant aspects of life. He stumbled across this subject matter almost by accident, when he started putting together the footage of everyday moments that he filmed on weekends while he waited to have the time and money to make a "real" film. But it was all there, in the amateur gesture of capturing the small moments that make up films in which "nothing happens." His experience paved the way for many of us, showing us that this "nothing happening" can have experiential and artistic value.

How important is sound in the construction and structure of your works?

Sound is crucial to our performances, as a structuring element and a unifying thread. They are pieces that you could simply listen to. The music, rhythm, silence, and noise run through the whole piece, always from a direct, non-sophisticated point of view. There are contrasting and clashing atmospheres, detail and drama, the choir and the soloist. You could say that we stage operas; our work has been described as "landscape opera," but we prefer "opera of the small," in homage to Jonas Mekas. (hea)

Interview with El Banquete

El Banquete, founded in Madrid in 2012, is a research and creation collective that develops projects related to everyday experience as an artistic value. Comprised of Alejandría Cinque, Raquel G. Ibáñez, Marta van Tartwijk, and Antonio Torres, their work confronts the private with the public and challenges systems of both collective and individual power. Their work methodology consists of a political rereading of our daily acts and our everyday environment. El Banquete's projects are articulated as playful appropriations that give rise to subjective experiences—provoking reflection, stimulating critical thought, and empowering people as individuals.

—www.colectivoelbanquete.tumblr.com

Your projects often require long-term research processes. Are they based on theoretical interests, or is the point of departure a real-world context?

We understand research as an expanded field. It is the process that lays the foundation for our projects that, in turn, are born out of common concerns, interests, and desires, between us or in the context in which we live. Thus it's diffcult to separate our practice into theoretical research and fieldwork, because our projects are designed based on an intertwining of them both, growing out of ideas or dilemmas that can exist both on a theoretical plane and in our immediate context.

How do you choose the contexts with which you want to work?

There is a common thread in our work that results from our interest and concern as citizens of Madrid, more so than a search for contexts. The phrasing of the question implies that we are severed from the context and that it is marginal to our work. Yet most of the contexts with which we've worked are spaces we have had more or less peripheral contact with in our daily lives and into which we were motivated—primarily by a desire, will, and interest—to explore more deeply, and out of that research a project emerged. Thus, while still a factor, our alterity is somewhat relative. A good example of this might be *Obra Pública* (Public Work), a project that developed around an equestrian statue in Plaza de Legazpi, right in front of Matadero Madrid, that had been covered for years. Ultimately the project came about because we visited Matadero regularly and implicated ourselves in the life developing within this space. This contact and our frequently passing of the covered sculpture piqued our curiosity and led us to inquire, investigate, keep digging, until we finally realized that we had a potentially interesting project.

Obra Pública isn't a typical collaboration, in that we act as artist-researchers, looking for specific agents who give us certain information, which we then

ultimately translate and shape as we wish. The collaboration takes place when an encounter occurs and impressions are shared and, through this process, we can start collecting different voices. However, the question is: Are we simply loudspeakers? What we know for sure is that we are gatherers, and gathering information always requires some kind of collaboration, regardless of how that information generated is later formalized.

There is also a question connected to the genetic code of the collective, in which this need and desire to join and collaborate with the other forms part of our daily activity, such that approaching other groups is fairly normalized and natural. Nevertheless, each context involves a different approach: we analyze the particularities, always keeping in mind that being dependent upon other agents in our projects demands on our part honesty, direct communication, and a clear commitment to a collaboration that is much more than simple participation.

Does working in collaboration with heterogeneous groups facilitate the creation of new contexts?

Once a collaboration begins and a certain permeability is generated, it is inevitable that the context will be modified by a presence and a change in activity, or use, and that ultimately other possible contexts will be reconfigured by the artistic proposal. Although in many instances an added difficulty, the heterogeneity of the groups typically enriches the work and, indeed, facilitates the emergence of new contexts that can expand a project, or even bring a new one into being.

What for you is a collaborative artistic practice? Would you consider that your work falls within this category?

Even though we perceive the viewer as a participating or activating agent, and we work with others in relation to context, most of our projects are not conceived with an explicit collaborative intention, but making the idea of collaboration more flexible is of interest to us. Because of the type of processes we propose in developing our projects, it is inevitable that they are naturally open to this practice. This means that our research and processes of

El Banquete, *Obra Pública* (Public Work), Madrid, 2015

formalization are contaminated by other collectives with a distinct focus, while we also participate as contaminating agents in their contexts or practices.

Obra pública, for instance, was more of a confrontation: first with the sculpture, and then with the entire history of the context. The subsequent research, however, included many voices: from taxi drivers to politicians, neighbors, and other artists.

Yet in other projects there is indeed a more set collaboration. *Traspaso de poderes* (Transfer of Powers), a workshop we realized together with the

retirement home Benito Martín Lozano, is perhaps the most obvious example, because there was a precondition of collaboration: we asked the residents to teach us, a group of young people, how to knit balaclavas. We went to the home and proposed this to them, which obviously resulted in a need to negotiate. There was a lot of reticence: "Why a balaclava, if what I want to make are some booties or a scarf." And that's where mediation came in. Also, in this particular instance, there was no need or desire to reach a final outcome; and even though we managed to make the balaclavas, what mattered to us was the encounter.

In this case we really had to seduce the participants with the idea, and although the initiative was ours, ultimately the participants threw themselves enthusiastically into the project, which placed them in the role of a figure of *power-knowledge*. It is inevitable that within every collaboration there is an asymmetry between the agents involved, as it is precisely in this difference where the appeal probably lies. But in order to speak of a collaborative practice, it is essential that both sides come out of it in some way transformed, or that it creates some kind of mutual—though not necessarily shared—benefit. That is, collaboration must be, by its very nature, bilateral, in order not to result in a dynamic of unidirectional instrumentalization. **(hea)**

El Banquete, *Traspaso de poderes* (Transfer of Powers), 2013

Work

Down to Work!
Ways of Doing and Activating Within
the Social Network

Selina Blasco y Lila Insúa

Selina Blasco and Lila Insúa are both professors at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. As members of the decanal team they organized the Extensión Universitaria program from 2011 to 2014, promoting links with other cultural players and fields. Two years later they coauthored *University without Credits: A Workbook on the Arts and their Doings* (Madrid: Comunidad de Madrid and Ediciones Asimétricas, 2016), in wich they reflect on this experience, linking to an experimental postgraduate program called *Programa sin créditos 2016*.

What we encounter in many of the projects under discussion here is not a disembodiment of artistic practice, but a process of social interaction mediated by a physical and cognitive co-laboring. Site is understood here as a generative locus of individual and collective identities, actions, and histories, and the unfolding of artistic subjectivity awaits the specific insights generated by this singular coming-together.[1]

Art faculties and colleges are complex communities that do not recognize themselves as such, either from inside or outside these communities. As teachers in the Faculty of Fine Arts at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, we have observed that the role our community plays in society depends on how it identifies with this complexity. When it is acknowledged and fostered, arts universities can extend their activity beyond the walls of their lecture halls and transcend their educational objectives. Our research project "La incorporación de las comunidades artísticas universitarias a las narraciones de la modernidad y del presente" (Incorporating University Art Communities into the Narratives of Modernity and the Present)[2], in which we approach the form/creation/artwork not as an object of study but as a means for producing knowledge and as a catalyst for processes in specific contexts, takes this notion as its point of departure, and we have also used it to approach the definition we were asked to provide for this glossary.[3]

To quote artist Hito Steyerl's description of the "Lensbased" course she teaches at the Universität der Künste Berlin, "Form is understood as an organising principle that is anchored within material reality and which affects this reality in turn." "Form is," she continues, "the material of aesthetic production."[4]

1. Grant H. Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 139.
2. Research and development project within the National Programme for Fostering Excellence in Scientific and Technical Research, ref. HAR2015-64469-P.
3. The Spanish term *obra* has diverse connotations. For the sake of this glossary, the English term *artwork* is our primary orientation, but not the only one possible. *Obra* can also denote any "work" of creation, or an "oeuvre," or one's general activity; within the context of this study, it is oftentimes more appropriate to use *work*, a more general, open form, when referring to projects that involve participation or collaboration.—Ed.
4. Hito Steyerl, *Lensbased.net* (blog), [last accessed: 12-05-2016].

The dissolution of the theory/practice duality is the backbone of our definition of the term *artwork* in the field of artistic practice and collaborative creation, and this definition is also related to our experience with Extensión Universitaria,[5] where we came to realize that the faculty did not identify itself as an artistic community, and where we also noticed the lack of attention paid to the collective in the university education. In order to try to create this sense of community, we decided, among other things, to change the meaning of the exhibition space by creating a call for residencies. Over the four years in which the space was occupied by groups of students, we saw how the potency of the collective was activated. We also saw how the residencies at La Trasera—a name meaning "the rear" or "the back" that (significantly) replaced the name of the exhibition space—were the first thing to be eradicated by the status quo when it resumed its direction of the faculty in 2014. This decision revealed an awareness by the new directors that what was at stake with the residency was nothing short of the questioning of issues such as the myth of the artist as an individual genius and the identification of the artwork as an object, as opposed to processes that could implicate immateriality or other ways of working. Curtailing possibilities for students to independently manage common spaces, as well as pointing out exactly who wields power in educational institutions, reflects the force of collaborative art practices in the appropriation of space, even if, in this case, responding to it meant dissolving it. "Institutional space is also, and above all, public space":[6] in the cases we analyze in this text, the work-space relationship, as it plays out in different ways of doing (things)[7] and proceedings, is fundamental.

Collaborative practices tend to prioritize the very process of participation and even production of the social network that develops these practices. So does this emphasis presuppose a neglect of what has been known as the "artwork," identified as the "result" of this process? Within this rhetoric many artists have wanted to renounce the term altogether. But why call it by another name? To what debates—some of which have not even reached Spain—do the terms *artwork* and *result* refer?

It is evident that creative languages and media such as photography, audiovisual work, edition in its broadest sense—from fanzines to artists' books—as well as, in general, all media we associate with documentation, tend to be more naturally identified with the work of art, largely for their historical association with traditional exhibition spaces and the market. Nevertheless, we would also like to highlight how disciplinary codes are stirred up and subverted when tied to collaborative processes. Two examples of the many we could analyze are: the problematization and, in some cases, dissolution of authorship; and the reconsideration of the archive. What is worth examining in this latter case is not only how archives are presented but also other aspects that we could situate within the thorny ground of the use and appropriation of memory, as well as the creation of mechanisms to facilitate their access. In short, we asked ourselves why certain repositories are in museums, even if they are at times held in specific departments, and how the status of documents is affected by being kept in museums rather than libraries or actual archives?

To think about the forms of collaborative practices means using new terms and finding ourselves in spaces of a different nature. And those spaces, for example, we might define as "in-between spaces." Jordi Claramonte, who has explored the notion of "ways of doing things,"[8] notes that this "in-between" has on its flanks works of art on one side and activism on the other, being neither one nor the other. This site (or this non-site) shifts the emphasis onto the mode by which we view the world, a mode that is relational, that creates the task "and even the values from which the task arises as a necessity and is eventually well resolved." Claramonte continues, saying that the mode is the beginning and the engine, not the result; it is something that subverts dichotomies, in this case the dichotomies that contrast what supposedly comes first (action) to what comes after (forms). Modes that, we might say, trigger, activate, lead to new old names: "it is no accident," says Claramonte, "that the oldest word we have for referring to these modes of making is *poetics*, which means nothing other than 'to make.'"[9]

With respect to forms of collaborative practices, another term that could be employed—a hybrid word, like *poetics*, but with a social dimension—is *imaginary*. The imaginary could be used to identify and recognize visual languages, to propose artworks, of course, but also different kinds of artworks that escape aesthetic perception or that are only identified as such when

5. We coordinated the vice-deanship for University Extension at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, from 2010 to 2014. Our task was to organize activities on contemporary art through different programs, some of which we created ourselves, others which were created through public tenders. Our a posteriori reflections on the work can be found in Selina Blasco, Lila Insúa, and Alejandro Simón, eds., *Universidad sin créditos. Haceres y artes: un manual* (Madrid: Ediciones Asimétricas and Comunidad de Madrid, 2016).
6. Olga Fernández López, Zoe Mediero, and Azucena Klett, "En medio de las cosas. Investigación indisciplinar, entre el espacio artístico, la academia y la ciudad," in *Transductores* 3. *Prácticas artísticas en contexto. Itinerarios, útiles y estrategias*, ed. Antonio Collados and Javier Rodrigo (Granada: Diputación Provincial de Granada, 2015), p. 225.
7. The term *hacer or haceres,* "way/ways of doing (things)," which has taken on a currency in this discourse, was coined by Jordi Claramonte, Jesús Carrillo, and Paloma Blanco in their book *Modos de hacer. Arte crítico, esfera pública y acción directa* (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2001).—Ed.

8. Jordi Claramonte, *Arte de contexto* (San Sebastián: Nerea, 2010).
9. Jordi Claramonte, "Haceres," in Blasco et al., *Universidad sin créditos,* p. 160.

under attack from those who appoint themselves the guardians of forms of tradition, even if that tradition is of recent creation. The notion of culture as an accumulation of constantly disputed signs and as a changing, conflictive process, not to mention as the political essence of popular culture and folklore, all of which are essential in the construction of imaginaries insofar as they reify modes of acting and living within our social reality, has been discussed by Jaron Rowan and Rubén Martínez.[10] That the aesthetic paradigm is not merely a formality has been a subject of debate ever since the 15-M demonstrations created the possibility that—through the collectives that activated the public squares—political processes could result in what we call "new works" or, from a more radical perspective, artworks par excellence. Debates also arose about these new works' potential for constructing possible worlds, along with the frustration caused by the upholding of a familiar aesthetic that is ostensibly politically aseptic, and, in light of the divided opinions they produced, the debates were indeed much needed.[11]

The context we refer to here "implies that the artwork functions as a critique as well as an amplification of the vital potential that we dispose of and that we actually put to use";[12] it refers to the articulation, production, and distribution of artwork within society by experimenting with new modes of political action, by inhabiting and thinking about territoriality, public space, and mechanisms of citizen participation. In this sense, it is important to take into account the institution. For years Spanish institutions have been spending exorbitant amounts of money on appointing from scratch contemporary art centers, which have sprouted like mushrooms everywhere, without first defining their objectives and contents. The beneficiaries of this lavish spending have been artworks that are suitable for museums and the art market itself. The programming of the new state-run contemporary art museums has virtually ignored collaborative practices, or relegated them to residual spaces. The fact that by their very nature these "artworks" put up resistance to the museum is no excuse for their official invisibility. To give a prime example, at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, these works can be found in relation to the department of public activities.

10. Rubén Martínez, "Tu cultura es algo ordinario," *Nativa.cat*, July 13, 2014, <www.nativa.cat/2014/07/tu-cultura-es-algo-ordinario>; Jaron Rowan, "Operación: politizar la cultura popular," *El Diario,* November 2, 2015, <www.eldiario.es/cultura/cultura-comun_0_446906228.html>. Subsequent comments on these thoughts can be found in tweets by both authors at @RubenMartinez and @sirjaron.
11. Jaron Rowan, "He visto unicornios caer del cielo en el Palacio de Vistalegre," *Demasiado Superávit* (blog), October 18, 2014, <www.demasiadosuperavit.net/?p=266>.
12. From Los Equipos Fiambrera website, <www.sindominio.net/fiambrera/teoricos.htm>.

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Gabriela and Sally Gutiérrez Dewar, *Villalba (Re)Counts* (Villalba Cuenta), 2012

Though this-rather calculatedly chosen—name reflects a desire to include collaborative practices, its policies are developed in a world parallel to that of the permanent collection, which is only somewhat willing to include the kind of work that results from such practices, and only after complicated negotiation.[12]

Though fairly easy to create parallels with other connotations of the word *work*, these parallels are nonetheless striking. Much has been said about the real-estate bubble and the unfinished (construction) works that like a sinister archaeology blight the landscape of Spain (where there is no money to demolish them). Less talked about, though, is the bubble of art that is conceived as (art)work-commodities.

We should not forget, however, that what the crowds in the squares proclaimed was, "You don't represent us!" "To speak of institutions has come to mean, in effect, to speak of institutional crisis."[13] The delegitimizing effect of corruption triggered a longing for democracy and a new institutionalism. Today, thanks to a few exemplary new organisms—such as Medialab-Prado[14] or Intermediæ[15] — that work with a sensitivity to their context and constantly question the inside/outside, we can say that the reappropriation of the public sphere is more than just a possibility, and that it can be achieved through collaborative work that focuses less on quantitative results and the tyranny of time that these demand and more on the possibilities of real integration in the social fabric through time, tools, ways of working, and objects that would identify works that require evaluation using specific, qualitative parameters and terms such as "fragile," "unstable," or "chance."[16] To pronounce these also leads to a distant territory that must be mentioned, however briefly given the scope of this essay: works that exist in private, domestic, or everyday space.

The methodology we follow here has tried to approach several paradigmatic instances/works of collaborative art that elucidate or can be considered representative of a typology, or that call into question and/or make visible some of the key factors in the types of practice we have outlined. We logically begin with the premise that collaborative works, which intrinsically involve fusion and contamination, can not be separated into fixed categories.

The Artwork Is the Neighborhood

The festival *Cabanyal Portes Obertes* (Cabanyal Open Doors) was initiated by the platform Salvem El Cabanyal in 1998 and since then uses a diverse set of artistic interventions to respond to the urban development threat that the extension of the boulevard Blasco Ibañez represented for the Valencian neighborhood of El Cabanyal, which was to be divided into two separate halves. The sociopolitical context and protracted duration of the project serves, in effect, as a journey through recent Spanish history; we witnessed an assault not only on the homes and the urban layout that had been declared a Protected Cultural Property, but also on a way of life, social and human relationships, and a culture and the peculiar idiosyncrasies born out of the community's relationship to the sea. The network of neighbor associations understood that the intangible heritage—the cultural life—could be communicated in collaboration with a broad collective of artists who initiated a convocation in which photographs, projections, music, theater, and performance were presented, and which were installed in the streets and the neighbors' homes, making it possible for Valencia's other residents to understand the reality of the neighborhood.[17] This relationship between public and private; artistic interventions and the everyday context of each home; and this mix of artists, neighbors, and visitors bring art and life together in a collective moment and in a logic that goes beyond top-down hierarchies. By proposing collaboration as a form of resistance and by pooling knowledge, "by laying down a path in walking" (haciendo el camino al andar), enough time was permitted for society to sign on to its objectives and methodologies. Thus, in 2015, with the arrival of the "new municipalisms"—other forms of institutionalism—to city hall, we seem to understand, along with the residents of El Cabanyal, that we too are the institutions.

The Artwork Is a Methodology

In this search for milestones, for specific actions, that can help us approach a definition of the term *artwork*, La Fiambrera represents an example of what a collective can accomplish. They have developed numerous projects, including *El Lobby Feroz* (The Ferocious Lobby), *Sabotaje Contra el Capital Pasándoselo*

12. One example that could be analyzed here would be the mediation for the exhibition *Un saber realmente útil* (Really Useful Knowledge) by the Subtramas collective. See <www.museoreinasofia.es/en/activities/actions-really-useful-knowledge>.
13. M. Domènech, F. J. Tirado, S. Traveset, and A. Vitores, "La desinstitucionalización y la crisis de las instituciones," *Educación Social*, no. 12 (1999), p. 20, <www.raco.cat/index.php/EducacioSocial/article/view/144294/383946>.
14. See <www.medialab-prado.es>.
15. See <www.intermediae.es>.
16. Ibid.

17. Teresa Marín García, Juan José Martín Andrés, and Raquel Villar Pérez, "Emergencias colectivas. Mapa de vínculos de actividades artísticas (autogestionadas) en la Comunidad Valenciana, 2001–11," *Archivos de Arte Valenciano,* no. 92 (2011), p. 515.

Pipa (Sabotage Against Capital Having a Great Time), *YOMANGO*, and *Bordergames*. Their activity highlights the importance of those who do things as well as how they proceed in doing so, motivations and aims arising from social reality. Other essential examples include *reHABI(li)TAR Lavapiés* (Restructure and Inhabit Lavapiés), a 1998 call for interventions, and the experience of the *Parque de la Muy Disputada Cornisa* (Park of the Highly Controversial Cornice) with the residents of San Francisco El Grande (Madrid, 1999), whose objective was protecting—against the interests of the archbishopric and the Madrid city council—one of the few public spaces in the neighborhood, a park in which meetings, carnival dances, parties, and summer movie screenings were held. The collective artwork developed by this grouping of different people creates a genuine space of freedom and recovers a mode of relation that combines the artistic process with the identity building of the public domain. In their own words, the group takes on "the struggle against orthodox thinking, or the orthodox life and its cynical little agents: if, in our work, we encounter gentrifying plans of urban renewal, park-stealing bishops, and so many other privatization plans, it is because they make up a sort of collective amalgamation whose common enemy is the proliferation of relational freedoms that used to be called art... or life."[18] The park is still being used, and if at the time a specific language was socialized, then it was these practices, these artworks, that reinforced the social networks.

The Artwork Is a Cooperative Practice

Notions such as "project," "encounter," or "event" can be analogous when we speak of "collaborative works." In the case of the border encounter *Transacciones/Fadaiat*, in Tarifa (2004), a map of the Straits of Gibraltar was created that featured migratory flows, solidarity hubs and networks, and possibilities for the alternative management of Spain's southern border. Both aesthetic and political, the project emerged from the collective Rizoma, in which artists and architects work together via educational institutions to produce events that can reveal political strategies of a new kind of public space by activating different fields of knowledge. As Paloma Blanco has said, "It is difficult if not impossible for a single artist to possess all the knowledge (formal, political, historical, pedagogical, and so on) required to address a true process of hybridization between the artistic and the political."[19] This intersection of

collectives and people working in the arts, media, communication, and grassroots social movements provides an approach based upon the ideas of freedom of knowledge/freedom of movement, while keeping in mind the complexity, diversity, and contradictions with which it is worthwhile to talk about reality.

Working with a network of live video and audio streams from Tarifa, Tangiers, and elsewhere allowed the creation of a virtual bridge between the European Union and Africa, a mixture of local and global, physical and digital, that orients itself geopolitically through a different kind of architecture, that of data streams. *Fadaiat* was constituted as an open space that functioned as both a laboratory and a forum for debate between different networks and subjects around three interconnected areas: new geographies, the factory-border (migration and work), and technologies and communication, to provide a glimpse of a possible collective conquest.[20]

The Artwork Is a Way of Doing Things

Ways of working insert collaborative works into life in multifaceted ways. The project *Villalba Cuenta* demonstrates this through a mixture of modesty and openness that characterizes this type of project. The project was developed in Collado Villalba, a town some forty kilometers northwest of Madrid with a population of around sixty thousand, and provides a window onto the Franco era and the real-estate bubble. Many of its inhabitants are young people searching for cheaper housing than could be found in the capital, and there is also a large number of migrant workers who live there. The project was developed within the framework of the Ranchito residency program at Matadero Madrid. Initiated by Sally and Gabriela Gutiérrez, they proposed an emotional mapping of life in Collado Villalba that was archived on and broadcast via the website www.villalbacuenta.com. The project is described as an interactive web-documentary and consists of geolocalized videos that recount aspects of life in the town (a squatted cultural center, Fábrika de Sueños, as well as testimonies about tourism and the World Cup of 2010, the year the project took place); itineraries chosen by neighbors and accompanied by experts in urbanism, landscape, and other fields; and very short videos that capture the life of the town, in front of a newspaper kiosk or in a bar, for example.

18. Equipos Fiambrera, "Art as a social process," *Sin Dominio*, n.d., <www.sindominio.net/fiambrera/colaborat.html>.
19. Paloma Blanco, "Prácticas artísticas colaborativas en la España de los años 90," in *Desacuerdos 2: Sobre Arte, Políticas y Esfera Pública en el Estado Español*, ed. Jesús Carrillo and Ignacio Estella Noriega (Barcelona et al.: MACBA et al., 2005), p. 41.

20. José Pérez de Lama Halcón, "Fadaiat: Relámpago desterritorializador en la frontera," *in Devenires cíborg: Arquitectura, urbanismo y redes de comunicación* (Seville: Secretariado de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla, 2006), p. 143.

The project consists primarily of filmic work, heavily influenced by the collaborative context in which it was made. The authorship is diluted (which is why we call Sally and Gabriela the project's *initiators*), because while some of the videos were made by the Gutiérrez sisters, there are also stories filmed by the town's residents, which are uploaded and afforded equal status. In the absence of "professionalism" we might speak of a "weakening" or "attenuation" in the definition of the artwork as art in conventional terms, which had collateral effects in the aesthetic validation of the project within certain contexts. The exhibition of the work is a good example of the honesty in the presentation of collaborative practices. The videos were exhibited at Galería Adora Calvo in Salamanca together with a map of the city where visitors could, and did, intervene to "(re)count Salamanca." The videos were also presented at Matadero Madrid's Nave 16. In this instance, the town of Collado Villalba was invited to intervene in the space, with a somewhat bizarre, we can even say "dirty," result, disjointed from the institution's expectations and artistic parameters, but worth revindicating in the context of these brief notes on the formalization of processes as artwork in the practices we are looking at. For example, for *Villalba Cuenta* the typical catalogue was replaced by a calendar that was designed as a recording device but that could also be hung in the town's homes and shops, as eventually occurred. This formalized the project's aspiration of social visibilization and activation, which also materialized in the social fabric with the incorporation of its participants—who used the videos in their election campaigns—in the "new municipalisms."

By Way of Concluding

The collaborative artwork is or can be a process, a methodology, a cooperative practice, a specific territory, a way of doing things, of inhabiting, of approaching the complexity of lives that we are trying to understand and reclaim through the collective. Herein lies its value today. Taking on such a task by looking at the Spanish context in order to dialogue with other cases in Europe led us from Valencia to Madrid and from here to the Straits of Gibraltar. We could find examples from all over the country, but we think that those we have chosen function as typologies with which we can reflect on the structure of the term ARTWORK.

Gabriela and Sally Gutiérrez Dewar, *Villalba Cuenta* (Villalba (Re)Counts), 2012

Interview with Juanli Carrión

Juanli Carrión (b. 1982, Yecla, Murcia) is interested in analyzing the social, political, and economic identity that drives us both individually and collectively. Using the absurd as his starting point, he investigates behaviors and problems related to social conflict. His works combines different materials, people, actions, information, and geographies; they are tied to communication, and almost always require the involvement of heterogeneous agents. From this Carrión produces installations, ephemeral actions, and object-based works with which he seeks to represent an entire working process.

—www.juanlicarrion.com
—www.outerseedshadow.org

Many of your projects have a participatory component in which outside agents unwittingly become a part of your work. Do you consider these unconscious participants your collaborators? What role do they play?

My artistic process involves an unavoidable collaboration with the communities where they take place. In some cases, those communities are active participants aware of their involvement, and in others they might not be, or only afterwards, when the work is already done. I wouldn't call them outside agents, because in my work they become indispensible for the development of the piece.

For me, artistic practice involves an intrinsic process of showing and participating. This can be passive or active, collaborative or imposed, elitist or popular. If we analyze the evolution of artistic practice throughout the history of art, studying its motives and results, we will discover the answer to your first question: art is always a faithful and raw reflection of the reality of its time, while at the same time serving as the prelude to a social future. Participatory works go hand in hand with this reflection, in which we see a change in how art is sponsored and produced, and a systematic revolution that is now underway. Museum visitors demand didactic and interactive activities as part of their programs. *Rotondismo*[1] may well have been the final symbol of the monumental imperialist era, and we may even be close to overcoming part of artistic classism, as it is now possible for scions of the middle class to become professional artists. For all of these reasons I consider the interaction of agents involved in the artistic process to be inevitable.

Then would you say that participants can even become co-authors of your works?

Of course they can. That too is inevitable. While all of my projects are linked to my personal experience, and thus to the single viewpoint from which I

1. A play on words that would roughly translate as "roundaboutism", referring to the common practice of decorating roundabouts with sculptures of questionable taste. —Ed.

determine what landscape I want to question, from the moment that the agents involved begin to take part in the project, a process of cession begins in which they take possession of the work. When this happens, each party's interests can be distinguished. This is where the work becomes unstoppable. Personally, I gather those conclusions that for me are relevant, and I subsequently transform them into other works with a more documentary, object-oriented, or aesthetic character, as a kind of signature. The other agents do the same, thus playing a role as essential as that of the initial author.

The construction phase of your projects takes on a fundamental role. What role does process play as an element in the generation of the final work? To what degree can this process overshadow the result? What element do you prioritize in your work?

As I said before, for me an artwork must be shown and experienced. Its process of creation begins with the conception of the idea and the determination of the landscape, but as soon as I begin to share this process and include other participants, this transforms into an artwork. Consequently, there is no final artwork; the artwork begins, but it may never end. That may sound romantic, but it's realistic; if we consider that the process of creation is artwork, and that the artwork has an indeterminate and exponential number of authors, then it will always be in constant evolution.

This exercise of turning process into creative material is no more than a reflection of contemporary social dynamics, so consequently, prioritizing it is, once again, inevitable.

What significance do chance and improvisation have in projects where you bring in external agents to configure your artwork, or part of it?

I wouldn't call it chance, as that word implies a sort of magic, an element that is unusual or strange. There is nothing unusual or strange in my projects— quite the contrary. First of all, I begin by imposing absurd but concrete parameters as the basis for restructuring a landscape in order to question it, analyze it, or simply contemplate it. The components of a landscape were

already there before I arrived; all I do is carry out a disruptive action to reveal things that were not previously visible. The surprise of seeing what was not previously visible can lead us to mistakenly think there is something magical, but this is in no way a random process.

There is undoubtedly improvisation, but it is simply a reflection of the given landscape or context. While the parameters are clear, what I discover in them is always unknown and unexpected, so improvisation is, once again, inevitable.

In your pieces, what role does the artwork as object play?

The object-based part of my work plays a documentary role that is often independent of the projects that generate it. While all of my object-based work stems from projects, it has its own identity and can exist without them. Its importance may lie in its expository function. Most of my projects are ephemeral and specific to a given moment and place, which means that only a very specific number of people can experience them. Still, the ideas that arise after the development of those works can persist in the objects that they have produced and that are linked to them. That is why I am extremely meticulous in executing them, and that is why I also consider them artworks to be experienced both conceptually and aesthetically, trying to distance myself from a purely documentary exercise that, in my opinion, perhaps belongs to other fields. (A.G.A)

Interview with David Crespo

David Crespo (b. 1984, León) develops projects in which the human factor and its empowerment in the territory are given priority. He is interested in topics such as games and sports as a field for questioning rules, norms, and roles. With his projects he creates physical and imaginary scenarios to free participants of social conventions and habits, helping them to create their own rules in order to reveal human essence and to highlight how ridiculous and absurd our daily lives are. The term *artwork* thus embodies the heterogeneous character inherent in the unpredictability of its final outcome. The experimental approach of these works betray the commonplace and the predictable, with which the domesticated eye comforts itself.

—www.iamdavidcrespo.com

What to you is the difference between a participatory and a collaborative artwork?

As an artist, I see the participatory artwork as any artistic manifestation or event that invites the public to participate in order to generate action and, consequently, reflection. The participatory projects I develop are closely related to action art. Using installations as a base, the participation of viewers is typically a fundamental element, as the activating subject of the piece.

A collaborative artwork is one that I usually conduct from the beginning with other people, mostly artists, though on occasion also with different social groups, with whom, whether because of a specific situation or a shared interest, I join up with in order to develop an idea collectively.

Do you consider that your work develops in collective, participatory, or collaborative contexts?

Of course, although not all my proposals meet these conditions.

My main area of research embraces the idea of social empowerment within a given context. This research allows me to critique our oftentimes normative and limited approach to the rules we are expected to obey and that we rarely question. In my work, it is important to develop pieces in which there are different degrees of freedom and experimentation, in which the viewers can question the work itself, appropriating it and making it his or her own.

I give form to many of my works using elements drawn from games or sports. My interest in those two concepts is a product of their versatility. They allow me to develop a discourse that reflects my political and social

interests, while also making it possible to integrate the viewers into the work of art by means of playful activity, making the message much more accessible and attractive.

How much control do you really have over the work processes when other people are implicated? How important is chance?

I prefer to have a clear starting point and then let the project itself indicate where I should go with it. Moreover, in each project I typically address only one subject: a social critique, or giving visibility to a reality I think should be known, and so on. As the project develops, I insist and labor to make sure this motif does not disappear, and that is what I try to control during the process. This implies a willingness to question what is happening, to experiment, and to generate dialogue. In fact, when I work with public participation, I try to motivate them to take over the project. In those cases I obviously have to be prepared for the unpredictable, and I cling to my capacity to adapt to the new situation, to my spontaneity, my empathy, and to chance.

A very clear example of chance's role can be found in my work *Terrain d'Action*, which I presented at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris in 2015. The piece consisted of a reconstructed soccer field, the setting for the realization of five happenings, for which I invited the public to take part in the work. Three of those actions turned out quite differently than I had first imagined, which was natural, as I specified only the bases on which viewers could develop their own stories.

One of the happenings consisted of mixing two ideas: rave and soccer. I do not know how it happened, but as soon as the activity began, the installation was flooded with hundreds of black and white balloons from another performance being mounted next to us. Someone decided to introduce them, to add them to the piece. The happening turned into a chaotic dance in which some danced, others had wars with the balloons, and still others played soccer with them. It was spontaneous, a coincidence that strengthened what we were developing. For me it was marvelous.

Given the process-based nature of much of your work, which includes the participation of others, what importance do you attach to process, and what to the final outcome?

Process and outcome generally go hand in hand. I do not separate them unless there is a specific reason to, as occurred with my piece *Pick Pang*.

Pick Pang is an installation I developed in Girona, months after realizing a collaborative work there, entitled *Bèlit*. When the possibility arose to exhibit *Bèlit*, it struck me as absurd to put on display the documentation of the work done with local residents, as it would have contributed nothing new to what they had already experienced. So I decided to put together *Pick Pang*, which summarized my experience in the city and welcomed the participation of viewers and those who had earlier collaborated with me.

I am attracted by these kinds of processes: resuming or continuing projects, even months after they were initially completed. I find it interesting when the piece continues to evolve, and in my work I am drawn to the idea that there is never any absolute final outcome, that new forms and possibilities of understanding and doing the work can always emerge.

Can projects with formats like *Gymkhana para frustrados* (Gymkhana for the Frustrated) exist as pure process, rather than as artworks/results?

There is always a result, even if that is not the aim. For me, the experience is a result, it is what people can take with them when the work is over, and what they can return to at any time in their lives if they want to. In the specific case of *Gymkhana para frustrados*, all of the activities are described on my website along with the games that were played, accompanied by the rules that were followed and the objects that were used. They are there for anyone who wants to repeat them, redo them, or appropriate them for other contexts. For me, that is the result. (hea)

Authorship

Going Beyond Artistic Authorship
Diego del Pozo Barriuso

Diego del Pozo Barriuso is an artist, cultural producer, and professor at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Universidad de Salamanca. He is also a member of the art collectives C.A.S.I.T.A., Subtramas, and Declinación Magnética, with whom he experiments and produces through creative and collaborative methodologies. His work is articulated around affection and desire, and how these aspects are substantially conditioned by economic production systems. Recent exhibitions include *Anarchivo Sida* (AIDS Anarchive, Conde Duque, Madrid 2017, and Tabakalera, San Sebastián, 2016), *Nuestro Deseo es una revolución* (Our Desire is a Revolution, CentroCentro, Madrid, 2017) and *Un saber realmente útil* (Real Useful Knowledge, Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid, 2014−15). He is a member of the research collectives Las Lindes and Visualidades Críticas.

—www.ganarselavida.net
—www.subtramas.museoreinasofia.es/es/anagrama
—www.declinacionmagnetica.wordpress.com

The relationship that artists, creators, or cultural producers establish with their status of authorship determines the characteristics of their production, and the results and processes of that production. In my case, I have been working as a visual artist individually for more than fifteen years, but also as a member of several art collectives—C.A.S.I.T.A., Subtramas, and Declinación Magnética— with which I develop projects of a collaborative nature. For me, artistic practice is a need; the arts allow one to produce things that are unthinkable by other means. It implies freedom, risk, and imagination, if we are truly willing to accept them. Artistic practice presents a constant challenge, as a result of which I am able to acquire knowledge about others and about reality and its potential for transformation, because artistic practice offers a multifaceted view of the world. Whether individually or collectively, I produce works, images, and affective mechanisms.[1] I create situations that promote encounter and dialogue. I work with museums, contemporary art centers, galleries, and cultural organizations both public and privately self-managed.
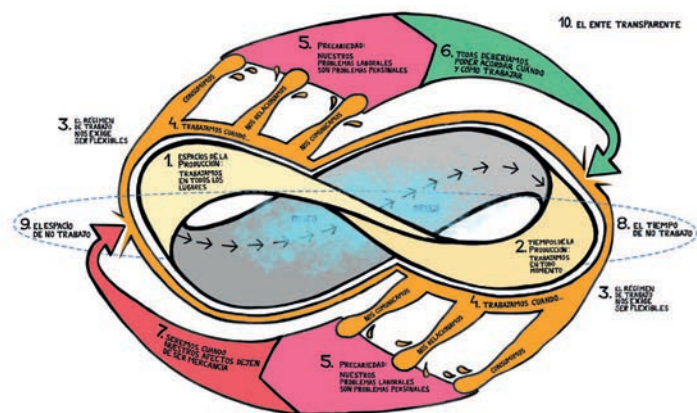
In 2005, I was lucky enough to connect with a group of artist colleagues with whom wonderful synergies emerged. The need to create together and our concern for the precarious conditions that had already begun to plague the cultural sector drove me to get involved in the C.A.S.I.T.A. collective, which was my first collaborative art project. The original members of C.A.S.I.T.A., founded in 2003, were Loreto Alonso, María Íñigo, and Patricia Fesser.[2] Currently, the permanent membership is comprised of Loreto Alonso, Eduardo Galvagni, and myself. Along with Kamen Nedev, who was a member of the collective from 2006 to 2008, we produced the project *Ganarse la vida: El Ente Transparente* (Making a Living: The Transparent Being).[3] Realizing this project and reformulating the collective for a new stage of existence allowed us to enter a period that was one of the most intense times of shared enthusiasm I can remember with respect to artistic creation. Through this project we took on the task of answering numerous questions we posed to ourselves personally and as artists about the reality of work, understood

1. See chapter 5 of my doctoral thesis entitled "Dispositivos artísticos de afectación: las economías afectivas en las prácticas artísticas actuales" (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2015), in which I take an in-depth look at the notion of artistic mechanisms of affectation, <www.eprints.ucm.es/30669>.
2. See <www.ganarselavida.net>.
3. See <www.ganarselavida.net/ganarseLavida/ELPROYECTO.html>.

in a broad sense, and the way in which it conditions our lives. We were intrigued by researching the consequences of the fact that the artist/virtuoso/entrepreneur was becoming a social model for all workers, by embodying the parameters and demands of the new immaterial producer.[4] At the same time, we regarded the collective as a space for experimentation with new notions of artistic authorship that included the development of collaborative practices. As we also continued to realize our own individual artistic work, we had to unlearn all of those vices of modernity's model of the individual artist that had formed part of our education. We experienced firsthand the potentialities of this process, developing artistic works on the basis of what we understood as "aesthetics of insecurity." Among the projects we developed, we produced situations of an immaterial nature, such as creating dialogues at assembles or carrying out actions together about the realities of work.[5] We conceived the collective as a platform in which members could come and go as they please, depending on the project, and which ultimately revealed a

C.A.S.I.T.A., *Decálogo del Ente transparente* (Decalogue of the Transparent Being), 2006

diffuse, highly flexible collective structure that encouraged alterations in its makeup. The collective's name created a game with letters that was itself a metaphor for the need to expand the notion of authorship.[6] We constituted a cultural association, because the system requires you to have an official tax identification number if you want to be acknowledged as an entity. Oftentimes, if we failed to include our own names with that of the collective, its existence was considered illegitimate. This situation led to profound debate among us over the collective's relationship with productivity, authorship, and the varying degrees of acknowledgment it received. Some of our debates had to do with the age-old conflict over the idea that if you act using the system's tools, you can only produce things in accordance with its logic, which implies that one must act outside or at the fringes of the institutional framework in order to produce works in another manner.

In parallel to C.A.S.I.T.A., I lived other rather exciting collective experiences. Since 2009, I have been involved in the collective Subtramas (Montse Romaní, Virginia Villaplana, and myself), which focuses on the artistic production and research of collaborative audiovisual practices. And since 2012, I have formed part of the artistic collective Declinación Magnética (DM; consisting of Aimar Arriola, José Manuel Bueso, Eduardo Galvagni, Juan Guardiola, Sally Gutiérrez, Julia Morandeira Arrizabalaga, Silvia Zayas, and myself),[7] whose most important objectives from the very beginning have highlighted problems involving colonialism. The three collectives were conceived as experimental communities to explore creative methodologies of a collaborative nature and the construction of new prototypes for artistic and cultural production. In all of them, work processes intermingle with important emotional relationships. DM and Subtramas are comprised not only of artists but also curators and researchers. In all three processes, we have implemented a "suspension" of our own subjectivities to transform our individual ways of working into others of an assembly-based nature, giving rise to aesthetic and productive decisions that make a hierarchy-free space of collaborative creation possible. As a result of all these experiences, I understand artistic authorship from an openly heterodox perspective. Following a process of reflection and analysis

4. Regarding the notion of virtuoso, see Paolo Virno, "Virtuosity and Revolution: The Political Theory of Exodus," in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 189–209. Regarding the concept of the entrepreneur, see Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2005).
5. To review the idea of the *invertebrate*, see the book based on the thesis by my colleague from C.A.S.I.T.A., Loreto Alonso Atienza, *Poéticas de la producción artística a principios de siglo XXI. Distracción, desobediencia, precariedad e invertebrados* (Monterrey: Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, 2011).

6. The name is an acronym whose meaning changes depending upon the project carried out by the collective. For instance, in the project *Ganarse la Vida: El Ente Transparente,* C.A.S.I.T.A. meant "Cómo Articular Situaciones Ilusionantes entre Trabajo y Arte" (How to Articulate Inspiring Situations Between Work and Art), whereas in the project initiated in 2011, *No es Crisis, es Crónico (Observatorio de fragilidad emocional*), C.A.S.I.T.A. signified "Crónica Afectiva y Subjetiva de Interrelaciones en los Tiempos Actuales" (Affective and Subjective Chronicle of Interrelationships in the Current Times).
7. Declinación Magnética (DM) came to life within the context of a research group known as Decolonizando las estéticas y el conocimiento (Decolonizing Aesthetics and Knowledge), an initiative of Matadero Madrid and Goldsmiths, University of London. See <www.declinacionmagnetica.wordpress.com>.

about specific practices, I would like to discuss several issues I consider of vital importance with respect to the transformation in the status of artistic authorship that has occurred over the past twenty years.

The Artist as a Model of Neoliberal Production and Self-Exploitation

It is clear that immaterial collaborative practices and the proposal of a new form of institutionalism have led to profound transformations in the status of artistic authorship over the last two decades. However, despite the enthusiasm such processes may provoke in terms of the creation of more democratic and more diverse societies and productive systems, one continues to see a consensus within artistic milieus with respect to the status of the artist's "genius," which has been with us since the dawn of modernity. Nobody seems comfortable with this designation, but in truth this idea is supported by the means of production, largely dependent upon the hegemony of the art market and its interests, which thus legitimizes the figure of the solitary, self-sufficient, competitive artist who must, continually, produce marketable works. This condition causes contemporary artists to assimilate the "rock star" model, a phenomenon that has also affected curators—and now even collectors! It is important to reflect upon the consequences of artists and other cultural agents that aspire to follow this model, and who is benefitting from this.

Moreover, the change in the productive paradigm that has gradually taken hold over the last forty years has brought with it the development of cognitive capitalism, making creativity, along with flexibility, a principal requirement of all workers for the purpose of creating a truly dynamic and productive economic system. As a result, within neoliberalism all people are creative subjects or could become creators, an idea rather distant from Beuys's notion that "every man is an artist."[8] In line with these changes, it also appears as if the art world, particularly in the last decade, has replaced the old-fashioned notion of genius, and its reformulations, with that of "genuine creativity," a trait once again unique to artists, allowing them to initiate collaborative projects or works with social implications. In this sense, we should carefully review how this new artist involved in collaborative and participatory projects exercises authorship. It would rather seem that the creative industries have restored the artist to a status of "neo-genius" that, even though obliquely influenced by the paradigm change provoked by the conceptual practices of the 1960s and 1970s, has assimilated these influences in their least radical

form, at times aestheticizing their more subversive aspects and at others merely supplanting them.

In one way or another, the notion of authorship revolves around the construction of a strong individual figure who is authorized by this authorship before other subjects. Authority is not a problem in and of itself. Sometimes it is necessary. The problem occurs when it turns into authoritarianism. What is important here is to understand that this principle of authority is designed to protect neoliberalism's productive values, which are profoundly authoritarian as a result of the greatly imbalanced social relations they create. In this respect, it is troubling to see how artists assimilate the conditions of neoliberal ideology in a way that reproduces the subject model that perfectly represents the prototype of the immaterial producer, obsessed with capitalizing on every moment and encounter in daily life, to the point of being accused of embodying a neoliberal personality that provokes a neurotic and predatory form of competitiveness among their peers.

Artist Liam Gillick, though highly critical of these accusations and a believer in the artist's ontological potential, admits, "The challenge is the supposition that artists today—whether they like it or not—have fallen into a trap that is pre-determined by their existence within a regime that is centered on a rampant capitalization of the mind."[9] If we think about the ontological potentialities of artists, understood to be subjects capable of inventing new visual, cultural, and social forms, this challenge should involve pointing out and/or producing forms alternative to those of the dominant systems. However, today's artists appear to be engrossed in a spiral of self-exploitation, with the objective of positioning their work in the market. In fact, the discontinuous nature of the visibility of an artist's work in the art world is precisely the key to making this exploitation sustainable.[10] Self-exploitation and discontinuity put the artist in a situation of intense material and existential insecurity. Thus it is even more troubling to find that artists who strive to produce work that questions the hegemonic means of production—which means putting other collaborative

8. Joseph Beuys et al., *Joseph Beuys: Life and Works*, trans. Patricia Lech (Woodbury, NY: Barron's Educational Series, 1979), p. 255.

9. Liam Gillick, *Why Work* (Auckland: Artspace, 2010), p. 3.
10. As pointed out by Marcelo Expósito, "the exploitation of artistic labour is *intensive*, because it is exercised in the overall time that you commit to your work, but the key to its economical sustainability for the institution resides in the fact that it is formalised discontinuously: you only get paid for the specific project, exhibition or investigation or the number of hours 'you work.' The extent to which this kind of exploitation is widely accepted in the arts is because, obviously, your activity is presumably 'gratifying' in terms of vocational self-expression and freedom. Also because your subjection to the institution is irregular in terms of labour-income, but constant in symbolic terms and in *its forms of subjectivisation:* the artist is taught to *always turn* to the institution as a guarantee of legitimacy and, above all, the 'relevance' of his or her own activity." Marcelo Expósito, "Inside and Outside the Art Institution: Self-Valorisation and Montage in Contemporary Art," trans. Nuria Rodríguez, *Transversal 10* (2006), <www.eipcp.net/transversal/0407/exposito/en>.

methodologies into action—must create much more work at a much higher personal cost. Consequently, such artists exploit themselves more than they do as individual artists, as the art system delegitimizes new collaborative ways of working for several reasons: there is no interest in investing in these processes that have no clear market potential; the system co-opts them in order to turn them into something marketable; and progressive institutions, with neoliberal economic and productive structures, are unable (with rare exceptions) to offer dignified production conditions to artists and the communities involved.

It is not a matter of giving up the potentialities of individual authorship. We cannot cease to believe in the strength and transformative capability of what individuals can do on their own, no matter how small their actions or gestures may be. It is a matter of reflecting upon the way in which a certain work system lies within and affects the social realm, and what values, structures, conditions, and lifestyles it creates. At the same time, more study is required of the mutations that need to take place but have yet to occur in the status of artistic authorship, the conditions and means of production, and institutional structures in order to define the potentialities of certain collaborative practices that aspire to create other social constructs.

Challenges and Conflicts for Artists in Collaborative Practices

In the process of realizing projects with C.A.S.I.T.A., Subtramas, and DM, we detected certain situations of interest in the relationships of collectives as authors with the groups of people who implicated themselves in the projects. I remember, among others, the situations of the Public Assemblies about The Transparent Being with C.A.S.I.T.A., with the newer and older workers at Matadero Madrid, or the relationships with groups of adolescents in the project *Margen de Error* (Margin of Error), with DM.[11] Based on the experience of these relationships, it is possible to articulate the conflicts and challenges with regard to the status of artistic authorship faced by collaborative practices, which need to incorporate other ethical parameters that are missing from hegemonic market logics.[12]

Declinación Magnética, *Margen de Error (tableau vivant)*, Film still, Matadero Madrid, Madrid, 2013

It is crucial to keep in mind that every relation of authorship generates a form of authority. It is thus important to establish a relationship that does not reproduce authoritarian behaviors under the aegis of authorship, as we are reminded by feminist biologist Donna Haraway.[13] All of this means operating from a position that leads to actions and knowledge related politically to the people involved, their context, and their time.

It is also important for us to avoid producing artistic materials or actions that impinge on the aestheticization of the social process by prioritizing our own particular viewpoint or desire to produce a specific material. Social processes and movements are typically diverse in form; what is interesting about an artists' role in them is how they can identify these forms and contribute to strengthening their potential for action and expansion. We must be careful to avoid adopting paternalistic, self-serving attitudes that might instrumentalize the communities with which we work. In addition to steering clear of capitalizing on the achievements of a specific social process, in this sense it is also essential to situate oneself and to negotiate the material conditions of collaborative tasks, which involves thinking ahead about how we are going to manage and negotiate with others the benefits of any symbolic (and at times material) capital that may result from certain productions in which we seek the involvement of these others.

11. See <www.ganarselavida.net/ganarseLavida/ASAMBLEAS.html>, and <www.declinacionmagnetica.word-press.com/margen-de-error/>.
12. We wrote about the situations of conflict between authorship and collaborative practices at C.A.S.I.T.A. (Loreto Alonso, Eduardo Galvagni, and Diego del Pozo), "El conflicto transparente," unpublished publication of El Ranchito de Matadero Madrid, 2012, edited by Iván López Munuera. Also see the diagram of this text: <www.formatocomodo.com/catalogos/catalogo_18.pdf>.
13. See Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (Autumn 1988), pp. 575–99, <www.jstor.org/stable/3178066>.

Another relevant point about the epistemic power of representation causes us to reflect on the implications of representing an other or providing a space for self-representation. This subject was a major concern of Subtramas in the project *Abecedario anagramático de Subtramas* (Subtramas' Anagrammatic ABC), which took form in artistic research on collaborative practices in audiovisual production.[14] We established various degrees of authorship in these type of practices, the processes of which often result in either the dissolution of authorship or the advancement of co-authorship:[15] (1) an artist or group of artists takes part in the life of the subjects being represented or filmed with a solid, long-term commitment, but the aesthetic strategies are not negotiated with them. The creative team is divided into roles (directing, camera, editing, etc.); (2) a group of artists among whom there is no division of roles, in which decisions are made collectively by team members, and the aesthetic strategies may or may not be negotiated with the subjects represented or filmed; (3) an unauthored model, in which all of the subjects involved, whether represented or not (those filmed and not filmed), decide everything together in a fluid process.[16] Over the last decade an important discussion has taken place over the need for artistic authorship for those collaborative practices that, ultimately, produce works,[17] such as those proposed by Claire Bishop.[18] Other voices, however, such as that of Grant Kester, prioritize the social over the artistic objective.[19] While the prevailing hegemony around the figure of the individual artist makes the issue of whether artistic authorship will or will not become obsolete or irrelevant,

it is still important to explore the epistemological possibilities of that which will continue to overflow, mutate, and expand. The problem resides in the fact that certain collaborative processes create spaces of exception intimately linked to the very experimentation, but without sufficient support in the cultural and artistic environment that invariably demands a well-defined, recognizable product to facilitate its distribution. For this reason, I find Bishop's stance to be too rigid, and though it is still of interest to produce works using these processes, it would be beneficial to do away with the demand that the objective is the production of works. Not only because of the enormous number of possibilities that are left unexplored, but also because of the great potentialities that exist in the relationships between performativity, research, and mediation. We could conclude that other sorts of visual, social, and cultural forms emerge through processes of nonauthoritarian collaborative creation.

The Artist as Researcher and Mediator

The projects in which I have participated with collectives have all been closely related to artistic research processes, which at times form part of the artistic practice itself, and which also affects the status of artistic authorship. As Hito Steyerl points out, artistic research must therefore be understood as discipline and, at the same time, as conflict. Often the objective of any discipline has been to "discipline" others in order to dominate them, as one can also infer from the relationship between author and authorship. Thus it is a matter of accepting the idea of discipline with the conflicts that are circumscribed therein. In this sense, Steyerl proposes the idea of resistance as a counterpoint to that of discipline.[20] The processes of legitimization established by traditional disciplinary systems (those that defend universality, transcendence, impartiality, and objectivity) are in this way continuously problematized. We are dealing then with lending credence to another sort of legitimacy, that which is created by the processes of action and creation that put up resistance to the system, making it possible to speak through the perspective of nonvisible conflicts. Thus an idea of "active research" is created that evolves into an "event" as a result of the contact between people taking part in a specific situation. This event that, due to its performative implications, itself stimulates the research and its effects is categorically

14. The project takes an in-depth look at the genealogy of these practices since the late 1960s and up to today in various contexts, as well as their methodologies. The *Abecedario anagramático* and all of the materials in the project can be consulted interactively at <www.subtramas.museoreinasofia.es/es/anagrama>. See the filmed video essay we created in 2011 on collaborative audiovisual practices online at <www.subtramas.museoreinasofia.es/es/videoensayo>

15. See the entry on the notion of collaborative work in our ABC at <www.subtramas.museoreinasofia.es/es/anagrama/colaborativo>.

16. Regarding this system, it is indispensable to consult the projects and texts by the collective Cine Sin Autor regarding their idea of "authorless" work, <www.cinesinautor.es/>.

17. In this sense, it would be appropriate to delve further into the relationships between artistic authorship, the autonomy of art, and political autonomy. On the one hand, I am highly critical of the way in which the autonomy of art is still understood within the field itself, because it highlights the transcendental nature of artistic objects for their commercialization. Yet I also realize that this is the feature that makes many of art's potentialities possible, because it allows spaces for political exception (if not distinction) and for creating new imaginaries contrary to the omnipotence of the logics of markets and creative industries. See Gerald Rauning, "Instituent Practices: Fleeing, Instituting, Transforming," *Transversal* 1 (2006), <www.eipcp.net/transversal/0106/raunig/en>.

18. See Claire Bishop, *Participation* (London: Whitechapel; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006); see also Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), esp. ch. 1, 8, and 9.

19. In order to review the notion of social purpose in certain collaborative artistic practices, see chapter 1 of Grant H. Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011). To this end, I would like to mention two projects that were the source of much inspiration: *Park Fiction* (Hamburg, Germany), <www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/parkfiction/>, and the film *Read the Mask: Tradition is Not Given* by Petra Bauer and Annette Krauss, <www.subtramas.museoreinasofia.es/es/contenidos/read-the-masks.-tradition-is-not-given-leed-las-mascaras.-la-tradicion-no-es-algo-dado>.

20. Steyerl points toward an aesthetic of resistance. She speaks about resistance against discipline; against notions of science-art history, she proposes those of public debate against information; against the notions of the art market / creative industries, she proposes that of aesthetic autonomy; and against the specific, she proposes the unique. See Hito Steyerl, "Aesthetics of Resistance? Artistic Research as Discipline and Conflict," *Transversal* 1 (2010), <www.eipcp.net/transversal/0311/steyerl/en>.

different from strictly theoretical speculation, implying a traditional scholarly study, because it means, on the one hand, introducing action, the motion of bodies, the perception of their emotions, and so forth, and, on the other hand, understanding how through making and practical experience invisible and crucial emotional elements appear that are marginalized or excluded from academic analyses biased toward a strictly rational and replicable legitimization of historically quantified data based on repetition and institutional acknowledgment over time. In this sense, we are once again problematizing the relationship between authorship and authority to encourage a broadening of the notion of legitimacy, this time with the age-old conflict between theory and practice, which would also be disrupted, because authorship is thus linked to a hybrid space overflowing with the production of knowledge and culture that does not correspond to "being a specialist or an expert in."[21] In addition to mediation understood as negotiation, which I stressed when speaking about the challenges of collaborative practices, I want to emphasize the relationship between mediation and performativity. As an example we can use Subtramas' participation in the exhibition *Really Useful Knowledge* at the Museo Arte Reina Sofía (2014−15).[22] In addition to the *Abecedario anagramático*, we presented a mediation program along with another program of public activities within the framework of our installation *Cuatro preguntas para una utilidad que está por venir* (Four Questions for a Usefulness That Is Still to Come). In both programs, we put into practice what we understood to be "performative mediation." This allowed us to create an artistic space in which the public—constituted in "walking assemblies"—and other social agents such as Marea Blanca and Marea Verde,[23] among others, actively intervened, for the first time ever, in the museum's exhibition spaces. Performative mediation functions like a practice both distant from and conscious of the conflicts of certain relational aesthetics, which tend to aestheticize social relations in order to benefit the logics of consumption. With performative mediation, in contrast, authorship is mediated through the use of artistic means, which permits specific agents to act in other ways, within spaces and

Subtramas, Action by MEDSAP-Marea Blanca in front of *Cuatro preguntas para una utilidad que está por venir* (Four Questions for a Utility Still to Come) during *Un saber realmente útil* (Really Useful Knowledge) exhibition, Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid, 2014

institutions.[24] As a result, the artist not only takes aesthetic concerns into account but also becomes involved in the mediation and distribution processes of everything that can be produced; the artist assimilates methodologies from radical pedagogy in a hybrid, multifaceted, decentralized approach. The artist becomes both researcher and mediator.[25]

The small experimental structure—still rather precarious in cultural processes before and after the crisis of 2008—that is comprised of the collaborative practices described above, as well as the situations and spaces that they promote, constitute just the tip of a large iceberg filled with prototypes useful to those communities beginning to introduce new forms of living as an alternative to those imposed by neoliberalism. Like many others, I wish for a prosperous expansion of this process, and that it may be accomplished with a large dose of empathy.

21. To me, it continues to be highly relevant to refer to Benjamin's notion of the cultural producer. See Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer" (1934), in *Reflections: Essays Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), pp. 220–38.
22. See <www.museoreinasofia.es/en/exhibitions/really-useful-knowledge, <www.museoreinasofia.es/actividades/acciones-saber-realmente-util>, <www.museoreinasofia.es/visita/tipos-visita/visita-comentada/recorridos-saber-realmente–util>.
23. Marea Blanca (The White Tide) and Marea Verde (The Green Tide) are protest organizations formed by professionals from the healthcare and educational sectors, respectively. They were actively protesting against the budgetory cuts in these two fields, in 2011 and 2012.—Ed.

24. See Dorothea von Hantelmann, *How to Do Things with Art* (Berlin: Diaphanes, 2007).
25. See the entry on the notion of radical pedagogy in our ABC at <www.subtramas.museoreinasofia.es/en/anagrama/radical-pedagogy>.

Interview with Christian Fernández Mirón

For Christian Fernández Mirón (b. 1984, Madrid), informal education has been, and continues to be, pivotal to his perspective on the world and on work. Hybridization is, in a way, his specialty, as he combines art, design, education, and music projects, representing disciplines to which he has arrived through experimentation. The diversity of his projects makes him difficult to classify in an artistic sense, though perhaps their overriding theme is a search for collective intimacy. This search is what drives the multidisciplinary collective ¡JA!, and resulted in his *Conciertos mínimos* (Minimum Concerts); the erotic-subversive calendar of hirsute pin-ups*, Bears, Illustrated*; and the creative gymnastics called *La sociedad de las nubes* (The Cloud Society.)

—www.fernandezmiron.com

In almost all your projects, you work with a large number of people whose collaboration at different stages of the process shape the outcome. To what degree does the figure of the author/artist remain important in this context?

As part of the exhibition *Ni arte ni educación* (Neither Art Nor Education, 2015), I carried out a project called *Murciélago* (Bat). Every Wednesday at the same time we met at Matadero Madrid to experiment with the limits and possibilities of our voices and our capacity to listen. The idea was to approach this project not as a workshop with a one-way transfer of knowledge but rather as a platform in which I was the catalyst, so that both the participants—with their individualities and differences—and myself could expand our knowledge, generating a group dynamic by which we could all learn from each other. That is why I called it a vocal research laboratory.

This approach was certainly utopian, but I have always known that I didn't want to be one of those artists who signs the front of the canvas, manifesting his authorship in the most visible place. I also dreamed of toppling hierarchies, so that all decisions could be collective. But I realized that leadership is necessary to insure the success of things that within a horizontal context could not flourish. In *Murciélago*, for example, I had to assume a certain leadership role or else things wouldn't move forward. I decided that it was up to me to assume that role because, ultimately, I was the one who had initiated the process: I had a number of defined ideas at the outset and I was much more experienced than most of my colleagues in the group. As such, it seemed appropriate for me to lead (at least at specific moments), to suggest dynamics and names, make observations, and so on. And we should not forget that such proposals have a social aspect, as they bring together people who did not know each other before. So, obviously, my role consisted in breaking the ice and getting everyone to feel comfortable. The goal is to create a trusting environment so that people begin to propose things, to contradict, and to question. That is when a collective or collaborative process can truly begin.

So could we say that an artist's role in collaborative and collective processes, in which there is invariably a social component, is that of a facilitator with a certain technical knowledge?

When you put it that way, it sounds rather ugly, but there is some truth to it. Though I don't consider myself an expert in anything, in *Murciélago* I was certainly the one who knew the most about the subject, as I did have the technical knowledge. And I do indeed believe that we shouldn't be afraid to take on the role of facilitator. Perhaps it requires a substantial sense of empathy, as well as certain social skills, charisma, and an extroverted personality. They are elements needed in mediation, be it in the field of cultural mediation or elsewhere, and I have always found them particularly useful for artistic projects as well, in order to effectively lead groups and resolve conflicts.

Why then do you think artists are asked to coordinate projects that have a strong social character when they could just as easily be led by mediators? Whether we call it "spark," "genius," or "creativity," there seems to be a widespread belief that true artists have the capacity to see the world in a different way and that this capacity is universally desired. What makes artists special compared to other creative workers?

I have spent my entire life trying to debunk the myth of the tormented and volatile artist simply because it is not something I identify with. I think it is possible to discipline oneself without taming one's creativity. The arts can thus contribute new perspectives that allow us to reflect upon our surroundings from unfamiliar viewpoints. Art is a vehicle, and it can become a useful tool for having a social impact.

But if the project is initiated by an institution with the wish to have a specific kind of social impact, then the commission will involve more than just financing the work, because the agenda is more far-reaching. Socially engaged art projects of such kind establish a commercial relationship between institution and artist that resembles the traditional client-vendor relationship. Is there artistic authorship in such a project?

David Crespo and Christian Fernández Mirón, *Atrapados en el acto* (Trapped in the Act), Madrid, 2012. This workshop introduces the performative practice reflecting from the action and diluting authorship with exercises that recreate historical and self-created pieces.

There are always limitations when you work with an institution. In 2012, our ¡JA! collective realized the *Terraza Matadero* (Matadero Terrace) project, an artistic program for twelve summer nights. I consider myself the author because I know what we contributed and what could not have been done without us. But I also remember that one sponsor vetoed some of our proposals. To avoid that ambiguity, it is important to also realize projects outside of institutional contexts, in private, intimate, and trusting environments. Only in these settings is it possible to create projects with another kind of exchange: complicity, food, personal intimacy, and so on. When institutions became interested in the *Conciertos mínimos*—held in domestic and personal settings—we knew that we should not try to recreate the same format but rather draw on the interest they had generated to design *Terraza Matadero*, which was a different project designed specifically for the space in which it was held.

Maybe I view all of this more pragmatically because of my origins in graphic design, where you respond to a concrete commission: a client who lacks a specific set of tools explains his or her problem to a specialist who does have those tools. It is good to be open to such an exchange of roles, to put oneself in the other's shoes and try to get inside his or her head. That, basically, is the empathy I mentioned earlier, and it is necessary in any social, collaborative project. You have to accept both leading and being led. And if it is done with the right approach, it is a refreshing change, even in the art world. (hea)

Buque Bólido (Toña Medina and Christian Fernández Mirón),
¡Luces, cámara, canción! (Lights, Camera, Song!), Madrid, 2017.
28 girls and boys helped to compose a collective song, writing
the lyrics and generating an instrumental foundation through
actions with their voices, bodies and different materials.

Interview with Federico Guzmán

Federico Guzmán (b.1964, Seville), is an artist and co(i)nspirer of collaborative projects. He follows his intuition in a quest for "formal unity" (which involves all forms but has no form of its own), living art as a game, as activism, and as an unlimited path to knowledge and transformation. Among others, his recent activities include *Derechos y deberes transfronterizos: Saltando el Muro de la Vergüenza*, Centro de Investigación por la Paz Gernika Gogoratuz; *La canción del tomaco*, MEIAC, Badajoz; *El otro en desafío*, Universidad del Atlántico, Barranquilla, Colombia; ARTifariti, IX International Art and Human Rights Meeting in Western Sahara; and *Tuiza, in Provincia 53; Arte, territorio y descolonización del Sáhara*, Musac, León.

—www.asi-de-facil.blogspot.com.es

You do a lot of work as Federico Guzmán, even when it is participative or collaborative, and that name has earned you a certain renown as a visual artist. On the other hand, you also collaborate on many collective projects in which the idea of *authorship* dissolves into anonymous collectivity.

Authorship is just a concept that we make real by collectively believing in its existence, but it is no more real than a magic trick or a game. That is why we can change our relation to this idea and enjoy it, understanding it not as an end unto itself but rather as a means of communicating. The opportunities presented by a collective allow one to disappear into a play of personalities that adapt to a context in which they are flowing, and to merge with it and transform it from within. We are not controlled by our authors; we are an expression of life's creativity through its infinite forms. Like almost all of the artists currently working collectively, we have turned toward this type of community formation as a means of learning, sharing support, and attaining greater strength through our ties.

What draws you to collective as opposed to individual work, and how do you handle questions of authorship in collective situations?

There are many different reasons to choose collective work on certain occasions and in certain contexts. The main one for me is a drive toward empathy and shared love. This is an impetus that flows and connects, overflowing a given situation and opening it. The *street museum* that we organized in Bogotá in the late 1990s is a good example. It was the result of a class exercise in the Universidad de Los Andes, where the idea of working in an urban space evolved into a proposal to be carried out in El Cartucho, the city's most impoverished neighborhood. We began with a visit and an in-depth discussion about what to propose. We agreed that it was a matter of offering a service to the community. Our colleague, Carolina Caycedo, proposed creating a beauty salon for the street people, which seemed like

such an excellent idea that we took it on as a collective task. That was the first step in our involvement with the neighborhood: offering hairdressing and personal hygiene at the local health center, with a service called *A toda mecha* [a play on words involving both hair and speed]. It was a wonderful experience. For several weeks there were intense encounters with all kinds of people in an atmosphere of safety and trust. In an agreeable setting of mutual respect, people open up and share their life stories, which are always admirable and impressive. Meeting there every week, we made many friends, and when the school year ended, the inhabitants of El Cartucho asked us to stay on.

This request led to the spontaneous founding of the Cambalache collective, which was the group that decided to continue working in that neighborhood after classes ended. It was an anonymous collective that did not usually bother with questions of authority, as its members sometimes changed and because they were working on the street, outside artistic and cultural circuits. The collective's project in that neighborhood—a recyclable museum generated through *cambalache* (bartering) with the local inhabitants— turned into our shared adventure. It strengthened friendships and gave us an excuse to get together. We were proud of it and we brought it out whenever we could, simply for fun. It was through that sense of playfulness that the experience of becoming fully engaged with life on the street led us to reflect upon and question what we had been taught about the institution of art and artists and their role in the real world; about the market, routines, and prestige. We began to grasp that true learning consists of unlearning everything that had been used to program us so we could recognize that what we had been taught at school and at the university was no longer useful to us. We members of the Cambalache collective have continued to meet for specific projects, and being a small group of people has allowed us to work with considerable autonomy and efficiency, even now that its members live in different places. When one of us receives an invitation to participate in certain types of projects (of a sociopolitical, ecological, or transitional character, or directed toward the mass public), we tell ourselves that this is a mission for the Cambalache collective, and we are happy to be back in action.

Authorship is understood to connote the existence of an author, but also of authority. In a collective process, can authority also be shared?

Cambalache collective, *museo de la calle* (Street Museum), Bogotá, 1998

In most of the collectives that I have been involved with, nobody addressed the question of authority within the group. The idea is normally that, in a collective where all viewpoints are accepted, authority is not only unnecessary but it is also an attack on the freedom of the members. However, there is collective authority in a group that functions as a countervailing power to that arising externally; it is a collective responsibility linked to the accelerated evolution of consciousness that opens paths to liberty in all of our societies. The fields of art and knowledge combine to constitute creative resistance based on a loving and community impulse that is committed to life, sharing, social justice, the democratization of knowledge, the expansion of the public domain, the construction of free cultural models, care for the Earth, and the capacity to imagine a transition toward a fairer, more democratic society. This is the first step toward a

collective transformation of "the planetary dream," in order to turn it into a fairer, happier, compassionate, and habitable place. This may seem rather utopian, but let us recall that all realities began as utopias.

In its *Abecedario anagramático* (Anagramatic ABC), Subtramas stated that what underlies the practice of collaborative art is a sort of "cooperative autonomy" that encourages a politics of sharing. What do you think?

I believe we are on our way to a collective structural change that emphasizes cultural diversity and creativity as expressions of collective intelligence. That does not weaken the artist's status; instead, it invites the artist to discover the artistic intelligence that each and every one of us has inside. It is a way of acquiring power, of going beyond definitions and dogma and understanding ourselves as the co-creators of our lives. My argument is that enabling these possibilities does not exclude the usefulness of the individual author as long as he or she is understood as one player in a collective function, as a figure that can still be useful in certain cases. In that sense, we could see an ambivalent relation between collective and individual identity, between the artwork as an experiential process and the final product as a complementary relation. Rather than favoring one term over the other, the collective over authorial sovereignty, or self-expression over the contractions of culture, we would rather recognize the play and interaction between those two apparently separate terms as an essential connection in creative action.

Moreover, I agree that the field of collaborative art can be a highly favorable setting for imagining and practicing the creation of shared property. At the same time, this shared field can be a space where artistic practice can find new meaning, as it addresses profound and as-yet-unresolved social dilemmas. In this sense, the opportunity of working in a specific community over time, as I, and other artists, have done in the Sahrawi refugee camps, is very important. From that experience, I have concluded that our paradigm may have to shift from "artist in residence" to "artist in resistance," because working in a place, longevity, and responsibility are what most facilitates community. If we propose long-term work to create what can be shared, we will be able to imagine a sort of artistic and human permaculture, applying

the idea of sustainability developed in scientific, political, and economic circles to the very heart of our everyday lives. Not this year's harvest, but instead a crop that bears permanent fruit.

I am convinced that these artistic practices can activate a communicative energy capable of embodying the change we want to see in this world. An art committed to sustainability implies more connectedness, more integration, more symbiosis, and more cooperation. Art is a field open to trying out other ways of living that allow us to cultivate our gifts and talents in surroundings focused on love, community, and creativity, proposing a real alternative to dominant structures and opening a door to hope. (hea)

Saber-acción-corazón (Knowledge, Action, Heart); collective painting, Ciudad Encantada, Cuenca, 2017
pp. 110–111: *Saltando el Muro de la Vergüenza* (Jumping the Wall of Shame), collaborative project by
Federico Guzmán at Tuiza, San Telmo Museoa for *Embarcada Artivista*, an initiative
by The Museo de la Paz of Gernika, San Sebastian, 2016

Trust

(Mis)trusting Strangers
Aida Sánchez de Serdio

Aida Sánchez de Serdio Martín is an educator and independent researcher. She is an educator and independent researcher as well as a Doctor of Fine Arts from the University of Barcelona, at whose School of Fine Arts she also taught for fifteen years. Her research focuses on relational politics in collaborative art practices and her fields of interest include cultural pedagogy, visual culture, and qualitative research.

I

It is always exciting to receive a commission to write about something that is not altogether familiar. It is an invitation to study, it keeps us from repeating ourselves, and it opens up the possibility of reconsidering some of our convictions in the process. So I was pleased when hablarenarte asked me to reflect on *trust*, a concept that I do not usually employ in my work or in my research,[1] although it is implicitly present in many of the processes I participate in, both in my personal and my professional life. It was precisely this relative distance from the concept (a distance that is desirable for the theoretical exploration of any object or process, even those we identify with) that led me to choose to discuss the complexities of the theory and practice of trust, rather than defend its virtues.

The notion of trust frequently comes up in processes and debates related to collaborative practices (cultural, artistic, or other types) in a straightforward, unexamined way, as a factor that is essential to the success of the projects in question. The accepted narratives recount how ongoing contact and the good faith of the participants promote a growing mutual understanding, the convergence of objectives, and even an emotional bond, resulting in a collaboration that is successful in every way (or else the opposite: how failure to build these types of relationships will destroy a project). In this sense, trust is always positive: something to be encouraged among the collaborating parties. This trust is based on forms of interpersonal behavior that are morally correct (honesty, sincerity, transparency, empathy, consistency, perseverance, etc.), and it is essential to the success of the process. In other words, trust is good, desirable, and necessary.

As a person who seldom uses the term, I started by asking questions such as: Is trust just one kind of interaction or could there be various types of trust? Does trust always require the parties involved to know each other well? Does

1. In my doctoral thesis—my first rigorous work on collaborative artistic practices—I used the notion of "rela-tion-al politics," which refers to the political nature of *all* relationships that are possible in these kinds of processes.

trust depend on the moral values of the individuals involved, or can it be structural too? Is trust an essential prerequisite of all fruitful or interesting collaborations? What is the relationship between trust and other aspects of social life such as the economy, politics, management, production, and so on? Is it possible to imagine a kind of trust that is problematic; in other words, is there such a thing as "undesirable" trust? With these questions in mind, I began an exploration of the concept of *trust* that I now share in this text in the hope of contributing, as far as I am able, to a necessary debate in the field of collaborative artistic practices.

First of all, I would like to clarify that this is not intended as a motion for the rejection of trust. It would clearly be impossible to live in a context of systematic mistrust of other people, institutions, and even ourselves... Even the simplest everyday actions would become unworkable: we need to trust that the bus will arrive at our stop (even if it is late), that our employers or clients will pay us (even if they are also late), that there will be food in the supermarket tomorrow, that our friends and relatives will care about us, and that those who govern us will only use violence with restraint and fairness. The fact that these things sometimes fail to happen only confirms the importance of trust in social relations, because it shows that we are able to operate systematically or relationally even when there are no guarantees.

II

As a concept and as a principle of human action, *trust* has awakened interest in the fields of morality and philosophy, on the one hand, and anthropology, sociology, and psychology, on the other. Philosophers are interested in trust as an abstract notion and in the ethical implications of trust, while social scientists empirically explore the emergence and development of trust in specific human societies, as well as its individual and collective motivations and effects.[2]

Cristina Acedo and Antoni Gomila[3] have studied the concept of trust as the basis of cooperative relationships from the perspective of anthropology. Their point of departure is the fact that the inherent uncertainty, risk, and complexity of human societies makes collaboration and a certain altruism necessary in most areas of life. And collaboration requires trust: in order to collaborate in an enterprise that exceeds our individual capacities, we need to trust that the others involved will also do their bit, and that they will not deliberately harm us.

But beyond this utilitarian aspect, Acedo and Gomila[3] emphasize the affective foundations of social life, in the sense that human beings develop reflectively in relation to those around us, and establish emotional connections, such as trust, that transcend cognitive or rational criteria. This is an intrinsic aspect of human experience and probably also a practical necessity given the impossibility, in large and complex societies, of making decisions based on a rational consideration of all contextual variables and the intentions of all the agents involved. In the context of this debate, Acedo and Gomila make an interesting comment on the importance of the emotional dimension in the construction of trust:

> The emotional aspect is relevant because trust emerges as a means of dealing with concern over the risks involved in building and maintaining social and cooperative relationships by circumventing fear of uncertainty, thus offering a greater sense of security.... Sometimes, the level of affection may in itself be a reason for trust to appear, without taking anything else into account, as in the case of romantic relationships.[4]

Acedo and Gomila also point out that the interest in the concept of trust in the fields of sociology and political theory can be traced back to studies on social capital (note the economic connotations of the notion of "capital") that analyzed the importance and functioning of networks of personal and collective relationships in the attainment of a particular benefit or gain: social cohesion, business efficiency, economic progress, and so on. From different perspectives, scholars like Eric M. Uslaner (who emphasizes the intrinsic moral value of trust) and Francis Fukuyama (who highlights

2. Some of the key authors who have discussed the concept of *trust* include David Hume, John Locke, Georg Simmel, Annette Baier, Talcott Parsons, Niklas Luhmann, Hilary Putnam, Anthony Giddens, Francis Fukuyama, and Erik Erikson.

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3. Cristina Acedo and Antoni Gomila, "Confianza y cooperación. Una perspectiva evolutiva," *Contrastes. Revista Internacional de Filosofía. Suplemento* 18 (2013), pp. 221–38.
4. Ibid., p. 226.

its contribution to economic prosperity) argue that trust, in the general sense—that is, not limited to family or friendship groups but to society as a whole—is a key element in the functioning of modern liberal capitalist societies, which are characterized by open markets, representative governments, a certain material well-being, and individual freedoms.[5] This is obviously based on a sympathetic understanding of liberalism as the most desirable political and economic form, as Fukuyama maintained in his famous thesis on the end of history.

I will return to the question of trust as emotional compensation in the face of uncertainty, and to the role that trust plays in economistic approaches to social organization. But before moving on from the article by Acedo and Gomila, I would like to mention their breakdown of the different types of trust: *personal trust* based on ongoing close relationships, the *general trust* mentioned above, *identity-based trust* between those who share common traits, and *strategic trust* geared toward obtaining some kind of benefit. We can see, then, that trust is not a monolithic concept and that it has several, quite different meanings.

On the philosophical front, the idea of trust has recently been examined from the perspective of the ethics of care. Ángela Calvo,[6] for example, takes up some of the ideas that Annette Baier developed from a feminist perspective to argue that trust is a form of "sympathy" (in David Hume's sense of the term to refer to the communication of feelings and passions between human beings). This allows us to take moral reflection beyond liberal contractualism (which is closer to a Hobbesian perspective) and abstract intellectualism. From this point of view, trust is the link between the moral mandate of justice and the embodied affects of care, between faith and feeling, and thus a complex notion with sometimes contradictory implications.

As Baier points out,[7] trust is not a positive quality in itself; its value depends on the purpose for which it is used. And even when the goals are admirable, it is perfectly possible for trust relationships to be based on the exploitation of those involved. What's more, this exploitation often

continues over long periods of time precisely because it goes unnoticed, given its emotional façade. Baier uses the example of marriage:

> Even when the enterprise is a benign one, it is frequently one that does not fairly distribute the jobs and benefits that are at its disposal. A reminder of the sorry sexist history of marriage as an institution aiming at providing children with proper parental care should be enough to convince us that mutual trust and mutual trustworthiness in a good cause can coexist with the oppression and exploitation of at least half the trusting and trusted partners.[8]

On the other hand, trust implies taking these and similar risks:

> We must allow many other people to get into positions where they can, if they choose, injure what we care about, since those are the positions that they must be in, in order to help us take care of what we care about.[9]

In other words, trust does not imply certainty, it implies exposing ourselves to the risk of sharing the things that we care about and cherish with others who can either harm us or help us in our efforts, precisely because they are in this position. But Baier does not see trust as a moral value that we must defend at all costs, a kind of absolute imperative. Rather she argues for the need to reach a reasoned, "reasonable" trust based on shared experience, dialogue, narratives, and testimonies, but also on the ability to wait, suspend judgment, and forgive breaches of trust if they are due to inadvertent errors, misunderstandings, and so on.[10]

Baier raises another important aspect: the fact that trust is a reciprocal relationship requires us to think about what it means to be worthy of trust, to consider the extent to which a trust relationship requires us to examine our own emotions and intentions, and to be questioned by others:

> Real trustworthiness, like real trust, involves feelings, beliefs, and intentions, which sometimes can be faked. The trustworthy person

5. Eric M. Uslaner, "Trust as a Moral Value," paper presented at the conference "Social Capital: Interdisciplinary Perspectives," University of Exeter, September 15–20, 2001; Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: The Free Press, 1995).
6. Ángela Calvo de Saavedra, "La confianza: ¿categoría mediadora entre la obligación y el cuidado en filosofía moral? La voz de Annette Baier en la filosofía feminista," *Universitas Philosophica*, no. 53 (2009), pp. 37–53.
7. Annette Baier, "Trust" (1991), in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* (Salt Lake City: Utah University Press, 1992), pp. 107–74; available online at <www.tannerlectures.utah.edu/_documents/a-to-z/b/baier92.pdf>.

8. Ibid., p. 110.
9. Annette Baier, *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 101.
10. Baier, "Trust"; Calvo, "La confianza."

will feel some concern for the trusting, and this feeling will be especially noticeable if things go wrong. She will believe that she is responsible for what she is trusted for and will intend to discharge that responsibility competently and with a good grace. A "good grace" excludes not merely resentment of the responsibility but also a too calculative weighing of the costs of untrustworthiness and the benefits of trustworthiness.[11]

As this small sample illustrates, the many debates around the notion of trust offer a wide range of possible approaches to the concept: personal trust and organizational trust, trust as an emotion, as something that springs from familiarity, as an absolute moral value, as a considered decision, as a commitment, as a form of negotiation, as a promise, as an act of faith, as a selfish strategy… The position that we take will determine the political and ethical nature of the relationship that is established, which, as we know, is never isolated or merely personal.

<div align="center">III</div>

I would like to conclude with two general reflections on the role of trust in collaborative projects, from a perspective that does not consider trust as an intrinsic value but as a contested field of negotiations that is both problematic and full of possibilities.

The first concerns the economization of trust. As we saw in the case of social capital, trust is by no means a moral value geared toward selfless communal benefit. Trust is also precisely that: a form of capital, a resource to be invested in order to produce gains or profit. And while there is nothing wrong in aspiring to profit (we all do it), we need to maintain a healthy caution given how easily trust has been integrated into economic models like the Economy for the Common Good, which is described as "a form of market system in which the motives and aspirational objectives of (private) companies shift from the pursuit of profit and competition to cooperation and contribution to the common good."[12] While acknowledging the value of this reorientation, the proposed model is nonetheless the umpteenth adaptation of capitalism

"with a human face" (what was social democracy, after all?) for the purpose of ensuring its continuing existence in changing and precarious circumstances.

Similarly, in collaborative and peer-to-peer economies, the trust that users generate by building and maintaining their reputation (through reviews, comments, and ratings on online platforms, for example) is also key to the effectiveness of the business itself and to economic prosperity. This is not to mention the online and offline "friendship technologies" that run the risk of turning all affective relationships into raw material for a post-Fordist economy that makes no distinction between work and leisure, and in which personal attributes, "soft skills," and social relationships have a high exchange value. Moreover, as Baier reminds us, trust relationships can contribute to the perpetuation of exploitation and precarization, albeit unwittingly. Therefore, when we participate in trust-based relationships we should constantly question them and try to detect whether we are subject to cooptation and instrumentalization. We must also be aware of the politically correct symbolic and emotional values that we bring to the process, not just on a small scale (where emotional compensations usually prevail) but also and above all on a structural level.

The second reflection I would like to make focuses on the affective aspect of trust, from the perspective of care and risk. As we saw earlier, Acedo and Gomila suggest that trust can function as a kind of "emotional bypass" in situations that require decision-making and cooperation, given the impossibility of rational risk calculation in large, complex societies. On the other hand, while Baier points out the role of trust as a mediator between abstract moral values (freedom, justice) and experiences of mutual care, she also emphasizes the vulnerability that necessarily goes hand in hand with trust (which cannot exist without it) and the possibility that trust may give rise to relationships that are not necessarily convenient to those involved. This complex definition invites a critique of the more corporativist versions of trust and, while we are at it, of care too.

If we expect trust to be based on the certainty of the benevolent behavior of all parties, with the resulting familiarity and common identity, we risk negating all possible dissent, and, as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe

11. Baier, "Trust," p. 112.
12. See <www.economiadelbiencomun.cl/2014/que-es-la-economia-del-bien-comun/>; see <www.ecogood.org/en>.

argue, dissent is the foundation of democracy.[13] We cannot and should not work toward certainty. When we open up to vulnerability, those who care for us may fail us, and they will, just as we will at some point fail them and disappoint their expectations. We need to mistrust the trust and affects that may be covering up an asymmetrical relationship and imposed consensus. The presence and the voice of foreign bodies that disrupt relationships of identity-based affinity may in fact be very productive, although not necessarily pleasant or welcome.

Lastly, we can imagine possible fruitful collaborations even without strong trust between the parties involved. As theorists of "symbolic interactionism" argue,[14] joint action is possible even among individuals who do not understand each other. Events often occur without our conscious will, feelings, and even knowledge, to say nothing of the collaboration between human and nonhuman agents explored in actor-network theories,[15] which would have us redefine the nature of trust so as to connect us to objects, animals, and other living beings. But without necessarily going that far, we can start by questioning the kind of personal, suprapersonal, and nonpersonal trust we build when we carry out cultural projects that connect individuals who are strangers to us or to each other, circles of regular collaborators, established collectives, organizations big and small, and institutions. We need to work with a definition of *trust* that is open to complexities and contradictions if we do not want to end up locked into our regular groups of friends and acquaintances.

13. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985).
14. Herbert Blumer, *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969).
15. Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005).

Interview with Saioa Olmo

In her artistic practice, Saioa Olmo (b. 1976, Bilbao), focuses on human relations, paying particular attention to behavior, communication and social organization. In her processes, she experiments with collaborative and participative dynamics. Her proposals lie mainly in the area between the contextual and the performative. Her recent projects include *Susurrando el futuro*, which addresses communication between generations, and *Eromecánica*, which explores the erotics of social machinery. She has also been part of *Tecnoblandas*, research into soft technologies, and she is currently completing her doctoral dissertation, *Transarte. Arte participativo-colaborativo y comportamiento social*.

—www.ideatomics.com

In recent years you have been doing quite a bit of writing and work on the concept of *soft technologies*. Could you define that concept for us?

Soft technologies are bodies of knowledge drawn mainly from the sciences and some areas of the humanities (education, social psychology, administration, marketing, management, etc.) that generate certain "artifacts" that organize our life in common: behavioral guidelines, work protocols, neighborhood agreements, schedules, social contracts, body routines, ethical norms, incentive systems, discursive modes, and relational dynamics. These artifacts are less tangible than the machines we generally think of as technological devices—printers, cameras, computers, robots, and so on—that have been developed mainly with mechanical, electronic, or cybernetic technologies more rooted in the natural sciences or engineering.

In recent years, with the groups LoRelacional and ColaBoraBora, I have been researching soft technologies. This is not a concept invented by us. Certain authors have applied the term *technology* to behavioral or organizational aspects, including Michel Foucault in *Technologies of the Self* (1988) and Lewis Mumford in his book *Technics and Civilization* (1934). More specifically, the term soft technology has been amply developed by researcher Zhouying Jin in *Global Technological Change: From Hard Technology to Soft Technology* (2005). We have simply brought it into our field, and made it more widely known, because we believe that soft technologies have a considerable capacity for agency in social settings.
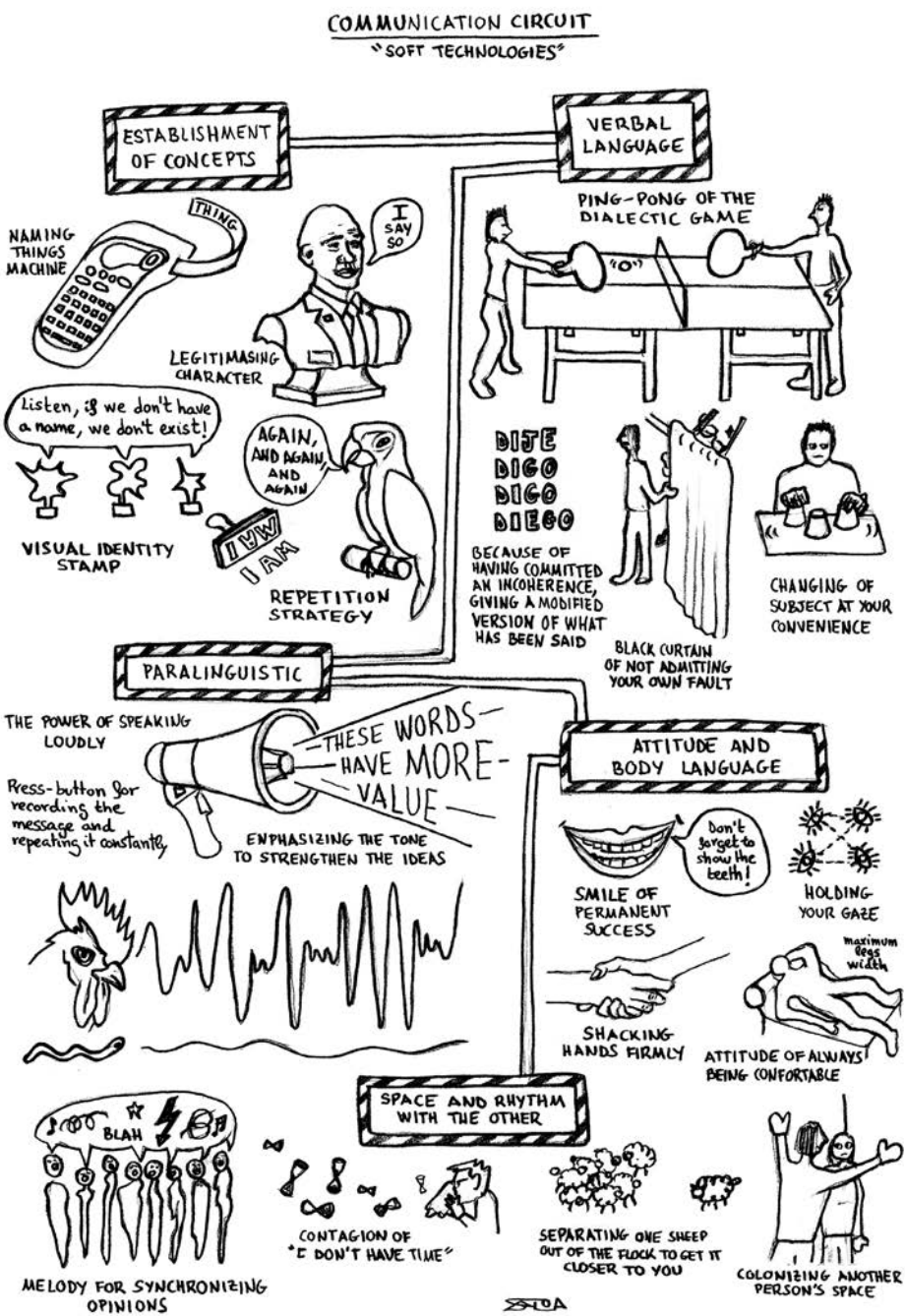
It is possible to understand the usefulness of soft technology in areas such as applied social psychology, marketing, and publicity, which involve generating dependable methods and patterns of interaction. What interest do you think this concept has in the context of art?

Soft technologies appear in all areas of our lives: politics, law, health care, war, childrearing, medicine, mathematics, aeronautics, gastronomy, and so on. It is simply that, in some areas, they are used as tools for processes, while in others, such as those you have mentioned, they occupy a more central place. As a category, "soft technology" is useful in drawing attention to intangible artifacts, as opposed to "hard" ones, but we believe that technological reality is actually a mixture of soft and hard technologies caught up in bodies, machines, and circumstances.

It is easy the grasp the interest of applying soft technologies in the arts if we keep in mind our current situation. On the one hand, contemporary art has de-aestheticized itself (it no longer focuses on an aesthetic quest via the senses); its disciplines and formats have expanded (what is considered art and what no longer is depends on whether it is produced by a specifically artistic discipline or medium). On the other, there are currents in contemporary art that seek, in their own processes, direct contact and mutual exchange with surrounding contexts and agents. This calls for different tools than those associated with the visual arts, which come from a tradition of material craft. It requires tools drawn from management, psychology, and communication—tools that belong to the area of soft technologies. Sometimes, however, they are hardly viewed as tools at all (our capacity for teamwork or for communicating with others is taken for granted), and they may even be thought of as skills. Of course, to a certain degree they are, and there are some advantages to working on an amateur basis, but we are talking about empowerment through methodologies and procedures that can be used in a more sophisticated way.

Your art work has strong collaborative and social components. In order for your proposed collaborations to work, does there have to be trust among the members of the temporary collective that make up a project?

Generally, yes, but it depends on the kind of project. Taking an interest and using soft technologies in a premeditated way in your art projects does not mean that you have to use them in just one way

Saioa Olmo, Communication Circuit Machine drawing, part of the TECNOBLANDAS research, 2016, <www.tecnologiasblandas.cc>

Saioa Olmo, *La raya*
(The Line), Corners
of Europe DSS2016,
Azala, Lasierra, 2016,
<www.ideatomics.
com/la_raya.html>

If, for example, we are talking to a group of people that we have brought together to take on a project, then trust among them, and in the work to be done together, is practically a prerequisite. At the very least, it makes things easier. The necessary level of trust will also depend on the degree of uncertainty that the others are capable of assuming. Generally, either you are a kamikaze of group work or you try to collaborate with people you trust or on whom you can somehow project that sense of trust. That would be the case with the collectives I have formed or been a member of, including Wikitoki, 770OFF, EPLC, LoRelacional, Plataforma A, Wiki-historias, and Pripublikarrak.

There are projects where you don't know all of the people you are going to be collaborating with. In those cases, you try to create a situation favorable to the project's development, and that includes fostering an atmosphere of trust. Emotions and sentiments are contagious, so projecting them yourself can be a good way to start. At the beginning of a process I try to clarify as much as possible the terrain where we will be moving in order to generate trust and confidence (finding out what each person expects, what degree of commitment each is willing to make, how much time they plan to be involved, and so on). Here I could mention *Susurrando el futuro* (Whispering the Future), a recent project about the commitment among people from generations that will not coincide in time. Basically, it consists of collectively generating whispers that will reach people living where we do in 200 years. This is turning into an exercise of trust in different directions.

Nevertheless, there are times when you can propose collaborative or participative group situations in which you do not want to work on the basis of trust, but rather the opposite: you want the participants to function in a setting where they do not entirely know what they can expect from this approach, or from the other people involved. That was the case with *La raya* (The Line), a group dynamic carried out on different occasions that was based on the concept of borders, limits, and identities, in which the participants have a part of their role defined, and another part undefined, and where they do not know what the other participants' roles are.

There are also situations in which the person will be willing to participate on the basis of trust, but you expose them to a situation involving uncertainty
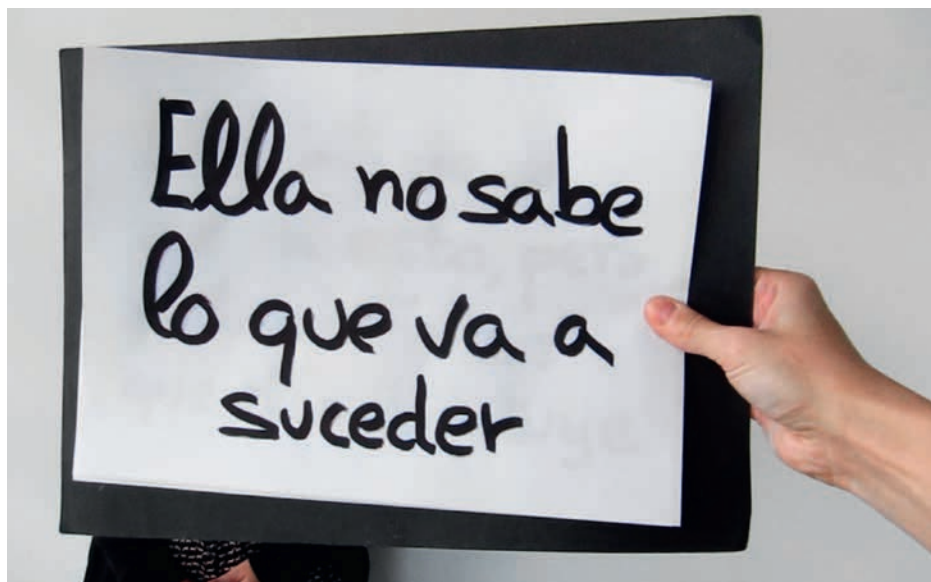
and unpredictability, such as *Jugando con* (Playing With), a series of interactions between two people recorded on video and subject to a partial script that is only fully defined on the spot.

To what degree can a good horizontal working methodology (soft technology) allow us to function without relations based on trust?

One thing does not replace the other. A good methodology for organizing work and distributing power within a group does not involve neglecting the importance of fostering an atmosphere of trust if it does not already exist. Relations based on trust favor the completion of tasks in both vertical and horizontal structures, and their absence complicates it in both cases. To the degree that each of us depends on others in both horizontal and vertical structures, we have to be able to trust that the system will function.

A person's trustworthiness depends on the ties they are capable of establishing (a sense of reciprocity, co-responsibility, affection, empathy), or the circumstances that have been constructed around us (for example, life-long mortgages that generate quite dependable and predictable
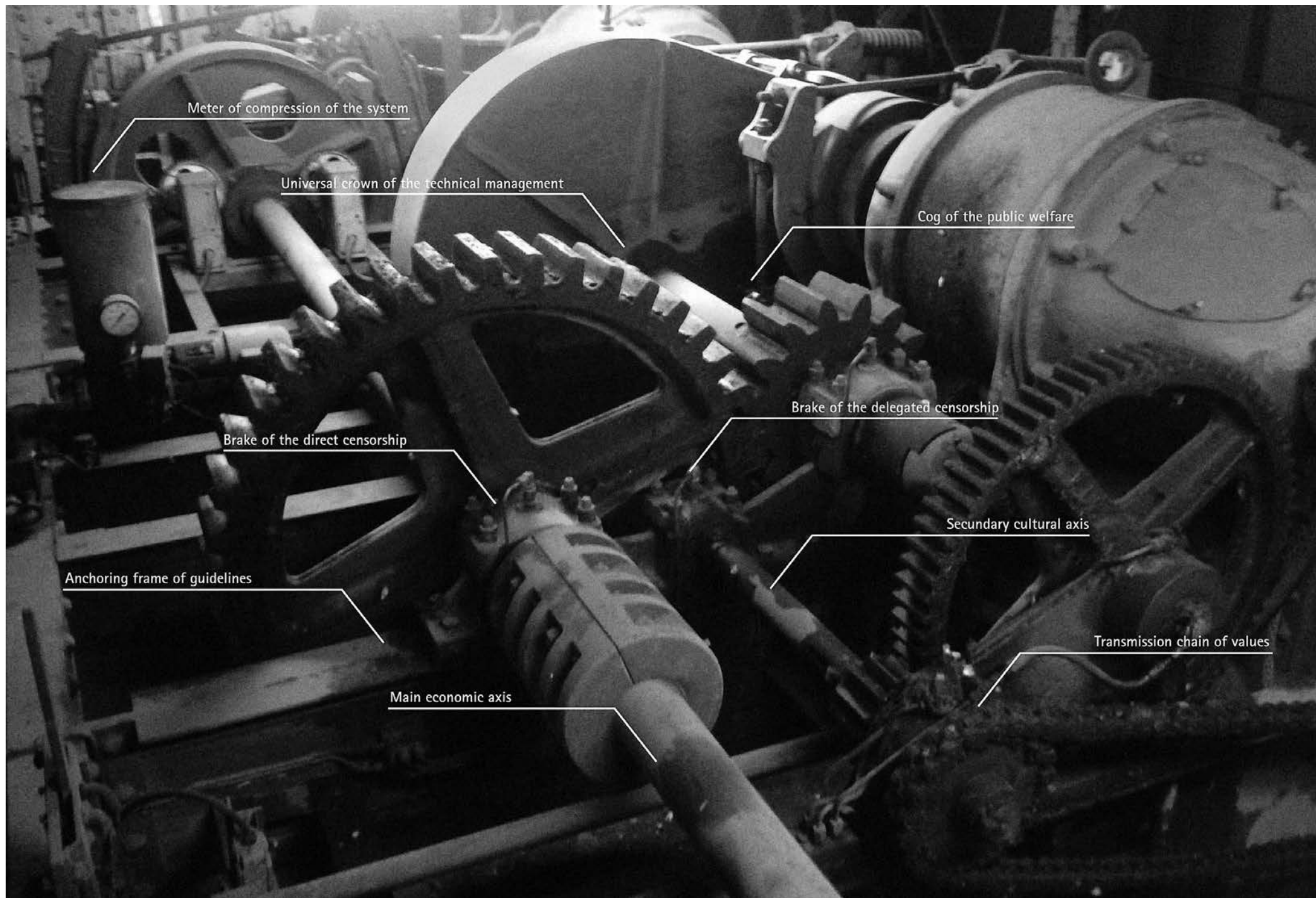
Ella no sabe
lo que va a
suceder

citizens). I say this because we generally use the term *relations of trust* in a positive sense, but for me the phrase "recovering market confidence" strikes me as suspicious, at the very least, and I wonder what will be sacrificed to achieve it.

In her text, Aida Sánchez de Serdio quotes Cristina Acedo and Antoni Gomila, who maintain that trust is also closely linked to affection and that it becomes especially important in contexts where preestablished behavioral norms are faulty or absent. It is hardly surprising that new collaborative proposals often originate in networks of trust. Can there be soft technologies that foster affection among people?

You can use knowledge of soft technologies to foster affection among people, and also to promote disdain or indifference. In fact, we are constantly being influenced by these technologies, and we also use them ourselves, for example, when we want to please someone or get them to do us a favor. And the fact that they are customary does not make them any less perceptible. The project called *Eromecánica. La erótica de la maquinaria social* (Eromechanics: The Erotics of the Social Machinery) addressed all of this to a degree, through consecutive dialogues that reveal power relations, libidinous flows, and the management of affects that connect certain people to others in a "very convenient" way.

And yet, when it comes to behavioral and emotional aspects where everything is measured in terms of intentions and objectives, the result is undoubtedly mistrust: like Facebook profiles that always present the person in a positive, successful, and glowing way, or the behavior of customer-service employees, which is entirely determined by protocols. Still, there are always cruder and sneakier practices, as well as people who are more or less capable of recognizing them or being affected by them.

In his book *Sex in Human Loving* (1970), Eric Berne, the creator of transactional analysis, explains how "sex best fulfills its purposes by being an end in itself."[1] I would say the same about affection and trust. What evolves in a natural manner is what works best. **(hea)**

1. Eric Berne, M.D., *Sex in Human Loving* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 33.

Meter of compression of the system

Universal crown of the technical management

Cog of the public welfare

Brake of the delegated censorship

Brake of the direct censorship

Secundary cultural axis

Anchoring frame of guidelines

Transmission chain of values

Main economic axis

Interview with Eva Fernández (Cine sin Autor)

Cine sin Autor (CsA) is a theory and practice of film production. For CsA, authorlessness no longer maintains the fundamental elements of authority and ownership embodied by an author, and instead makes it possible for collective production to emerge. Since 2007, CsA has developed over twenty projects in Spain, France, and Italy.

Eva Fernández is cofounder of CsA and she formulates some of her projects there. She practices literary authorlessness and is also a writer and editor at Contrabandos.org and La Oveja Roja.

—www.cinesinautor.es
—www.evalazcanocaballer.wordpress.com

In Cine sin Autor your approach to work involves not assigning ownership of film material to any single author but instead collectivizing it among all the participants. You have mentioned Nora Sternfeld before, and we could therefore ask why it is necessary to explore "an alternative production of knowledge that resists, supplements, thwarts, undercuts, or challenges traditional forms of knowledge"?[1]

First of all, let me say that, though I am answering from within Cine sin Autor (CsA), I am doing so with my own voice and responses, not those of the collective. CsA's manifestos and main concepts come from Gerardo Tudurí, but we conceive collectivity as the empowerment of individuality. From that position, I will answer as truthfully as I possibly can at this moment, and that is how I will be faithful to CsA.

For me, what has been called "alternative production" has no particular merit; it is an inevitable reaction. Faced with the predominance of "private ownership" or author's rights, peer-to-peer networks and platforms such as YouTube emerge to emit audiovisual material from all over the planet. This is a chaotic and nonhierarchical format, but it breaks down the Monoform discussed by Peter Watkins.

The hegemony of a single viewpoint and authorship is what most terrifies me. It isn't that we want to change the world, it's that we want to look beyond what is being shown us by whoever has been chosen by power to show us the world. Cine sin Autor emerges, as Gerardo Tudurí wrote in its first manifesto fifteen years ago, as a response to the desire to produce works from the standpoint of "us," to make a "forthcoming democracy" possible. Our challenge has been to find a way to promote social collectivity, to accompany the production of works. "Organized people making films" is one of our slogans.

1. Nora Sternfeld, "Unglamorous Tasks: What Can Education Learn from its Political Traditions?," *e-flux journal*, no. 14 (March 2010), <www.e-flux.com/journal/14/61302/unglamorous-tasks-what-can-education-learn-from-its-political-traditions>.

Now, this is not a matter of breaking with professional authorship, it's about giving it a new meaning and applying it to serve a diversity of the imagination, to serve anybody, and what has never been seen, rather than repetition. Professions change. We have always aspired to create the profession of "social filmmakers 2.0," and we always will.

Resistance and criticism interest us in the context of doing. We are not trying to charm the critics. Arguing that society is unable to achieve what power can, taking refuge in the institutional as a norm, is a commonplace in the arts, and in collaborative art as well. But the institutional is something that "closes," when what matters is to "open" oneself to others and to the unknown. Now, following a period when institutions were curious about our work, we have returned to face-to-face contact with people and their resources in order to make collective works that bring out the best in all of us.

In her text, Aida Sánchez de Serdio discusses the difference between the concept of trust in hierarchical structures and in more horizontal approaches. In order for the kind of collaboration you propose to function, is it important for members of a project's temporary collective to trust each other?

Nonauthorship begins with a suspension of everything previous; a crisis of the previous authority and expertness of everyone involved. This gesture is what marks the birth of a collectivity that replaces the guiding function of an author. How that collective is structured—more or less horizontally—and how it carries out the different functions needed to produce the work, depends on each collective, on what knowledge is pertinent, and this also depends on the work to be produced. That knowledge is not a given, and it is not possessed by a specific person: you try, you do, you update.

It is therefore not a matter of trusting previous structure but of temporarily suspending things in order to generate something previously unknown, which will only continue to make sense to the degree that it can demonstrate its validity in this new production situation.

How do you reach agreements? Is the need to create or the urgency to produce enough to address the a priori difficulties of an assembly-based process?

In my experience, there are no a priori problems in assembly-based processes. The difficulties may come from circumstances that make such processes impossible. Our experience with Cine sin Autor projects has showed us that assembly-based work seemed difficult when we did not take the time to reach agreements, to look at and re-imagine ourselves. As María Zambrano put it, "One doesn't pass from the possible to the real, but from the impossible to the true."[2] So the question I always ask myself is: What truth shall we realize?

Of course, in Cine sin Autor we have not found any better way to make works than through assemblies. Script assemblies, followed by shooting

2. María Zambrano, *Filosofía y poesía* (Madrid: F. C. E., 1987), p. 7.

and collective editing, are the heart of Cine sin Autor, "collectivity producing itself." And in our experience, while the production process is alive, the work is too, and no one is unnecessary, no one is bothersome, everything is needed.

You work with the idea of an active, rather than passive, viewer, one who produces and speaks about their imaginaries, thus democratizing the cultural process. How is this space generated?

In Cine sin Autor, production is based on a desire to make works collectively. That desire, which is continually taking shape in all its complexity, is filled with both trust and distrust. There is neither moral superiority nor higher authority. These are very intense processes, but they are not as conflictive as one might imagine. When you decide to do something with others, what is interesting is discussion, not agreement. And when an agreement is reached, everything has to be redefined, with no given author, no predetermined work, no "aura" of the work; viewers and actors all remain to be defined.

That does not mean that those of us involved in the process have to forget what we have already experienced, but our knowledge is not valid as a category unto itself. Anyone can provide the solution needed to sustain a work's process and execution when it is required by the collective. And also when it is necessary, and possible.

In her text, Aida Sánchez de Serdio explains that when we give priority to trust, we run the risk of canceling all dissent. What is your opinion?

There is a kind of safety and simulation in cultural production. Our lives are not at stake in our work. We make it because it is easy for us to occupy that place and because we want to have fun, or, at the very least, because we can make money from it.

But, while certain situations shape us, it is not necessarily true that we allow them to define us in a narrow, tightfisted manner. Of course we are vulnerable, and of course we dissent, and of course we fail, and sometimes we cannot take it any more and we dig in; but when disenchantment and

falsehood begin to appear on the horizon, it's time to dynamite that future. Especially after one has learned by experience that representing ourselves, acting, and taking our own risks can make us stronger and less fallible than anything else.

In some of Cine sin Autor's processes, I have experienced situations I could never have dreamed of, reaching agreements and producing with others, whoever they may be. Our work, due to the narrowness of the cultural contract that binds us, has sometimes not even been seen. Of course we are not trying to *con-vince* anyone. The evidence that interests me is the evidence that is shared. What we want to do is to do. And, to continue doing, we have to take over the means of production. Of course, what is evident to those of us who practice *authorlessness* is that creating art is useful for the fullness of life. (**hea**)

Failure

Policies of the Situation, or Going Beyond the Success-Failure
LaFundició

LaFundició is a cooperative created in 2006 to foster collective processes for construction knowledge, cultural practices, and forms of relation, understood as resources for shared use and as "controversial" and localized activities. In 2013, it opened a physical space in L'Hospitalet's Bellvitge neighborhood, where it develops its processes in a collective, horizontal way that surpasses borders.

When we received the invitation to write in this book, our first reaction was surprise. The proposed term was *failure*. Failure? Aside from a certain noise associated with the word, we were curious as to why it had been considered appropriate to ask LaFundició to reflect on this concept that is outside our universe and has never formed part of the narratives of our practices. Perhaps, we thought, reflecting on why we have never used the term *failure* in our discourse could be the unifying thread that structures this text.

A priori, "failure" sounds pretty awful. It seems to be infused with a certain angst, bringing to mind a character in a second-rate TV series or film who fails to live up to their parents' expectations, a hard-luck story, a telling-off, ineptitude, defeat...

Venturing further into the semantic field surrounding the word *failure*, we find that its antonym is *success*. This brings us into the field of a dichotomy—one among the many that limit possible ways of doing and understanding the world and positioning ourselves in it. We see culture as a field of tensions and struggles among social groups with different, sometimes conflicting, ideologies and interests, a field in which each group fights to defend and assert the ways of feeling, knowing, and being that advance their own objectives. In short, we believe culture is one of the areas in which the hegemony of a certain cosmovision and a certain subjectivity is decided, relegating all others to a subaltern position or even condemning them to disappear. But hegemonic culture can never occupy the entire space. It must coexist with other epistemic formations, and this means that all kinds of cultural borrowings, appropriations, and transfers take place. The problem lies in the fact that hegemonic cultures and epistemes tend to define being and non-being, or, in other words, to delimit the space of the thinkable and the sayable and to saturate it, making it hard for other types of cultural and epistemic formulations to emerge. An ongoing conflict among different groups with opposing interests plays out

in the different forms of distribution of the sensible, and conditions their understanding of the world. Consequently, certain cultural expressions produce meaning and a coherent worldview at the expense of the domination or destruction of other cosmovisions. The cultural expressions that support and justify patriarchal, colonialist, or capitalist relations of subordination are just one example of this.

All of this leads us to ask: What set of discourses, habits, aesthetics, and practices make the success/failure duality thinkable? In what "world of meaning" does this duality make sense? As we see it, the idea of failure falls within the "extractivist" and productivist logic of the dominant modern liberal order, which only values effective, quantifiable results and penalizes the understanding of underlying processes and the territories and assemblages that they give rise to. This paradigm collapses the complexity of situations, determining the optimum development of processes and their outcomes before they even take place. However, social processes—including cultural processes involving the construction of knowledge and meaning—do not revolve around a key element that is outside of them, and as such they cannot be reduced to the wishes of a thinking, planning subject who sets objectives based on a series of codes and principles. Rather, the kinds of social processes and situations that generate meaning appear to take place in the form of dynamic systems in which countless agents set up different kinds of relationships that change over time. Consequently, although the provision of certain means for the purpose of achieving certain ends—the degree of attainment of which will be a measure of success or failure—may serve institutional interests, it cannot enrich cultural processes and systems. Social processes that produce meaning tend toward complexity and conflict, and their results are diverse and unpredictable results, among other things because: (a) the agents involved in them never quite match the abstract a priori-defined models and patterns, and (b) those agents are always "situated," that is, conditioned by the actual processes. If we were to stop seeing ourselves as something separate from the situations and processes of collective creation, to stop trying to control them from a privileged position and by means of external calculation, then it would no longer be possible to measure their "effectiveness" in terms of the degree to which objectives are attained, and they would no longer fall within the dialectic between success and failure.

In that case, how do we evaluate and reflect on the things we do? Perhaps "effectiveness" lies in incorporating all the agents and situations into the process, in integrating them into the landscape.[1] The greater our distance from the territories and processes that affect them grows, the less power we have. On the other hand, the more we recognize ourselves as part of the landscape, the greater our capacity to participate in its transformation and (also importantly) in transforming ourselves.

LaFundició is a cooperative that works in situations in which the social and cultural tensions that usually remain hidden beneath the surface come to light and become clearly and permanently visible. In this context, language works as an instrument of capture and restraint by which places and bodies are inscribed with a series of marks that violate and stigmatize them. "Diagnostic," "indicator," "objective," "impact," "beneficiary," "access": the violence of the language of those who speak from an important position, disconnected from the situation; the language of those who have the resources and set the objectives, who "evaluate" the success and failure of their enterprises. Another thing we can say about our work is that it is situated in a specific context—the urban periphery, the working-class neighborhoods we grew up in—and rooted in a genealogy of forms of knowing and doing that have been destroyed by neoliberalism. Communities in these areas have been broken up and made vulnerable. They have been dispossessed in material terms but also, acutely, on the symbolic plane. One of the most effective forms of symbolic dispossession has consisted of injecting into the social body the fallacy that we are isolated, self-sufficient individuals, thus destroying the awareness of the interdependent relationships that make life possible. At the same time, the idea of "community" as a group of individuals who share a common origin and an identity that transcends it has become hegemonic, resulting in enormous social divides pierced by increasingly virulent forms of racism and xenophobia. Contrary to this, we understand community as a contingent entity comprised of those who produce something in common at a particular time and place.

From these strands we try to weave new ways of relating and processes of collective creation that are meaningful to the people with whom we share the territory. The ways of doing we practice aim to override the violent

1. Miguel Benasayag and Angélique Del Rey, *Elogio del conflicto* (Madrid: Tierradenadie Ediciones, 2012), pp. 134–36; first published in French in 2007 as *Éloge du conflit.*

logic of expert, bureaucratic jargon: "project," "methodology," "evaluation," "outcome"…, terms that require targets, objectives, schedules, strategies for looking after one's own interests. It is not easy to get rid of that baggage, and in spite of our efforts to "de-sediment" that political-linguistic deposit, we are constantly forced to come up against it. And so, when we apply for a grant, for permission to use certain facilities, or to occupy public space, for example, we have to alter and mutilate our narrative, forcing it to fit into the sections and checkboxes of forms that do not contemplate a practice that merges into day-to-day life. Admittedly, the forms do help us to understand the development of the hegemonic discourse: at the moment it is all about "new audiences" and providing "access" to "vulnerable groups." The forms do not allow for the possibility that those "vulnerable"[2] groups may have no desire to access the aesthetic and theoretical practices that make up (dominant) "culture," that they may want to distribute the sensible in ways that jeopardize the system and the established structures through processes that reject authorship, build communities of meaning and economies that cannot be captured, and map out lines of escape, spaces of possibility, heterogeneous territories.

When we founded LaFundició in 2006, we felt the need to explore the relationship between the ways of understanding work that we had learned growing up in our neighborhoods, and those of the professional field of art, which was what we had studied. The word *precarity* was starting to be used in the art world, but only as a timid lament. There was usually no attempt to socialize the material living conditions of the people who worked in the cultural field, or the working conditions and industry frameworks that the art institution handled. Our attempt to create a horizontal cooperative structure that would cover the social security contributions that freelance workers are required to pay in Spain and redistribute the income generated in the form of salaries—while at the same time refusing to accept the logic of service provision, or of selling "products" in the form of projects—was like putting together a monster: the fragile, deformed body made out of assembled pieces that has served us for the past eleven years. We did not escape precarity, but we have been very conscious of our limits and horizons.

We started working with "projects," such as *projecte3*/EspaiDer3**,[3] and learned that getting involved in processes that respect the rhythms, needs, and times of the people who are part of them and the context and situations in which they unfold will be unable to precisely keep to the outlines of the texts and forms written in advance. We learned that if we wanted to build porous spaces for the collective production of meaning in a new context we had to share our knowledge and explicitly state our interests, principles, and desires from the start. In the case of *projecte3*/EspaiDer3**, the context was already familiar to some members of LaFundició. The idea of *projecte3*/EspaiDer3** was to create a self-managed learning space within a school community so as to explore the limits and possibilities for change of the school system. In order to rethink education, we embarked on a process of archaeological research into the school as an institution and at the same time investigated other ways of understanding learning and collaborative knowledge-building.

But *projecte3*/EspaiDer3** did not follow any of the paths we had imagined. It set us adrift, and for a time we had to come up with provisional answers. This drifting was often frustrating, but it never felt like failure, even though nothing turned out as we expected and a one-year project at Joanot Martorell high school in Esplugues de Llobregat ended up becoming a three-year struggle to bring to fruition something that never took place. Or rather, something that did not take place in the terms we had foreseen: the proposal envisaged that the students would build a space for self-education at the school itself. The trouble started when theory became practice and the proposal materialized in the form of three prefabricated house modules provided by Santiago Cirugeda from the architecture studio Recetas Urbanas. Those modules ended up being referred to as the "poisoned candy," an expression coined by the deputy principal at the school, because their arrival stirred up all the prejudice and mistrust that had hitherto been hidden, and exposed the limits of the educational institution. Even though the school board had unanimously approved setting up the modules in the schoolyard, the school's management tried to call off the project as soon as it started to turn into something too real. Despite the students' participation and enthusiasm, the authorities turned to the rules to freeze the architectural intervention, acting with a paternalism that it justified by saying that only the management knew "what was good for" the students,

2. We recognize the intrinsic vulnerability of all bodies and the fragility of life that requires care in order to be sustained. But welfare jargon makes a distinction between bodies that are vulnerable and others that apparently are not. We could say that the welfare mentality itself produces vulnerable bodies, individuals who renounce their power and cease to recognize themselves as subjects, driven also by the material precariousness of their lives. As such, twisting the logic of these uses of language, we should speak of "vulnerabilized" rather than "vulnerable" groups.

3. See <www.projecte3.pbworks.com/w/page/19064465/FrontPage>.

thus drawing on the semi-hidden coercive mechanisms that make it the school's "highest authority."[4] It is a long story, and it is full of negotiations, pressures, and resistances that led us to the quandary of having to decide what to do with three modules of a prefabricated building that took up an area of forty-two square meters: we were refused permission to use a vacant lot in the local area; the citizen participation department at the city council denied the participatory nature of the whole process, alleging that it originated in a conflict; the students involved in the process were not allowed to organize a talk in a public facility because, in the management's opinion, it was a "political" act; and the councilor for participation—who also happened to be the youth councilor—refused to see and listen to the account of the young people involved in the process (who then formed the youth association EspaiDer3*). These were just a few of the numerous conflicts that continued over a period of three years and became one of our most valuable forums for learning, shot through with the indignation, frustration, and rage of repeatedly coming up against the impossibility of change, but also with the joy of being and resisting together.

Among many other things, *projecte3*/EspaiDer3* taught us to mistrust success stories, the kinds of narratives that frequently describe apparently seamless community artistic practices. The absence of seams or cracks—what some people would call "failures"—in these narratives covers up the conflicts that are inherent to all collaborative processes of constructing meaning. As a result, many community artistic practices, understood and transmitted in this way, end up becoming means of social pacification, hiding the conflicts arising from the inequalities that exist in the hierarchy of relations. The ways of doing and of narrating that emerged in the course of *projecte3*EspaiDer3* came into conflict with the language and the ways of doing of the educational and cultural institutions, and institutions in general. If a successful project is defined as one in which the agents involved behave as planned, and the preestablished "objectives" and "impacts" are achieved, then there is no room for tension between divergent ideas, which means there is a depoliticization of the processes of collective creation. This definition of "success" is based on supposed consensus without exclusions, which is impossible.[5] In light of all of this, accounts of community creative processes should not only be produced jointly and collaboratively,

4. For example, the headmaster's power to authorize or deny access to the school, which is a public facility.
5. Chantal Mouffe, "Por una política de identidad democrática," in *Prácticas artísticas y democracia agonística* (Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona and Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2007), p. 15.

Walk through Cal Trabal, the last agricultural area in L'Hospitalet. Action related to the residence of the Chilean collective Nido Textil in Prado 11, LaFundició

The Chilean collective Diarios de Guerra records a scene (played by hand-sewn dolls) proposed by several girls in LaFundició

they should also go out of their way to emphasize the points at which the participants question, challenge, or propose alternatives to the original plans. The value of these accounts and of the processes themselves should be measured according to their capacity to reopen the controversies that are patched over by institutional mechanisms (such as the education system), and to reveal the exclusions that are inherent to all social and cultural consensus.

From this experience onward, we have continued to learn from conflict—that is, from what others might call "failure"—using it as an "indicator" of change: there must be some degree of conflict in order to generate seams and cracks, new frames of possibility... Movement requires friction. We are wary when a process is too "successful," because all artistic practices involve conflict due to the inequalities between the agents involved (directly or indirectly) in their production and circulation. As such, we cannot say that there is one "type" of art that is political or social and others that are not: all art is social and political insofar as all artistic practices place value on certain ways of life and worlds of meaning over others, thereby defining the reasons that make life worth living.[6]

A group of neighbors and other inhabitants of Prado 11 tastes a dish of beans with fennel, a typical recipe of Gypsy cuisine. The elaboration of the dish was recorded by the collective Diarios de Guerra for the documentary *Recetario*

Group reading outside the classroom during the collective research developed during *projecte3*/EspaiDer3**

6. Luis Moreno-Caballud, *Cultures of Anyone: Studies on Cultural Democratization in the Spanish Neoliberal Crisis* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), p. 32.

Interview with Roger Bernat and Roberto Fratini

Roger Bernat's theater recovers documents, testimonies, and historical stagings to create projects in which the community becomes the protagonist. Rather than individual actors who embody specific personages, the audience, with no little irony, represents the collective. Among his best-known works are *Domini Públic*, *Please Continue: Hamlet*, *Numax-Fagor-Plus*, *We Need to Talk*, *No se registran conversaciones de interés* and *The Place of The Thing* (documenta 14). In 2017 he was awarded the Premi Sebastià Gasch d'Arts Parateatrals.

—www.rogerbernat.info

For documenta 14, together with Roberto Fratini, you produced *The Place of the Thing*, which consisted of collaboratively moving a replica of the oath stone—an object with a certain symbolic and archaeological value—from Athens to Kassel. Right from the start, you saw the project as a dialectical questioning of the notions of *success* and *failure*. How and in what context did you come up with the construction of this piece?

When Lord Elgin decided to remove the Parthenon piece by piece, he was already affirming the failure of the Greek people. To the fledgling discipline of modern archaeology, the fact that Hellenic shepherds lived alongside ancient ruins, celebrating them occasionally, looking after them sporadically, and ignoring them most of the time, was a sign of the backwardness of the Greek people and proof of the failure of their civilization. Elgin was only the first of many who decided to protect the ruins of classical Greece from the Greek people and their livestock, a plan that implicitly declared that the de facto "Greeks" (the inhabitants of Greece) were not the *true* Greeks (the builders of temples, sculptors of statues, and thinkers of syllogisms), and that others—the protagonists of the "neo-classical turn," by virtue of "spiritual" merit—were the true heirs of these lost peoples and their marble statues. Interestingly, Elgin had no qualms about committing a crime to support this principle, thus materially confirming the remarkable closeness of *statual* power and violence. And the exclusive right of "true" peoples to allow themselves to be represented by a mafia state.

The fact that the idea of failure was still hovering over Greece two centuries later was of course part of the genesis of the project we were preparing for documenta 14. To move a replica of the oath stone (*Lithos*) from the ancient Agora of Athens to the historic *Thingplatz* on the outskirts of Kassel, using only the help of the various collectives, groups, and associations that we found along the way, was a project that would inevitably question the different interpretations of the notion of *failure*. Within the framework

of the participatory device, indifference, unwillingness to take part, and even non-participation were considered by us to contribute to meaning just as much as the self-mobilization of "mobilized" groups. The failure of the project in *itself* or of *itself* would mean absolute success, poetically and ideologically, in relation to the *project-for-Documenta.*

How can the indifference of an audience (which is both spectator and actor) produce meaning? Can we talk about failure if a participatory work manages to produce friction, discussion, and conflict?

If we wanted *The Place of the Thing* to be of any use, it had to be a failure. The groups that received the polystyrene stone and sent it on its way were aware that it was a great joke. There was no heroism in their actions, perhaps casual indifference, a genuine expression of irony. By celebrating the stone's departure they were embodying the myth of the indignant South. The art world, and Germany in particular, looked to Greece hoping to find the sincerity of the people, truth in misery. Here they found a hoax instead.

Indeed, the fact that the replica of the oath stone drifted around Athens throughout April, in spite of all its contemporariness and Kasseliness, was a failure for our project and an ideological success for the project in relation to Kassel. It said more about the attitude of the Greeks than a thousand statements in writing, on film, or pasted on the walls.

The danger in this edition of documenta was that visitors, who were going to "learn from Athens," would end up becoming "tourists who use the enthusiasm of the natives as a bridge with which to reach the myth, and burn it behind them once they no longer need it"[1]—to quote the words that Juan Marsé used over fifty years ago to refer to tourists who visited Spain. There would be no bridge between Germany and Greece. At most, as we suggested in one of the first texts, the project would denounce the ideology according to which those who are "poor in everything else" are "rich in truths," and the fact that these truths can be consumed in the moral and culturally soothing form of the document.

There was a difficult point in the project when an LGBT group in Athens tried to sabotage the work by seizing the stone that had been entrusted to them for part of its journey. This conflict could have brought the work to its natural end, but you decided to continue the choreography with a second replica of the stone. Why did you continue, knowing that your decision would invite the reproach of an entire artistic community, which accused you of destroying the critical significance of the work?

Some artists celebrated the fact that a collective had taken the work seriously and "stolen" the stone, thereby endowing it with "real" value. That bastard stone that had been bought, sold, borrowed, ignored—a stone that had been good for everything and for nothing—was finally turning into the symbol of a "real" struggle and therefore into a "real" object, a "work of art," the wet dream of Kasselian artists. But the artists who celebrated the LGBT collective's "real action" had not understood that by believing in the "truth" they were supporting the most puerile of ideologies of North-South identity. Moreover, by alleging that the real action was politically more effective than the fiction, they were embracing profoundly reactionary assumptions that were radically contrary to the actual demands of the collective in question.

Terminating the project at that point would have been the most glorious thing possible, in the view of artists and critics hungry for symbolism and scandal. Yet *The Place of the Thing* was not following the logic of art but the logic of theater, in which objects are masks, multiple copies without value that find meaning in the hands of the actors, and in which success is measured by the capacity to lie. The logic of art is based on turning actual failure into symbolic success, while that of theater is to fulfill failure and, in turn, making it fail. Theater does not conceive its success, its Pyrrhic victory, except through this failure multiplied, in which the true face of failure is to continue to fail.

After the second replica had reached Kassel, you decided to call off the project: you talked about "failure" when you saw that documenta visitors "participated unreservedly" instead of reading the work, as it would be "more accurate," as an "unspecified festivity bringing together

1. Juan Marsé, *Últimas tardes con Teresa* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1966).

artists, collectives, and individuals moved by a cynical fondness for revealing jokes, for half-genuine simulations, for the *mot d'esprit* and for impure truths that only produce illegitimate, unpresentable, useless, contradictory documents."[2] I am interested in the apparent contradiction: Why did you describe the visitor response at Kassel as a "failure"? What would have been the appropriate reaction to prevent this failure?

By the time the second stone reached Kassel it had become a myth. The collaborators in the Balkans had woven together stories, representing with the keenest irony the ghost that documenta visitors were expecting to project onto the "earnest Athenian collectives."

Once in Kassel, the plan was to move the stone to the historic *Thingplatz* on the outskirts of the city. There, where medieval Germanic tribes had once gathered around a ring of stones, we would bury our piece of polystyrene. Historic *Thingplatz* and Greek amphitheaters had inspired the Nazi regime to come up with the *Thingspiele*, the most extreme form of participatory theater. And at the end of the day, documenta 14, with its million visitors, was also a great theater for the masses, in which to celebrate the myth of identity. In order to carry out our plan we needed the complicity of the documenta collective par excellence: its audience. But the fact is, in times of infocapitalism, the very notion of audience is the final amortization of any possibility of a genuine collective identity. The remarkable thing about the notion of audience is that it makes it possible to reaffirm that any collectivization of identity is, inescapably, fiction. This is why the Kassel audience is unaware of anything other than that feeble "mystical communion," the spectral worship of the concept of Culture.

An audience so busy reaffirming certainties that, when faced with a false stone purporting to be genuine, with some schoolchildren purporting to be a court of justice, with bodybuilders from a fitness club purporting to be national heroes, and with a group of Athenian artists purporting to be a collective of LGBT refugees, it wanted only to maintain its identity as an audience. The documenta 14 audience only wanted to be the documenta 14 audience. Convinced that it was the critical conscience of the West, it forgot that by taking *The Place of the Thing* seriously it was yielding to the temptation to project onto others a heroic collective capacity for

Woman, Roberto Fratini, Roger Bernat, Farid Fernández and Paul B. Preciado in front of the Failure, Athens, 2017. Photo: Karol Jarek

"identification" that, by virtue of being an audience, it no longer possessed (which is why it was so anxious to discover which of the "gestures" organized around the stone were "true"). And that it was yielding also to the temptation to consume as Art (its latest substitute for Truth) something that had never aspired to be so: to create a *punctum*, a focal point, a material protagonist, a revealing document, out of something that had always been decor, a cheap pretext, a second-rate stage prop.

So instead of interring the stone at Kassel, we decided to bury it on eBay. To return the stone to the only place in which the substantiality, the consistency, and the truth of all things false and all things ghostly is taken for granted: the market. Better still: the telematic market. By denying it the benefit of having been an event, we turned it into pure "provisional value." We were, of course, quite convinced that outside the magnetic fields of false Art and false Politics (which is where false values are produced), nobody would give it even the material value that it humbly claimed for itself. In other words, we were convinced that the Thing would not even find its place in the second-hand value system, that its failure would be, literally, de-finitive, in other words, "devoid of an end." A permanent performance of the Thing (and the citizens) that are no longer anything, that no longer interest or frighten anybody. **(hea)**

5. Roger Bernat, *The Place of the Thing*, see <www.rogerbernat.info/en/shows/the-place-of-the-thing/>.

Interview with Todo por la Praxis

TXP is a multidisciplinary collective of Madrid-based architects, designers, and artists. TXP proposes new modes of producing cities, enabling channels, tools, methodologies, and frameworks for urban innovation with the active participation of the citizenry. The collective's main activity employs collaborative practices that propose processes of coproduction by the citizens involving collective diagnosis, design, and construction. TXP is itself part of a group of networks that cooperate and share knowledge, experiences, and resources, including Red de arquitecturas colectivas, Red Hacenderas, GRRR (Gestión para la reutilización y redistribución de recursos), Mercado social de Madrid, and COOP 57.

—www.todoporlapraxis.es

On the subject of long-term processes involving very diverse groups of people, we are interested in the way expectations are managed, not just yours but also the expectations of others.

Before embarking on a new project, we always establish a convergence of interests with the people we are going to work with, in which we reach initial agreements. This dialogue gives rise to a series of basic expectations and interests that all parties must be very clear on. The idea is to avoid taking the wrong approach and thus prevent problems and unnecessary conflicts.

This methodological procedure usually consists of four stages: diagnosis, co-design, construction, and management. During the diagnosis and co-design stages, we do what we call a "scope shaker" [*coctelera de alcances*] and describe the main objectives we set earlier. We then adjust these objectives in line with the resources and budget available to us—very tangible things that allow us to really determine where we are heading and how far we can go with what we have.

We start handling these parameters in the early stages of each project, but they are, of course, constantly fine-tuned during implementation. Our work is chiefly practice and direct action, and the evaluation of whether we judged expectations correctly forms part of the process, through trial and error, and through testing, which is a key aspect of the constant readjustment of the scope of each project.

Changing the subject to error—or in this case to the concept of *failure*— do you use any particular strategies in projects that are problematic or when undesirable aspects come up? Is there a limit?

Every project has its own particularity arising from the actual process, so it is difficult to design a strategy for managing failure. That said, we believe

it is important to celebrate failure as a learning opportunity rather than something with a negative connotation. In our own practice we always try to learn from the situations we encounter, and to see how those situations allow us to evolve within a project. If we reach an impasse, that supposed failure may give rise to other kinds of ideas that may even improve upon the initial proposal.

You could say that we fail constantly in our practice, but this failure is not individual or personal. Our failure is a collective failure, because our learning processes are very horizontal.

Often the biggest problem is the refusal to talk about failure, which imposes a forced optimism on the results of a project. The subject seems to be taboo, and anybody who speaks about failure is best avoided because they are undermining the defense of a project that has to be sold to who knows who. For us it is essential to generate discussion about the process, but it does not always happen for fear of losing opportunities. Talking about failure is difficult but essential, because consensus is built on dissension. It is the foundation of any process of critical reflection.

Do you do any kind of follow-up work on the projects you have participated in?

In general, aside from the technical-construction aspects, our role is to activate projects and get them off the ground. Any subsequent follow-up depends on our availability.

In the early stages, we try to transmit the idea to the people we work with that projects need maintenance and financial sustainability, and that managing these aspects may ultimately be more important than the project itself.

Sometimes, the situation of the spaces in which we work changes, so the channels we work with also have to change. In any case, what usually happens with these kinds of projects is that they receive funding for infrastructure but not operation. This means that the agents involved—

usually local residents—have to find ways to maintain it. In these cases we work with them to try and regularize the situation to generate a certain financial autonomy, or practical matters like energy self-sufficiency, for example. Situations like this bring to light flaws or problems in the system that we have to resist, learn from, and try to resolve.

We have talked about process and follow-up, but what about the issues that arise even before a project starts? How do you work with calls for participation, for example?

As a rule, if problems are detected before a project starts they are solved before going any further. But you often find yourself participating in a project for financial reasons, to earn a living, or because you know that it will end up feeding into other processes. So you set certain boundaries, but they are often broken, generating contradictions that you are forced to accept, even though in theory you should not. We accept contradictions, but we do not contradict ourselves. In other words, we can accept contradictions that come from the other side, that are imposed by the format of the project or by institutional agreements, but our way of working is not part of that.

This causes a lot of conflict, because it highlights the differences and problems in various working methods, and the incompatibilities between the agents involved in a project.

All this has to do with the language and working methods used by the institution, but they do not always correspond to the actual practice, such as, for example, the so-called participation processes. What is your view on this?

The word *participation* (which has been used to death) generates a unidirectionality that does not really interest us. When the institution merely courts collaboration processes but does nothing to help generate them, those processes are simply parodies. That is real failure, when participants—local residents, for example—are simply used to legitimize projects. These are the blunders that work against practice.

We realize that processes also need results, but we think that they can be obtained in other ways, and we have to find them. This depends on all the agents involved. At the same time, the public administration needs to explore other options and lower its demands. Criteria and targets are necessary, but they should not determine the process.

The institution, like everything else, needs a counterweight to avoid being dragged down by bureaucracy and by the system itself. So it is in its own interest to foster that critical spirit. Many relevant things are discarded when conflict is avoided or pushed aside, and it is regrettable that they should disappear or be overlooked. **(hea)**

Todo por la Praxis, Youth Urban Design Workshop with
Jon Garbizu and David Marti, CAPP, Callan, 2016. Photo: Brian Cregan

Return

The Return Is the Commons

Haizea Barcenilla

Haizea Barcenilla is a professor in the Art History Department, Universidad del País Vasco. As an art critic and curator she is concerned with producing works and writing for artists. Her research is structured around the idea of the commons and analyses using gender as a perspective. She works from the hypothesis that art exists within different interlinked social systems and is entangled in ideologies and ways of looking, which she attempts to study from as many viewpoints as possible.

I confess that I don't particularly like the word *return*. When chosen as a contributor to this publication, I was forced to reflect on how to approach the word and its various meanings. I found it interesting that it would be included in a publication called the *Impossible Glossary*, and was somewhat relieved to know that the idea was grounded in its very impossibility, in the idea that there was no single word that defines the sum of participatory practices, nor a single meaning that could cover all aspects of them. I proposed this journey toward *return* as an opportunity to play with the term, to exhaust it, stretch it, and to see where it could be taken.

Curiously, I find *return* more appealing as a romantic concept than as artistic jargon: the returning home of the prodigal daughter, going back to the place where she belongs and feels loved. Returning in this sense implies certain caring relationships—bound to a place and usually to a social group—that trigger stronger reactions than the administrative version of the term, used, for example, when we are returning a book to the library.

Perhaps what least convinces me about this last meaning, this administrative return, is that it involves an obligation of exchange. We are lent a book and, naturally, we must return it. We are done a favor and, naturally, we must return it. In this sense, return implies that something is exchanged in a manner previously agreed to, with the expectation that each part of the exchange receives something equivalent from the other. And it is this manner of applying the idea of return to art that bothers me most; not only does it affect how we approach participatory, contextual, or collaborative practices, but in recent years it has became pervasive with respect to any publicly funded artistic practice.

In the hypercapitalist view so characteristic of the current day, any center, agent, artist, or action that receives a cent of public funding should pay for what it received. We might argue that any cultural action gives back by

contributing to the production of collective knowledge. But the idea of return generally does not refer to this type of contribution. The expectation of a devolution is framed in one of two polarized options: either it is something financially quantifiable (it must bring in a minimum number of visitors, who pay their entrance fee and then subsequently consume at neighboring businesses); or a return as pretense—thoughtless compliance with institutional principles that are rarely based on true social needs or desires (for instance, asking people in the neighborhood where the action is to take place to participate, even though the project is entirely unrelated to them).

Thus we find ourselves in a back and forth much like a ping-pong game with only two interests at stake: who wins and by how much; and that the pre-established rules of the game are strictly adhered to. By focusing on these two points we overlook some very important issues, such as the size of the ball, whether we like the color of it, who made the rules and on what basis, and, ultimately, the central question, why are we actually playing?

Fortunately, to combat this increasingly influential tendency within institutions, there persists other ways of doing things that reveal the possibility of establishing new operating and valuation parameters. They break from the administrative logic of return because they have a different starting point, such as the specific interests of citizen groups, and work actively on these issues. They borrow nothing, but rather immerse themselves in this society that the administrative logic of return labels quite simply as the "donor." They do not take and then give; they share. I was lucky enough to have worked as a mediator on two projects for Nouveaux Commanditaires (New Patrons), a program that functions within this logic, and I will use one of these projects as an example in order to develop a concept of *return* that departs from the logic of devolution.

Nouveaux Commanditaires is a platform conceived by the artist François Hers in the early 1990s, in France, with the objective of facilitating art that would represent the desires of civil society. The project grew out of a disconformity with the approach taken to the creation of public art, which typically emerges from centers of institutional power, commissioning work in an authoritarian, unilateral fashion without regard for the needs and wishes of the people who have to live with the results. Inverting this logic, Hers proposed a new work

protocol whereby it was civil society that should establish the focal points upon which artists would base their work. Small groups of people involved in local-based networks would define what themes to develop, where interventions should take place, and what stories to evoke and from what perspective. Also included in each project would be a mediating figure that would help the group define a roadmap based on their desires, worries, and dreams, and to identify the most appropriate artist for the commission.

Although not a direct inspiration for its creation, Nouveaux Commanditaires reminds me of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*,[1] which proposes that it is the people who are to be learning that should define their own fields of interest, and who acts as an educator in this process must be capable of building with them a program of collaboration based upon these needs rather than implementing a default agenda. Similarly, in Nouveaux Commanditaires it is the group rather than the institution that determines the subject matter, and the mediator who constructs a program based upon the group's criteria.

An example of this process is the project *Andrekale*, for which I served as mediator, in the town of Hernani, in Guipúzcoa.[2] Kalandria, the patron group, proposed a project that explored the name of one of the town's streets; officially called Padre Kardaberaz, since at least the late nineteenth century that street has been popularly known as "Andrekale" ("The Street

1. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (London: Penguin Books, 1996), pp. 68–105. Originally published in Portuguese as *Pedagogia do Oprimido* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1968).
2. Hernani is a town in the Basque Country with a population of around 20,000. The patron group, Kalandria, is composed of Nekane Idarreta Mendiola, Maialen Apezetxea Lujanbio, Ixiar Pagoaga Soraluze, Ibon Arrizabalaga de Mingo, Maitane Elosegi Mateo, and Irantzu Jauregi Artola. *Andrekale* has been running from 2014 to 2016, and is produced by Tabakalera with the support of Artehazia and the Fondation de France.

of Women" in Basque). Research into the origins of the name produced various theories but could not clarify exactly who the "women" were to which the name referred. The group had two objectives. On one hand, and independently of the Nouveaux Commanditaires project, they sought to change the official name of the street. Their requests had been rejected in the past, but on this occasion the local government conceded and the change was made. Parallel to this process, Kalandria sought to commission an artwork that would ask various questions: Why don't we remember the history of these women? Why don't we know their names? From what point of view has history been written, and what influence does something so mundane as street names have on determining who we remember and who we don't? What are the present and future consequences of the fact that the women of Hernani are not publicly visible in either the streets or in history?

In addition to these questions, working together we decided that the artwork should have two facets: one that would help raise public awareness of these questions, and another to leave a mark on the street itself. Using this roadmap as a foundation, we invited the collective Señora Polaroiska (Alaitz Arenzana and María Ibarretxe) to meet with Kalandria and assess whether our working interests coincided with their own. They did, and Señora Polaroiska thus labored for an entire year to develop an artwork based upon the initial premises.

Their proposal was to create a new mythology and adopt it as truth. It would consist of three women whose legacies since time immemorial had

Señora Polaroiska,
Andrekale-Kandela,
Hernani, Basque
Country, 2014–16

influenced the women in Hernani. In order to define the character traits of these three mythical figures, they met with over a hundred women and men from the village, retrieving memories of the street, collecting wishes for the future, and listening to the frustrations of women of distinct generations. With this research, and in dialogue with Kalandria, they fabricated the heroines' personalities: Ekhiñe, a name related to the "Sun" in Basque, represents struggle, taking action about our concerns, and the possibility of relief; Kandela, the eternal migrant, the women from everywhere and nowhere at once, combines all languages in one with no words; Pantxa, the lazy one, the idle woman who feels no need to produce, takes to the street with her friends to laugh, drink, smoke, and have fun.

The legacy of the three figures was portrayed by the women of Hernani in a three-channel video. In the channel representing Ekhiñe, women of different ages carry out actions that require great strength, as in a catharsis: breaking dishes or classical busts, burning clocks, sawing through chairs. For Kandela, twelve migrant women who have settled in Hernani hold a mysterious meeting in the main chamber of town hall during which they communicate only through dance. In commemoration of Pantxa, two hundred women occupied Andrekale street, setting up tables and chairs, playing cards, singing, and enjoying the public space and each others' company. In addition to the installation, Señora Polaroiska edited a single-channel video as a means to more easily disseminate the work. As a way of marking the street, a fountain rechristened as "the fountain of the legend" in order to give material form to the women's legacy as well as being a functional urban element.

If we look at this project from the perspective of return, we see that it does not clearly correspond with the idea of a two-way street that dictates what society gives and what it receives in exchange. It is more a question of synergy, of concentric forces turning around a single place, of staying, taking root, and settling in. Kalandria contributes enthusiasm, hope, a subject for reflection, an approach to an issue of representation, of social responsibility; Señora Polaroiska contributed their artistic vision, their ability to create new forms of representation, empathy, labor, and, ultimately, an artwork. However, the potential impact of this work also depends on Kalandria, and it is they who must activate it.

and private, and leads to policies focused more on life than on production and consumption. At the same time, it opens up a whole field for reflection on issues related to participatory practices. In fact, Ugo Mattei states that common goods cannot be understood as objects and, contrary to mechanistic logic, cannot be separated from the subject. We do not have common goods, we are part of the commons insofar as we are responsible for and involved in maintaining the existence of these goods.[5] Shifting the focus in this way allows us to reflect on communities created around these projects as valuable relationships in themselves, as a commons that enriches our intangible heritage.

The importance of this relationship was evident in the *Andrekale* project. The formation of an organization—a series of relationships of co-responsibility and of bonds between the participants—became in itself another of the project's benefits. While the project would never have been completed without the labor of everyone involved (both the members of Kalandria and the more than two hundred women from Hernani who collaborated at different junctures), we should also highlight their importance on an emotional level, which we were able to integrate into the realm of care. As both the artists and myself as mediator also found ourselves within this network of care and collaboration, exchanges were not based solely on a contractual relationship of production of an object but also involved a number of emotional values held in common with the patrons. It is this factor, often overlooked because of the difficulty of quantifying it, that I consider essential in estimating the contribution of participatory projects. The dynamics of care and mutual respect that often develop in these contexts represent a significant form of symbolic value, a way of working and of dislodging more market-based values that, I believe, is one of the most relevant elements of exchange within what we call *return*.

In addition to the common relationship that is created between participants, this kind of project can also activate the commons from another perspective: by making visible, empowering, and reinforcing common goods and common values. For this to occur it is vital for artists, curators, mediators, and other agents to have thorough knowledge of the context in which they are to work, or, failing this, must engage in ongoing research and lasting interaction with this context. With this in mind, it is important to point

The idea of administrative return does not really apply in this case. Yet, if we go back to the more romantic idea of return discussed earlier, of finding oneself in a caring environment, within a sense of community, we can connect this to another concept that might help us to better understand the dynamics that came into play in *Andrekale*. It is the idea of the commons.

We will digress here to consider this idea of the commons, which first began to gather steam on the Internet and later gained momentum and visibility in the spheres of politics, activism, and social participation. The commons includes elements that belong to everyone and nobody at the same time, and that are universally necessary for life in its broadest sense. The most obvious are resources such as air, water, light; but along with these are a great number of intangible elements that make up culture and knowledge, such as history, language, and traditions.[3] And In relation to each one of these, we find the social organization created in order to share them, enrich them, divulge them, and enjoy them. This social organization is also part of the commons.[4]

The idea of the commons, increasingly internalized in approaches to governance, offers an opportunity to rethink the dichotomy between public

3. We have Elinor Ostrom to thank for the return of the commons to a prominent position in discourse; the main body of her research is gathered in Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Silvia Federici, who is best known for her book *Caliban and the Witch* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2004), has also worked on the concept of the commons.
4. The commons has become a key concept in political programs such as Barcelona en Comú, which includes it in its nomenclature. A clear, concise approach to the importance of the commons in governance can be found in Joan Subirats, *Otra sociedad, ¿otra política? Del "no nos representan" a la democracia de lo común* (Barcelona: Icaria Editorial, 2011).

5. Ugo Mattei, *Beni comuni. Un manifesto* (Bari: Editori Latenza, 2012), p. 53.

out that the Nouveaux Commanditaires platform functions through offices located in specific regions, each of which focuses on its own surrounding area. Contextualization goes hand in hand with any participatory project, and though this may seem self-evident, it is an aspect often not given the importance it deserves.

It is largely thanks to contextual knowledge and to the work with civil society agents that we as artistic agents can try to activate the mechanisms discussed above. Within the logic of consumption that is engulfing us, it is often possible to lose sight of the wealth of commons of which we form part, or its value as such. Social relations, care, languages, shared knowledge can become so naturalized as identity-forming elements that we may overlook their importance. An outside perspective can help one to value these components in a process of empowerment in which the artistic project can give participants confidence in themselves and their abilities. In the case of *Andrekale*, the project displayed history as a common and collective good that need not be left in the hands of outside specialists. A large number of women were involved in the writing and reformulation of their own history and that of their town. It provided a representative image in which the women felt reflected, and which encouraged them to demand a visible place in a shared, common history. In this sense, it was not the artists who created the women's capacity for intervention; they merely provided an image and strengthened a capacity that already existed.

Consequently, the return that most interests me is the return to common goods by means of collaborative artistic practices. If we are capable of shifting the paradigm, taking us from the traditional sense of property (the *we have*) to its sense of identity and community (the *we are*), we would extract *return* from the administrative logic to which it is currently bound, turn it around on itself, in a spiral, constantly returning it to its origins, empowering care, affectation, knowledge, and social responsibility.

Interview with Alberto Flores (Makea Tu Vida)

Alberto Flores (b. 1980, Talavera) is a founding member of the Makea Tu Vida collective, in turn part of the core group behind the development of el Recetario, a platform for sharing knowledge about construction methods. Makea Tu Vida designs and creates strategies, workshops, and platforms that investigate and promote reuse and open design. Since 2009, Makea Tu Vida has organized and promoted *REHOGAR*, a collective exhibition of open-source furniture design and constructive solutions for living that is based upon recycled materials and the effective use of resources. Though Makea Tu Vida's work is highly collaborative in nature, its members' primary motivation is not artistic. With a strong activist bent, they undertake their work from a utilitarian perspective.

—www.makeatuvida.net
—www.el-recetario.net

Do you frame your work as an artistic practice? What is your motivation?

I'll start with the second question in order to answer the first. As critical individuals opposed to the current situation of homogenization and standardization, and sensitized by the loss of values and of the degradation of the environment, we feel an inner need, both personal and professional, to act. By contributing as much as possible of our *know-how* and a bit of creativity, we hope to contribute to changing and bettering the environmental conditions by involving the community.

We build on the application of design methodologies that seek to address people's everyday lives: how they look at their context, how they decode it, and how they approach work. We want people to be aware of their ability to transform and utilize resources from their immediate surroundings with their own means. We often use certain tools, criteria, or methods considered artistic practices in order to elucidate certain other things, but that doesn't mean we think of ourselves as artists, or of having anything to do with the art market.

But careful, that doesn't mean we don't appreciate and, in many cases, admire the work of certain collectives or individuals who do form part of the art world and work within its codes, not from a binomial artist/viewer position but rather a more relational and facilitating one.

Are the projects specifically designed to generate the greatest possible impact, or do the formats chosen come from somewhere else? What is more important in a project, that it has a tangible impact or that it prioritizes the process?

The actions we develop with Makea Tu Vida are pretty varied and a constant learning experience. Clearly each action needs and has its own
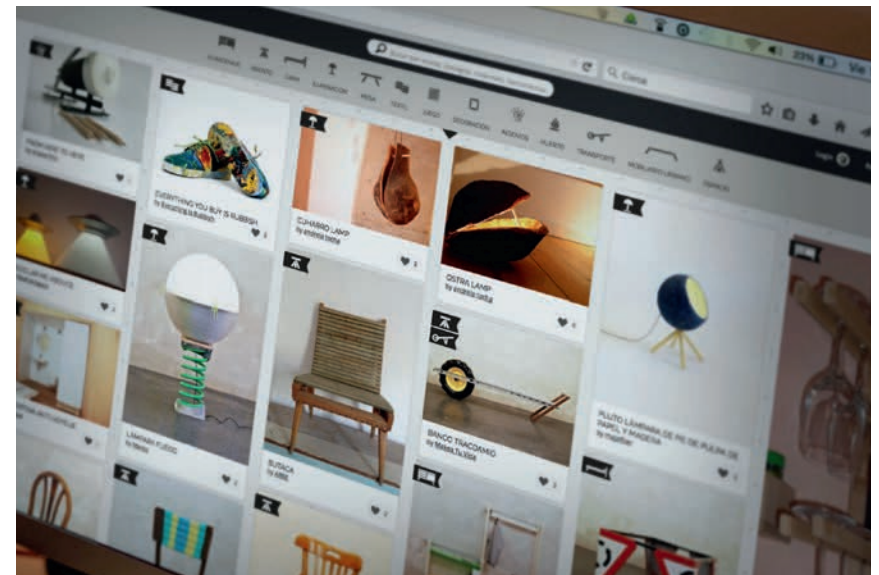
formalization, and one can use certain methods to achieve the stated objective, but each context is very distinct, the people are very different, and time frames are variable.

What is most important about the actions we implement is just that: implementing them with other people, getting them out of our own heads so that they can impact and get into the heads of others, and so on.

Your platform el Recetario can be seen as part of a growing wave of proposals in which designers and architects work with tools of the commons and with a social purpose. Why do you think this tendency is so strong in Spain?

In the current environment of social transformation, there is a broad spectrum of citizens who cannot find anything commercially available that represents us or that provides solutions to our daily needs. Tired and bored of standardized spaces, facilities, and objects for which aesthetics and obsolescence take priority over functionalism and sustainability, it is becoming increasingly clear that, in certain settings, behavior is changing, and as citizens we have decided to take a more active role and to participate in the construction and reappropriation of our immediate environment. Being able to design and build our own objects strengthens us both individually and collectively as citizens, and creates intelligent communities that foster the sharing of ideas and encourage creativity and popular wisdom that, by putting it into practice, can be saved from falling into obscurity.

The el Recetario platform features open content that anyone can use, and also contribute to, by modifying and costimizing a design; for example, by using a recycled material in a different manner than originally intended, by altering the dimensions, or simply by using a different type of joint or finish. This highlights the fact that anyone, with practice and a bit of ingenuity, can become a designer and creator of almost every element in their domestic or urban environment.

Makea Tu Vida, *Taller Mobiliario Nómada* (Mobile Furniture Workshop), Madrid, 2014
The platform el Recetario <www.el-recetario.net>

Interview with Fernando García-Dory

Fernando García-Dory (b. 1978, Madrid), engages with issues affecting the relation between culture and nature. He works through long-term social processes, cooperatives, drawings, and installations that are embodied within the contexts of expanded landscape, the rural and desires. They connect to expectations linked to aspects of identity, crisis, utopia, and social change. In 2009, he started INLAND as a collaborative platform and alter-institution in which to dissolve his authorship. He has shown his work internationally and has participated in biennales in Athens, Lisbon, Istanbul, Gwangju, and documenta 13. In 2012 he received the Leonore Annenberg Prize for Art and Social Change from Creative Time (New York).

—www.inland.org

What does the word *return* mean to you in relation to current artistic practices?

As the poet Antonio Machado said, "Only fools confuse value and price." The way the concept of *return* is understood in the art world depends on the ideological views of those responsible for deciding on the "investment" in question—whether they be curators, museums, directors, or politicians—and their perceived legitimacy to defend it. The key is to know whether we are addressing the idea of *return* from the perspective of the benefactor (increased revenue, visibility, or brand prestige), or as an element that regulates and strengthens the new system of values we are trying to introduce.

Are you resignifying the usual connotation of *return*?

In Spanish we use the word *retorno*, which is probably an Anglicism from the word *return*, in the economic sense of yield or "payback" on an investment. The underlying logic would be that a return is greater than or equal to the initial investment + x.

I am interested in a different interpretation of *return*: the kind of return that can raise the awareness of a community, for example, or help people reconnect with their local area and become active agents. I see it as empowerment—in addition to purely economic criteria, if necessary, but linked to other kinds of policies to do with redistribution, sustainability, and so on.

This does not mean that return cannot be both economic and transforming. Talking about an economic return does not automatically mean that the project in question is aligned with hard-line profit-driven capitalist notions. As I was saying, when it comes to economic return, we have to ask: For whom and for what?

Part of the art world believes that projects that seek the kinds of returns you are describing are more suitable for NGOs, that they have less artistic value.

There is a clear divide, and taking sides is inevitable. If you do so consciously, you become aware of a kind of latent conflict or dialectic between two different models. One is closely tied to the formal value of art as a consumer object, and the other implies participation in social change, which I believe is the future. But it should not come down to choosing one of the two approaches; we should be able to bring together the artistic and socio-ecological value of artistic interventions.

There are negative connotations associated with the word *return* because it is part of a vocabulary that is foreign to or imposed on artistic practice. But if we trace the roots of the concept we find that it also has to do with usefulness and belonging, with having an impact that continues over time. In this sense, I subscribe to the idea of "useful arts" as coined by Grizedale Arts and picked up by the museum confederation l'Internationale. As I have argued along with theorists like Stephen Wright and artists like Laure Prouvost, Emma Smith, and Bedwyr Williams, this differs somewhat from Tania Bruguera's concept of *arte útil* (useful art), which strictly limits the criteria of usefulness, utility, or art as a tool. The idea of "useful arts" is inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement and other trends that focus on the social and historical responsibility of individuals, artists, or cultural producers in a given context, and their desire for transformation and social change. These ideas are part of the genealogy of debate on the function of art in society as opposed to the notion of "art for art's sake." In this context, I am reluctant to talk in terms of return, but at the same time I think it is necessary and important for artists to incorporate this idea, even as a criterion for the quality of their practice.

So what would be the antonym or the opposite of this interpretation of *return*?

The opposite of return would be the kind of art that disclaims all responsibility over its possible impact on economic, political, and social processes. I think that the focus on the "success" and "careers" of artists, which is so closely tied to the art market, privileges the symbolic, visual, and aesthetic function of art.

What is your understanding of the concept of *return* applied to your own practice?

One day, any art that does not concern itself with *return* (in its own context) will be seen as the art of an era in decline. With INLAND, we work as though we were in that future in which the neoliberal global art system (which is already in decline) has given rise to new forms, and artists have to show that their work is valid, that it is useful in its social and local context. In my own artistic practice, I try to ensure that the public funds invested in culture are channeled toward the transformation of socioeconomic or environmental infrastructures. Because I think it is important and because there is a lot of money floating around the art world that has to return, not in any old way but as an investment in this paradigm of change.

Talking about *return*, we should measure the effects of artistic projects on people's ordinary day-to-day lives, in particular the lives of groups in vulnerable situations, which is where I think artists should carry out their work. And I mean groups in the broad sense, not just humans but also nonhuman agencies such as the soil, or a plant variety, an aquifer, or a coral reef.

As an artist, I make sure that my work includes an element of critical reflection, beyond quantifiable returns and results, because otherwise we would indeed be doing social development projects.

Artists are privileged beings who work with symbolic languages in the public sphere, who speak in the agora through their work, who have a share of attention. Artists must go to, be present in, and do things in all these (physical and conceptual) places, and the things they do must provide some return or leave some trace. As such, this idea of *return* should be part of the process, not something that happens at the end.

Collaborative processes in the field of art usually have institutional benefactors, whether foundations or state agencies, working with a certain social policy agenda that leads them to finance these kinds of projects. How is the questioning of the context "commodified" or appeased when a social return is required? Does activism become something else?

Whenever I come across the term *return* in art processes in the field of critical public art, or what I call socio-ecological practice, it is always in connection with the institutional sphere, things like cost assessment and budgets for a particular intervention. The public agency involved has to weigh up whether it is in its interests to commit to a collaborative process, given the uncertainties, the immaterial labor, and the fact that these types of projects are open-ended and inconclusive. The idea of *return* is its attempt to deal with that uncertainty and justify its commitment by pinning down something that would otherwise be completely abstract. This response has to do with the fact that public funds are subject to auditing, citizen opinion, and fluctuating votes.

Artists are often required to produce results, to fulfill objectives, and this can be detrimental to the artistic quality of a project, and even lead to its instrumentalization. An agenda for change can end up serving a different agenda altogether: the agenda of mitigation, appeasement, solutions that do not upset the status quo.

If there is an unvoiced need, the artist should detect it, and if there is a problem, the artist should deal with it in a complex way. An artist always has to take a critical stance of mutual dialectical interaction with their environment, the institution, the art system… You are inside but you are constantly trying to overturn those limits, to challenge them, go beyond them.

There is a certain kind of social art that is not particularly desirable because it perpetuates the status quo. But I don't think we can afford to simply reject it and go back to a self-absorbed idea of art, because we need to be in that space of dissension and to make things emerge from it. And some projects can be good even if they are commissioned or produced in a framework that does not seem interesting a priori. Whether they end up having value and providing real returns will depend on how well the artists carry out their work. **(hea)**

INLAND, *Jardín de las dalias* (Dahlias Garden), Madrid, 2013
INLAND, La colonia invernadero (The Greenhouse Colony), 2012

Agents

Constellations, Glossaries, and Functions

Es Baluard
Museu d'Art Modern i Contemporani de Palma

Nekane Aramburu
Eva Cifre
Sebastià Mascaró
Irene Amengual

Es Baluard Museu d'Art Modern i Contemporani de Palma aims to consolidate an open, collaborative working model which fosters a transversal, horizontal approach through the projects that are set up by its departments. With this philosophy it aims to involve different local citizen groups and to activate a network of national and international collaborators.

Beyond their architectural frame, museums today have seen their role and functions subjected to a rethinking that has shaken the very foundations upon which they have traditionally worked. At the same time, there has suddenly emerged new demands on cultural management, above all in the orientation and social responsibility related to new cultural practices whose political and intellectual activities are engaged with their immediate context. This text represents an attempt to summarize the developing practices at Es Baluard, a museum where we are constantly analyzing and testing out the merging of the roles of citizen participation, artists, the institution, curators, administrators, and educators.

We are at the so-called *educational turn* in cultural policy, which seeks to create new forms of institutionalism. This phenomenon arose in response to the current neoliberal climate and the resulting standardization and privatization of education, and is committed to seeing cultural institutions as spaces with a great potential for exploring emancipatory educational alternatives.[1] It is generally accepted that today's cultural facilities wishing to be socially relevant must establish links with the local context and develop initiatives with different agents, collectives, and communities that fit in with their agenda and interests. This inevitably leads museums and art centers to adopt a self-reflexive and critical form of institutionalism.[2]

Against this backdrop, the team at Es Baluard has put in place a structure based on transversality with the objective of carrying out cultural projects oriented toward the collective production of knowledge for and with the citizenry by means of open, permeable methodologies. To do so, one of our principal tasks is to analyze and experiment with different forms and strategies of collective discussion and work that transcend the idea of cultural consumption and that move within a spectrum ranging from participation to collaboration. The difference between "participation" and "collaboration" lies in the degree of agency and implication of those involved; collaboration

1. Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff, eds., *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles* (London: Routlege, 1994).
2. Carmen Mörsch, "At a Crossroads of Four Discourses; documenta 12 Gallery Education in Between Affirmation, Reproduction, Deconstruction, and Transformation," in *documenta 12 Education*, ed. Carmen Mörsch et al. (Zurich and Berlin: Diaphanes, 2009), pp. 9–31.

Mujeres valientes (Brave Women), Es Baluard, Palma de Mallorca, 2015. Project with a group of women in danger of social exclusion and with artist Virginia Villaplana

la gent (The City of the People, 1996).[4] Or it may be a journey returning to it, when it is social demand that initiates the processes, as in the case of *Cabanyal Portes Obertes* (Cabanyal Open Doors) in Valencia, or the community actions realized by Juan Aizpitarte and Ibai Hernandorena with the project *Éxodo* (Exodus) in the Bordeaux neighborhood of Saint-Nicolas.

One of the first experiences with collaborative practices initiated by Es Baluard's educational team was *Cartografiem-nos* (Mapping Ourselves, 2006–14), a long-term project aimed at schools and the surrounding neighborhoods with whom work was carried out based on contemporary artistic practices, and in which was involved a large number of social agents (including community, elderly, and merchant associations). The project consisted of different phrases: a period for research and listening, another for agreeing objectives, another for production/action, and another to increase public visibility. Over the years, the educational team has followed this same framework in projects with other collectives, such as neighborhood associations and resident organizations, HIV patients, immigrant women, the elderly, and so on. As a result, the museum has collaborated with a wide range of professionals unrelated to the world of culture, including social workers, therapists, caregivers, psychiatrists, psychologists, and other healthcare professionals.

Lisa Roberts upholds that good mediation (or, in her terms, "interpretation") practices are those based on dialogue, that attend to processes rather than results, and that, as in collective processes, rather than authorship they are created by many agents with differing perspectives.[5] As Javier Rodrigo remarked, education should be understood as a space of collective research "based on long-term processes by way of complex cultural conversations... to generate multiple channels of conversation, negotiation, and translation between social agents serving as nodes."[6]

This shared reflection generates other types of narratives and experiments with other possible relationships within the institutional space. There are, however, challenges intrinsic to collaborative projects promoted by

entails bearing in mind matters such as working with difference (of agenda, interests, needs, capitals) as well as the methodologies and power relations that play a role in the processes carried out. On the other hand, participation does not entail a reflection on the subject matter proposed as exists in collaborations, and this results in more rigid mechanisms of inclusion/exclusion that determine which agents can or cannot participate, unilaterally delimiting participation and the form this will take.[3] Thus the museum is not only involved with traditional agents of culture (such as artists, curators, cultural managers, and educators) but also with activists, collectives, communities, and the citizenry in general.

Another of the museum's principal activities has been the development of long-term artistic and expository projects with different collectives and communities on emerging themes or those that are relevant to them. The projects grow out of the social context, which demands the resolution of a specific conflict, but also from artistic agents or the institution itself. As described by Marcelo Expósito in his interview with Manuel Borja-Villel, this type of project may consist of an outward journey from the institution, as in the case of the Fundació Tàpies with Craigie Horsfield's project *La ciutat de*

3. Here we follow Javier Rodrigo's (2011) definition of "participation" and "collaboration," which, in turn, is based on the distinction established by Aida Sánchez de Serdio at the first "Jornadas de Producción Cultural Crítica en la Práctica Artística y Educativa," which took place in 2010 at MUSAC. Javier Rodrigo, "Políticas de colaboración y prácticas culturales: redimensionar el trabajo del arte colaborativo y las pedagogías," available at <www.app.box.com/s/zpg13euxvvgle7xe05gt>.

4. "[The *City of the People was*] the result of a lengthy process of collaboration between (a) the museographic institution, (b) intellectuals and professionals critical of the urban modernization model promoted since the eighties by mayor Pasqual Maragall, and (c) citizens linked to neighborhood struggles in the late Franco years and during the Transition." Marcelo Expósito, *Conversaciones con Manuel Borja-Villel* (Madrid: Turpial, 2015), p. 23.
5. Lisa C. Roberts, "Changing Practices of Interpretation," in *From Knowledge to Narrative: Educators and the Changing Museum* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1997), pp. 60–71.
6. Javier Rodrigo, "De las políticas de acceso a las políticas en red: experiencias de mediación crítica y trabajo en red en museos," *Revista Museos*, no. 31 (2012), p. 79

cultural institutions in which multiple agents intervene, which is where the great richness and potential for reflection resides. These challenges are an integral part of such processes[7] and it is necessary to bear them in mind, both when developing collaborative work and when representing and making it visible.[8]

One of the main sources of tension in such projects is the discussion over the role to be played by artists and what should be their position with respect to the other agents involved. This friction is one of the recurring pitfalls in collaborations between the two parts. The difficulty inherent in working from different positions but in a horizontal manner not only involves the artist-educator relationship but also permeates the network of relationships that comprise the very fabric of the projects. The figure of the mediator is vital for addressing this potential point of conflict. While avoiding assuming a central role and thus displacing that of the groups involved, the mediator must ensure that the interests and perspectives of cultural institutions and artists do not impose themselves upon the collectives and communities with whom they are working.

Often it is also the institution itself that extols the role of the artist. Artists are frequently touted as outsiders capable of making proposals that are innovative as well as unaffected by the dynamics and common sense of the institutions or communities with which they are invited to work. It is precisely this distinctive value that is considered the greatest benefit of including artists in such projects. Following this logic is a depoliticized vision of community art, according to which the creativity of artists can heal social problems.[9] And underlying these points of view is a romanticized perspective of the artist as creator, which often results in these types of commissions being participatory rather than collaborative projects.

But the power relationships between the different parties involved in the projects assume tangible form not only through the interests of those involved and any possible frictions that arise from this; they also have to do with the people who manage the symbolic capital of the initiative, how the representation of the process is handled, and the visibility of the participants. At Es Baluard, we thus try to collaborate with artists who do not position themselves as outsiders or unique creators but rather as participating collaborators. The museum involves artists in joint projects with the hope that they can contribute, from the perspective of their creative processes, to the collective pedagogical experience, an experience oriented toward social and political transformations fostered by culture.

This horizontal networking with collectives and communities goes beyond the museum's traditional boundaries and may potentially deconstruct its discourses. The educational turn requires increasing flexibility on the part of institutions in terms of times, spaces, and rhythms, because only with a community engaged with culture and comprised of an active citizenry of partners and participants will it become possible to construct cultural models for today's society.

7. "Critical collaborative art makes it possible for all types of relations to flourish between the various agents involved. Ultimately, relational politics means making the junction of ethics and aesthetics dictated by collaborative artistic projects problematic." Aída Sánchez de Serdio, *La política relacional en las prácticas artísticas colaborativas. Cooperación y conflicto en el desarrollo de un proyecto de vídeo comunitario* (PhD diss., Universitat de Barcelona, 2007), p.13, available online at <www.aidasanchezdeserdio.wordpress.com>.
8. The appeal for a critical reflection on the collaborative work promoted by Spanish cultural institutions is gradually producing results, as was also recently demonstrated by Fermín Soria Ibarra, *El giro educativo y su relación con las políticas institucionales de tres museos y centros de arte del contexto español* (PhD diss., Universitat de Barcelona, 2016).
9. In general, the accusations are centered on the fact that this type of project limits itself to celebrating the positive aspects of the communities with which they work and exalting morally correct values—peace, coexistence, diversity, etc.—but leaving untouched the problems and contradictions in the situations dealt with. In this sense, the social domain would have the effect of eliminating the political. See Aida Sánchez de Serdio, "Arte y educación: diálogos y antagonismos," *Revista Iberoamericana de Educación*, no. 52 (2010), p. 50.

Puntos de fuga

Javier Montero

Javier Montero is a playwright, performing arts director, visual artist, and writer. In recent years he has directed and developed numerous projects of collectivization of tools, dynamics, and methodologies of artistic production. In 2017 he premiered *La colonia de vacaciones* (Teatro del Barrio) in Madrid. Among his most recent collective projects are *Aventuras Teatrales* (Galería Travesía Cuatro, Madrid), together with choreographer Marisa Lull, the laboratory of research and creation Creativity as a space of conflict (Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid), and *La máquina del tiempo* (Intermediæ, hablarenarte).

I

Projects of artistic production that collectivize methodologies, tools, processes, concerns, knowledge, practices, and secrets have become highly visible. These projects pose interesting and varied challenges to the traditional hierarchies of artistic and cultural production, they stimulate the building of autonomously operating communities, and they can provide a new line to follow—a new form of social unionism—in defiance of "precarity."

Let us begin with a brief journey back in time and outline a certain genealogy. In the late 1970s, countercultural and political experimentation, which in a collective form had sought the emancipation from Fordism and disciplinary subjectivity, had been practically wholly assimilated into new governments. Strategies of subjectivation, for relating to the Other, and of cultural production had taken on a fundamental importance. Many of the forerunners of the transformations had assumed a prominent role in a world made by and for a new form of capitalism.

Present-day living and labor conditions take us back to the genealogy of countercultural movements through the 1960s. Within the context of feminism, environmentalism, the radical left, the period's local struggles and autonomist movements, and dissident practices that sought alternative forms of living, bodily desires, and relationships, there was a wish to move away from the prevailing labor conditions and their disciplinary measures. The voluntary acceptance of precarious employment conditions was, generally speaking, a response to the need to surpass the modern patriarchal division between reproduction and wage labor.

Nevertheless, in recent years it is precisely these alternative living and employment conditions that, increasingly, have become so economically useful, favoring as they do the labor market flexibility demanded by

powerful financial institutions. In this way, the practices and discourses of social, political, and cultural movements of previous decades are, apart from their dissent and antagonism with respect to normalization, absorbed in part by the neoliberal imaginary of governability.[1] This implies a profound process of commodification and co-optation of cultural and artistic potential. In A *Brief History of Neoliberalism*, American philosopher David Harvey speaks openly about how late capitalism uses culture to commercialize forms of resistance and creativity in order to strip them of their revolutionary potential.[2]

II

To continue with my digression on the commodification/growing precarity of cultural and artistic production: in her essay Unpredictable *Outcomes/Unpredictable Outcasts*, artist-researcher Marion von Osten claims that the figure of the artist personifies the successful combination of an unlimited variety of ideas, creativity-on-call, and sophisticated self-marketing, which today is what is demanded of any person worth their salt on the labor market. Artists seem to be the protagonists in this new way of understanding the relation between work and life, and, more importantly in our context, for articulating it to a wider audience.[3]

This mystification of the figure of the artist, whose way of working is based on self-responsibility, creativity, and spontaneity, is what nourishes the discursive narrative on work. For a decade, employment policy programs in countries such as Holland, Germany, and the United Kingdom, programs later adopted by other countries, conditioned support for the unemployed on their capacity to be creative, entrepreneurial, autonomous, and willing to productively combine work hours with their private lives.[4]

III

We return to the here and now in order to see how these transformations affect the production of subjectivities. I believe it was Mao Zedong who said something to the effect of, "Our battlefield is the imaginary of the middle classes." It is worthwhile to briefly mention how contemporary art and culture in Spain is constructed upon imaginaries of class and gender developed by agents that typically belong to very specific social strata. Thus their traditional insensitivity to social and political conflicts, or to the extremely precarious tangible and intangible conditions of production, is endemic.

In this context the figure of the artist has become a model of precarity is symptomatic. Neoliberalism seeks to maximize flexibility in order to obtain cheaper, more easily exploitable labor. So-called freelance employment follows a set of parameters of impoverishment: the search for temporary employment with no entitlement to sick leave, unemployment benefits, or paid vacations; the absence of protection against wrongful dismissal; the lack of minimum social protection standards. The boundary between working hours and life blurs and disappears. It is taken as a given that skills training will take place during off hours without compensation. Being permanently online and connected is crucial for survival... But in the neoliberal imaginary of governability these parameters are kept hidden under the guise of creativity. For capitalism, the art world is a fascinating testing ground to experiment with subjectivities, one which generates everything from models of precarity to a variety of speculative commercial processes.

We will only touch on this briefly, but ever since the consolidation of the Spanish Transition system, culture has been characterized by a lack of critical capacity, the assumption of conceptual and institutional frameworks, and a lack of political and social commitment. As neoliberalism has consolidated itself as the biopolitical DNA of the system, spaces of artistic and cultural production have been traversed, compartmentalized, and territorialized by forms of mediation that represent the introduction of a market logic, along with mechanisms of control.

1. Paolo Virno. *A Grammar of the Multitude* (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004). p. 101.
2. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (London: Oxford University Press, 2005).
3. Marion von Osten, "Unpredictable Outcomes / Unpredictable Outcasts," speech given at the "MyCreativity" conference, Amsterdam, November 2006, in *Traversals* 11 (2007), www.eipcp.net/transversal/0207/vonosten/en.
4. Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso Books, 2012), p. 14. "Northern Europe has experienced a transformation of the 1960s discourse of participation, creativity and community; these terms no longer occupy a subversive, anti-authoritarian force, but have become a cornerstone of post-industrial economic policy."

La máquina del tiempo (The Time Machine), Intermediæ, Madrid, 2015. Collective
art project with senior citizens that seeks to collectivize art production processes,
directed by Javier Montero and produced by hablarenarte. Photo: Javier Montero

As Harvey points out, one of the functions of official culture is to obscure the process of the growing precarity of people, communities, and collectives.[5] And it is important to highlight how the Spanish political system in the last decades has implemented neoliberal policies in artistic and cultural areas with a particular intensity and bias. Obsessed with stability and stabilization, it has structured this domain as a mediated, regulated, normative, instrumentalized, homogenized space. In fact, it has used every tool at its disposal to try to establish a hegemonic culture with the goal of producing docile, depoliticized, and highly consumerist subjectivities. And this kept them happy, until the explosion of 15-M with its practices of collectivizing processes of social construction, its logic of rupture, and the development of thought as action. Thought as action...

How the system uses mediation is a critical issue in the world of art and culture. Mediation has become a formula for introducing and consolidating neoliberal commercial logic and the resulting "precarization" of production conditions. In this context, institutionalizing collaborative practices carries the risk of their being co-opted, depoliticized, their aesthetic potential limited, and a loss of their capacity both for rupturing conceptual and institutional frameworks and for generating conflict. Formulas for mediation have been developed for controlling and domesticating the subversive, trangressive, or simply critical potential of collective artistic and cultural creation, as well as for solidifying the hierarchical institutionalization of those practices.

It is not just a question of co-optation and commodification, but a much more far-reaching process involving a conflict in the construction of subjectivities; or, to be more precise, we are living in conflict with the capitalist subjectivation that pervades society.

IV

When we talk of collaborative projects in which the production tools are collectivized, we start from the premise that intersubjective relationships are not solely an end in themselves; rather they allow the exploration of such complex issues as the nature of pedagogical processes, the role of affectation, the influence of systems of cultural representation and institutions, behavior protocols, gender constructs, the political engagement and potentiality of micropolitics, inequalities and the class system, narcissism, and the concept of value. And we are talking, of course, of precarization.

An interesting point of light that could lead us out of this labyrinth in order to oppose the dynamics of precarity is the reinvention of formulations of unionism. Essential to this process are the roles played by the collectivization of practices, tools, forms of care and attention, knowledge, methodology, and mediation. And it is important that these are not co-opted, depoliticized, or institutionalized.

We need to reinvent formulations of social unionism in order to confront the profound deterioration in the living conditions of cultural production, to challenge the hierarchical form and position of the institution and its representatives, and to bring about new realities. We need flexible formulations of unionism capable of producing conflict, overcoming dichotomies, and articulating knowledge. We need formulations of unionism that create transversal networks with opposing political projects and a wealth of active cultural phenomena, whether or not these are recognized as such. What we are talking about is the creation of a union of cultural producers faced with precarity, producers that develop thought as action as a logic of rupture of the institutional, economic, and artistic framework.

It becomes necessary to reinvent the union system in order to change the tangible and intangible conditions of cultural and artistic production. The processes of collectivizing tools, methodologies, practices, and projects are an essential part of this new social, reticular, autonomous unionism that fights the process of precarization to which we are subjected and that is producing new realities.

Phew!

5. Harvey, *A Brief History*, p. 47.

Interview with Núria Güell

The artistic work of Núria Güell (b. 1981, Vidreres) blends with the limits of her daily life in the development of disruptive tactics with the potential to subvert imposed power relations. The explicit objective of all her projects is to repeatedly challenge the assumed identifications and the roles established by agents involved in our social, political, and everyday environments. She seeks to give visibility to abuses perpetuated by the established legality and the dominant morality by addressing their limits. To do this, she flirts with the powers that be and the privileges conferred on her by the art world as well as socially, along with the complicity of different allies.

—www.nuriaguell.net

Your art projects require you to, in a greater or lesser degree, establish relationships with a large number of heterogeneous agents: people who have been affected, ordinary citizens, art institutions, and administrative entities. To what extent does working with all of these form a part of your practice?

Yes, all my projects depend upon and are constructed with (and through) others—just like life. It is precisely the work with different collaborators and establishing personal relationships and, in many cases, emotional bonds that is the essence and foundation of all of my projects. I always say I work with my life as a medium. As sculptors need a physical space to support the sculpture and painters need a surface on which to paint, I need my body (physical, emotional, legal), my time, and my relationships with others to carry out my work.

Would you say that collaboration and management are two of your artistic "techniques"?

I wouldn't speak of techniques in my case. One of the methodologies I use most in my work consists of creating *counterdispositifs* for listening to the singularity of others. So, taking this into account, along with the fact that my medium is my relationships with others, if we want to speak of techniques, then the closest we get to that is dialogue—dialogue as a technique for developing the work: listening and the word. And here is where we would find collaboration, management, and many other factors, different in each project and, frequently, unpredictable.

How would you define the role of different agents in your projects? Are they a means to a particular end or result, or is the objective of your work rather the process of working with others?

Everything comes into it. I don't differentiate between the result of the work from the process of its production. With my work I look to generate moments of ethical interrogation, moments of a suspension of values and meaning, moments in which established values are emptied of content, lose their power, and are thrown into shadow, causing disquiet and facilitating a critical distance. These suspended values do not only affect the "public" but also my collaborators and myself.

The role played by different agents is rather varied, though these roles can be summarized in two categories: accomplices and involuntary collaborators. By accomplices, I mean collaborators that should be aware of the project's starting point, of the premises that put into question the values the project deals with, which is related to my political stance. With projects in which there is a high level of personal, I think it is indispensable for the work to run smoothly and for it to be ethically transparent. For instance, it was very important for María, the political refugee who offered to play hide and seek with the Swedish people (*Demasiada melanina* [Too Much Melanin], 2013), to have a clear understanding and to share in what we wanted to provoke in the public she was challenging. The lawyers who assist me in these projects are also accomplices. And I typically also demand the same level of complicity from the art institutions that invite me to work with them, as you can clearly see in my project in Medellín, *La feria de las flores* (The Flower Fair, 2015–16).

By involuntary collaborators I am referring primarily to government institutions and the staff there who realize bureaucratic functions. They often participate in my projects without being aware of it. They are devoted and committed to do a certain job that, as a citizen, I make use of. But, as I said before, using my own life as a creative medium they not only attend to me as a citizen but at the same time these services become part of an artistic project. They do their work and I do mine. A good example of this would be *Apátriada por voluntad propia* (Stateless by Choice), a project I've been working on since 2014.

This category of involuntary collaborators would also include actors I didn't intend to engage in a project. I'll explain. Because I work in confrontation with the real world, I include whatever that confrontation leads to, as everything that the initial premise leads to is valuable for my work. This

means that collaborators that are involuntary, unforeseen, or what have you, appear. For example, in *Ideologias oscilatorias* (Oscillatory Ideologies, 2015), Levi Orta and I considered the mayor of Figueres who censored the work to be an involuntary collaborator, and we thanked her for her contribution because she gave the work a new meaning, making it more interesting and pertinent. The same thing applies to the hundreds of readers' comments to the news articles published about the projects. To me this still forms part of the work, another phase of it.

What is your experience working with cultural organizations on your projects? In what aspects of your work with them do you see room for improvement?

In many of my projects I use my socially acquired privileges as a white, Spanish citizen and as an artist. I make use of my privileges, but I also take risks because I try to get all I can out of them, to stretch them to the limit, and doing something like that makes you vulnerable—your privileges can be turned against you when you use them. After some thought, one day I decided to ask the same thing from institutions that asked me to work with them, as they enjoyed far more privileges than I ever could. Too often institutions want to exhibit politically committed work but don't want to be politically involved, justifying this with the supposed need for political neutrality. I don't agree with such a premise: if we put ourselves into something, we all put ourselves into it, and more so when we are dealing with institutions that are responsible for producing, managing, and disseminating culture. Not to take a stance seems to me unethical.

The room for improvement, apart from the conditions of production and respect for the artist's rights as a worker, would be in their implication and commitment. I expect an implication from them equal to my own. In terms of personal relationships I look for complicity, in order to generate the trust needed to complement each other and learn in the process. What I value the most about working with collaborators is that they push me beyond my own limits. Still, I find the principal challenge is when collaborators prioritize political correctness or their personal interests over honesty with respect to reality, something that, consistent with my interests as an artist, is essential. (hea)

Núria Güell, *Apátrida por voluntad propia* (Stateless by Choice), ongoing since 2014

Núria Güell, *Demasiada melanina* (Too Much Melanin), Gothenburg Biennale, 2013

Interview with María Ruido

María Ruido (b. 1967, Ourense) is an artist, researcher, and teacher. Since 1998, she has been developing interdisciplinary projects about the social construct of the body and identity, the imaginaries of work in post-Fordist capitalism, and the construction of memory and its relation to narrative forms of history. María Ruido involves various collectives, associations, and people in her work to configure the representation of imaginaries that respond to social and political questions. To do so, she draws on different agents that, in any way or another, become part of her work, of her research processes, and of the work's final outcome.

—www.workandwords.net

Is the definition of yourself as an artist important in your work? In order to meet your projects' goals, do you usually play the role of an artist or do you prefer to abandon this role?

In my work, I step outside the artist's role to use different methodologies, employing procedures closer to research, but also to anthropology, ethnography, and self-ethnography. I am very interested in this last approach, as it uses testing procedures that are similar to documentation. This places me at a considerable distance from the role of the artist, but I don't identify myself with this role. Sometimes, when working with collectives, an artist can acquire an almost shamanic power, understanding their role as someone who speaks for a specific group and, in a way, solves their problems. That strikes me as a big lie and an abuse of people.

Your work could be described as socially engaged. What relevance do cultural institutions and galleries have in it?

My work has a social character. I understand representation as occupying a political domain and, by extension, a social one. In that sense, when we work with those agents, I believe we have to be very aware that we are intervening in an institution with very concrete rules. Working in the context of public institutions can be relevant and it can bring out a series of social and political questions. We cannot forget that we form part of institutions, whether on the periphery or more in the center, but we are always there, even if only to tear them down or criticize them.

My relations with art institutions are normally uncomfortable, as is my rapport with the university where I teach. Still, I believe that it is important to be inside—to be there—especially in public organizations, in order to analyze institutional limits. This has sometimes led to tense and uncomfortable interaction, but on other occasions things have been more or less fluid. There have been all sorts of relations.

Many of your works involve the participation of collectives to denounce specific social questions. To what degree do those social agents acquire a specific role in your art?

Here, I would distinguish between collective and collaborative. I have worked in collectives with other artists and social agents, and that involves a different kind of practice than my projects, where I am inevitably working with people's life experiences.

I believe that we have to be very aware of how far an artistic process can go, and what its limits are. I am interested in work in which artistic practice functions as a social agent, but I must also add that I am very much a realist about the possibility of art's agency to interfere and change realities. These have to be transformed by people on the street and—in other contexts—from other institutions.

When you address an association that works with historical memory or a collective working with immigrants, or with women, you cannot sell them the idea that your work is going to change their lives. If I decide to make a film with a collective—following a strike, for example—I have to take into account the time that the involved agents need for their negotiations, which is not always compatible with the time frame of my work. Even if I want to maintain continuous contact, I have to make decisions, and, in the end, it is my name that appears on the work. Moreover, that can turn a piece into a fetish, an object with no life outside the museum, which reinforces the idea that art spaces address such questions. This seriously concerns me because it can produce a rebound effect.

What value do you assign to the working process and to collaboration with collectives, as opposed to the final result of your projects as artworks and objects?

The process is the most important aspect of my work, particularly research, interviews, and editing. That is what most interests me. Turning the study material into an aesthetic experience—I work in the art world, but I am not a journalist, a political scientist, or an anthropologist, although I use methodologies from those disciplines—and negotiating with the agents involved in the work are fundamental aspects of it.

The final result varies considerably. Sometimes it has been a complete disappointment for the people who participated, and other times not. I prefer to be honest in my work, so when I include a group of people I like to let them know that I will have the final word, the final cut in both the real and symbolic sense.

They may think that I am going to deliver them a sort of pamphlet that they can use in their rallies. In that sense, there is a dichotomy between what an association finds politically useful and something more closely related to the formal research involved in an artistic work. And this contradiction between form and content can produce frictions. Consequently, the final results are not always well received, but you have to be responsible and, somehow, not create expectations that you are going to make a campaign video for a specific cause. **(A.G.A)**

María Ruido, *Ficciones Anfíbias* (Amphibian Fictions), HD video, 2005
María Ruido, *Plan Rosebud 1*, HD video / 16mm, 2008

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María Ruido, *Plan Rosebud 2*, HD video / 16mm, 2008

Impossible Glossary

Institution

Institutions and Institutionalism
Beyond the Ruins of the Museum
Jesús Carrillo

Jesús Carrillo Castillo (b. 1966, Madrid) is a Doctor of Art History from Cambridge (King's College) and Professor of Contemporary Art History at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. His research focuses on analyzing the role of contemporary cultural institutions in the configuration of urban space. From his posts in public management he has launched programs of new institutionalism based on the principles of openness, transparency, co-responsibility, and social return. Both his teaching and his institutional management are characterized by a feminist and anti-colonial position. He participates actively in international projects in Europe and Latin America designed to rethink the role of culture in contemporary societies.

The debate regarding the institution has taken on unexpected importance over the past decade. This could have been interpreted as a further turn of the screw of the practice of institutional critique in the art world in the 1970s and 1980s, were it not for the fact that it originated in agents and approaches outside the field of art, even if that is where it has acquired a certain specificity and widespread acceptance. The institution is no longer being broached on the basis of the obsession that made it the object of dogged analysis and critique, fueling its narcissism. And it is no longer branded the enemy standing in the way of emancipation, as it was in classic antagonism. The debate over the institution has returned as a kind of urgent challenge to the political imagination and a necessary horizon for collective action at a time of extreme social vulnerability and the rapid discrediting of the political mechanisms of the system. Art is embroiled in this urgency because of its dialectic relationship with the established system and its desire to transcend the bounds of the thinkable and the feasible. This call for "new" or "other" institutionalities reached the cultural institution when it was besieged by neoliberal productivism, general disaffection, and the culture wars.

In the late 1990s, an idea spread through art, theory, and activism circles according to which tapping the potential of new communication technologies would result in a new society of interconnected individuals capable of cooperating, managing their projects, and generating synergies without the need for stable frameworks or mediations other than those dictated by the technologies themselves. The emergence of new modes of producing and shaping the subjectivity of these individuals seemed to call for a new political economy that, in principle, did not require the construction of new institutional forms. According to this "fin de siècle" sensibility, the evanescent logic and ad hoc forms of the Temporary Autonomous Zones (TAZ) that emerged in specific situations through the will and the actions of individuals and groups ended up prevailing over the desire to build permanent institutions, which were

considered mechanisms for social control and for the perpetuation of structures of domination. TAZ were no longer a means to escape an omnipotent state, as imagined by Hakim Bey's libertarian thought, they were a blueprint for action in a stateless society. The institution was in crisis, but so was institutionalism itself.

From the opposite extreme, this radical vision reflected the premises upon which neoliberalism was devising its new world order at around the same time. There sometimes appeared to be little difference between their respective arguments and modus operandi. Nonetheless, the first group believed that the state would eventually collapse out of sheer obsolescence, while the second group thought that it should continue to exist instrumentally, as a facilitator and guarantee for the smooth deployment of its financial operations. Ultimately, those who believed in post-institutional truth—freelance, creative, and, above all, flexible individuals—became the ideal victims of the production apparatus of post-Fordist capitalism.

This sensibility generated more than the image of a network of interconnected singularities floating in the amniotic fluid of a society without institutions. The Italian post-operaist philosopher Paolo Virno, criticized the opportunistic cynicism of those who celebrated the end of institutions while parasitically accepting the new forms of neoliberal domination. To counter them, his 2001 *A Grammar of the Multitude* named the subject that was to be the basis of a new community: the multitude. He argued that the set of singularities which, according to Hobbes, predated the institution of the political body, would return from the remote past and replace the already overflowing forms of modern subjectivity: citizens or—above all—the people. Indeed, civil disobedience and the exodus that Virno advocated as a last resort did not appear to provide the most appropriate substratum for the foundation of a new institutional imagination. On the other hand, his philosophy identified the bases for a new, "other" public sphere and for radically new forms of democracy in the multitude's capacity for communication, affect, and cooperation.

With the easing of millenarianism and the emergence of new forms of political action in response to the system's violence and unsustainability in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the emphasis on defection gradually shifted to the "general intellect" and its capacity to produce new forms of common life. In 2007, *Transversal*, the online journal of the European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies (EIPCP), published an issue on what it called "instituent practices." It included an article entitled "Towards New Political Creations: Movements, Institutions, New Militancy,"[1] in which Raúl Sánchez Cedillo drew on a little-known text by Gilles Deleuze on David Hume to explore a notion of the institution conceived (unlike laws) as a structure originating in social invention, a vehicle for individual and collective experience leading to affirmative modes of action that are neither exclusive nor repressive. Although it was not yet possible to discern the forms of this new institution, which could then only be glimpsed in certain concrete, context-specific "instituent practices," these ideas were generating hitherto unknown aspirations in the social movements.

True to the grammatical ambivalence of the term, this way of thinking about the institution did not refer to a formally established structure—to the institution recognizable as such—but to the act of "instituting" and, above all, to practices fueled by an instituent drive. In another issue of *Transversal*, Gerald Raunig argued that conceiving instituent practices as process—as a "concatenation of instituent events"—was a way of breaking the binarism of instituent/instituted and constituent/constituted rather than merely opposing the institution.[2] This reading as present participle rather than past tense made it possible to get rid of the vision of a closed, centripetal state institution and connect the term to the cooperative and affective practices that Virno had described as pertaining to the multitude.

In 2008, *Transversal* published another monograph on the urgency of coming up with "*mental prototypes* for political action" that could overcome the "frustrated virtuality" of the revolutions of 1968 and the more recent global resistance movements. In response to this, Universidad Nómada, one of the agents born out of the mutation of

1. Raúl Sánchez Cedillo, "Towards New Political Creations: Movements, Institutions, New Militancy," trans. Maribel Casas-Cortés and Sebastian Cobarrubias, *Transversal* 7 (2007), www.eipcp.net/transversal/0707/sanchez/en.

2. Gerald Raunig, "Instituting and Distributing: On the Relationship Between Politics and Police Following Rancière as a Development of the Problem of Distribution with Deleuze," trans. Aileen Derieg, *Transversal* 9 (2007), www.eipcp.net/transversal/1007/raunig/en.

subjectivities in the late 1990s, suggested the "inopportune" emergence of "monster institutions," which is how it referred to itself.[3] The editorial described this monstrous institutionalism as a hybrid, contradictory apparatus, a constant negotiation of heterogeneous elements in which *movementist* elements and "classic" institutions came together. A strategic device for "bursting onto nationalized and/or privatized public spheres and transforming them." The monstrous nature of these institutions, which is a trait of the multitude, consisted in their supposed lack of a recognizable political organization or form, and in that they provided conditions suitable to generating "a certain density and possibilities for intellectual creation and collective political action that will contribute to inventing another form of politics." The oxymoron "monster institution" was going to make it possible to understand the exodus of the multitude as an instituent process.

In the late nineties, with the "hipness" of post-institutional trends and of neoliberalism, Spanish art institutions were enjoying their sweetest moment. The museums and art centers that had sprung up all over the country in the preceding years were riding the crest of the wave of economic growth, fueled by public investment and the real estate industry, bound together by the speculation frenzy. But, as Alberto López Cuenca pointed out in 2003, when few dared to speak out, the emperor had no clothes: he had compromised his institutional purpose through a web of interests that had little to do with promoting the development and knowledge of culture and the arts. All over Spain, flashy new buildings slotted into the urban fabric like missing pieces for the growth and gentrification of impoverished city centers.[4]

There were a few exceptions. In San Sebastián, Arteleku had embarked on its particular exodus from the conventional frameworks of art, choosing to negotiate, as an institution, with artists and social agents rather than politicians and property developers. In Barcelona, also around that time, MACBA was taking a path with unforeseeable results by recognizing activism as "one of the fine arts,"[5] and opening up the institution to agents and discourses that introduced a radical questioning.

This contact may have been without consequences were it not for the fact that it was part of Jorge Ribalta's plan to turn the museum into a laboratory from which to imagine and experiment with new forms of the public sphere.

In 1997, shortly before being named head of Public Programmes at MACBA, Ribalta published *Servicio público*, a book that sought to contribute to "reflection and debate on models and possibilities for generating effective, democratic administrative structures in the field of culture in Spain," just as we were starting to see the course that public cultural policies would take within neoliberal ideology. In a conversation with Ribalta included in the book, Marcelo Expósito noted what he described as the symptomatic surge of associations and self-managed projects in the cultural sphere at the time: the Red Arte network, the union of visual artists, and the string of "independent" spaces and collectives that proliferated in Bilbao, Seville, Valencia, Barcelona, Madrid… Nonetheless, Expósito pointed out that it was not sufficient to simply come together to demand more and better-distributed public funding, arguing that this movement should move toward a radical critique of the institutional model and enter into a "dialectical relationship with the impetus of updated forms of citizen participation, what is in some circles known as 'alternative civil society.'"[6]

Expósito clearly saw the need to rethink cultural policies in connection with a radical imagination and democratic praxis that were being tested elsewhere, outside the art scene. What did he mean by "elsewhere"? In Spain at that time, this "alternative civil society" took the form of groups involved in the theoretical development and political and personal practice of new models of self-managed squatted social centers. In Madrid, these groups came together around Laboratorio, a project that initially squatted several abandoned buildings belonging to the National Institute for Agricultural Research, at Glorieta de Embajadores near the city center. Between 1997 and 2003, learning from earlier experiences such as the long-term squat Minuesa and, above all, from the example of Italian self-managed social centers, the Lavapiés-based Laboratorio I, II, and III offered what they considered a necessary alternative to the democratic deficit of the institutions,

3. Universidad Nómada, "Mental Prototypes and Monster Institutions: Some Notes by Way of an Introduction," trans. Nuria Rodríguez, *Transversal*, 5 (2008), <www.transversal.at/transversal/0508/universidadnomada/en> (translations modified).
4. Alberto López Cuenca, "El traje del emperador: la mercantilización del arte en la España de los años 80," *Revista de Occidente*, no. 273 (2004), pp. 21–36.
5. See <www.macba.cat/en/of-direct-action-considered-as-one-of-the-fine-arts>.
6. Jorge Ribalta, *Servicio público. Conversaciones sobre financiación pública y arte contemporáneo* (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1998).

and a response to the rapid expropriation of public space. These "laboratories" became the basis and the platform for the debate on "monstrous institutions" that Universidad Nómada formulated a short time later.

Ribalta and Expósito agreed that the new associationist tendency in art should not merely aspire to the role of instigator of reforms in the existing administration, or of a marginal, minority agent lacking the ambition to bring about more substantial change. Ribalta saw the need to recognize the desire to "conquer the institutions" and to occupy "the center," while Expósito maintained that associative movements should, through their specificity, contribute to creating a new hegemony, the forerunner of the alternative civil society that would eventually erode and supplant the hegemony of the technocratic institutionalist discourse. In practice, the alliances between associationism in the art world and social movements that Ribalta and Expósito called for in 1997 only occasionally took place and, paradoxically, it was the traditional institution—first MACBA, then Museo Reina Sofía—that ended up taking a leading role in that exchange. On the other hand, the institutionalist-technocratic hegemony was not ousted, although the institution did have to mutate, in league with economic powers, in order to survive the shrinking public sector, and—in the spirit of *Il gattopardo*: "for things to remain the same, everything must change"—to respond to the demands of the sector and to society's changing cultural patterns.

Nonetheless, the signs that they detected in the sphere of art and culture could be interpreted as the seeds of a new kind of agency that no longer conforms to associationism or to the formal institution: a web of autonomous self-organized social and cultural operators with an increasingly flexible—and increasingly precarious—structure. In the space of a few years, a great diversity of projects sprung up all over Spain, including Consonni, Fundación Rodríguez, and Amasté in the Basque Country; ZEMOS98 in Seville; Universidad Nómada in Madrid; and Hangar in Barcelona. These spaces did not identify as being part of an alternative or parallel scene but as actors in a new scenario, negotiating with the "old" institutional apparatus that still managed the bulk of cultural resources. The production company BNV, founded

in Seville in 1989, can be considered a pioneer in this sense, although the historical context in which it began sets them apart in that they challenged the institution as such, while the later wave approached it through the redefinition of their own practices.

The hypothetical *institutionalism* of these new agents had to do with the way in which their practices embodied a new understanding of the social sphere that traditional institutions are unable to incorporate into their rationales and structures. Drawing inspiration from feminism, Zapatismo, environmentalism, new technologies, and other movements that converged at the end of the twentieth century, these agents formulated a new ethics and standards that shaped their internal organization and forms of external relation. Interestingly, many of these projects came together around the notion of production and accepted the central role of culture in the new "cognitive" capitalism, rethinking their own modus operandi through a critique of the conditions of the post-Fordist system. Like the social movements, they believed it would not be possible to imagine a new institutionalism unless these aspects were taken into account.

The terms *economization* and *outsourcing* have been used to describe the framework in which these agents entered the cultural production field. But their significance is not expressed or exhausted by these terms, despite the fact that the patterns of action they refer to were systematically imposed and a proliferation of companies appeared, designed to compete as subcontractors of the services that museums themselves were no longer able to provide. The internal organization of these new agents, their economies, and the terms on which they relate with others were a radical alternative to both conventional business models and to the traditional hierarchical, bureaucratic institution. Another important, related difference is their way of conceiving the social context as a complex ecosystem that they form part of, not as an "other" to be treated with mistrust, in relations of patronage, favors, and subalternity.

Paradoxically, the undiminished hegemony of the institution meant that museums and art centers were one of the main arenas for the debate on

institutionalism. The discontinuity of the relationships between the new cultural agents and the social movements, and the recruitment of "double agents" like Jorge Ribalta, Marcelo Expósito, and myself by institutions like MACBA and Museo Reina Sofía, was bound to produce either an anomaly that would substantially affect the meaning and scope of "alter" or else a new institutionalism in our context. The museum, primarily through its public programs, declared itself in crisis and opened up to debating with others the foundations of that possible other institutionalism.

The museums' avowedly deficient institutionalism connected with the instituent desire expressed by the social movements. From 2000 on, museums launched collaboration processes in which the institution de facto recognized the logics and protocols of the new agents, strategically suspending their traditional monopoly and exclusive hold on cultural authority. The contractual frameworks that governed these relationships became legal umbrellas covering processes of negotiation and co-responsibility that were not based on the same terms as the usual mutual relationship of service provision.

Even though the processes that were underway appeared to establish a space in which to operate—the research project *Desacuerdos* (Disagreements), the process of setting up the Fundación de los Comúnes, the collaboration with Red Conceptualismos del Sur—the disjunction between instituent practices and institutional mechanisms created distortions and dysfunctions that became intolerable with the unfolding of events and the new political contexts. The hypothesis of a flexible institution that would be able to modify its conceptual framework and its structures as a result of ongoing contact with horizontal, cooperative practices was deferred and ultimately replaced by a less ambitious framework in which collaborations took place on an occasional basis, without challenging its definition as such. Meanwhile, beginning in 2011, the social movements gradually ceased to see the museums as fellow travelers in their instituent practices. The centrifugal force that had filled the country's streets and squares and that had channeled into the incipient municipalist processes flooded the confined space of the art institution that, until then, had served as a temporary laboratory.

The museums and art centers born after the advent of the ambiguous cultural policies of "creative cities," such as Intermediæ and Medialab Prado in Madrid and Tabakalera in San Sebastián, were conceived along the lines of a relational model based on lightweight, porous structures and on the recognition of an active and proactive "user." Designed as part of processes of urban transformation and city "branding"—Madrid Río, European Capital of Culture—and affected by the productive channeling of collective creativity typical of cognitive capitalism, these art centers were undermined by a flaw in their foundations that conditioned the development of a new institutionalism attuned to the new social impulses. The problems they faced when starting up, compounded by the collapse of the property market on which their emergence was based, are proof of the fragility of a schizoid model that swings between the neoliberal business model and self-management, unable to fully embrace either of the two. But in spite of this structural flaw, their "soft" nature and the ebbing of the "interventionist" cultural policies of other eras mean that they can be "taken over" by authentic institutional experimentation processes, as long as they are managed by people with sufficient ethics and intelligence.

At present, municipal governments persist in their efforts to generate protocols to allow the implementation of citizen initiatives and co-management of public resources. But the truth is that the cooperation and squatting processes rooted in the social movements are virtually the only surviving examples of the new institutionalism. Casa Invisible in Málaga, squatted in 2007, and La Ingobernable, a social center for the construction of the urban commons squatted ten years later on Paseo del Prado in the heart of Madrid, are examples of the flexibility and the capacity for public engagement of a model originally grounded in antagonism. Their exceptional status and the fact that they are not acknowledged in the current legal system are still inherent to them, but they now defend their existence as a civil right, based on a new common sense.

From the current situation we can deduce the futility of looking exclusively to the social movements, the new cultural agents, or the institutions in crisis as the favored site for the emergence of the new

institution. Ultimately, none of these will be able to create a totally new structure to oust and permanently replace the existing ones, which, on their own, are incapable of completely mutating into something radically different through reformist dynamics. The stubborn reality of our times, and the nature of what we aspire to, ordains that we seek this institutional promise in the specific processes, ways of doing, protocols, economies, and communication strategies that regulate the relationships between agencies of various kinds. A new institutionalism lies in a political reconfiguration based on the possibility and negotiation of the specific practices and the inside/outside binary structures that divide and order the social realm. To this end, it will of course be necessary to break the existing deadlock and inertias by testing "dangerous," monstrous, hybrid, contradictory devices in which these negotiations can take place.

Interview with Ricardo Antón (ColaBoraBora)

ColaBoraBora is a non-profit organization that designs services and fosters collaborative innovation, surroundings and processes that focus on human beings. For its members ColaBoraBora is an island between prevailing reality and projected desire, where the WHAT is redefined by transforming it into the HOW. The collective proposes new systems and methodologies to modify customary forms of governing, production, and property by changing how we approach and interpret reality. They are part of networks such as Wikitoki, Karraskan, and Reas, and over the course of their existance, they have carried out projects such as Bherria, CasiTengo18, Copylove, CTRparaCOLABORAR, DSS2016EU, Goteo, HARROBItik HARROBIra, Hondartzan, Juntas Emprendemos, Kit Krak, KOOPtel, Kultursistema, and Tecnoblandas.

—www.colaborabora.org

Jesús Carrillo describes you as an example of an alter-institution. Do you agree with this label?

There are many possible names. If we talk about alter-institutions, I think it is important to mention the role that Arteleku played in the early 2000s. Arteleku was a "classic" institution: it depended on the regional government of the Diputación de Gipuzkoa, and it had a director, Santi Eraso, who was anomalous but a director nonetheless. Even so, it managed to think of itself in a critical, porous way. It opened up to other arts, to cultural practices, and to social movements such as feminisms and free culture. It also managed to experiment with forms of institutionalism as with Associated Projects, delegating responsibility to this network of diverse agents that managed part of its budget in an autonomous, decentralized way.

Arteleku was a fertile breeding ground for agents, including AMASTÉ, which later turned into ColaBoraBora and is now also part of Wikitoki; or Fundación Rodríguez, which later formed part of Asamblea Amarika, and now has its members in ZAS. Agents that are constantly evolving toward more collaborative and distributed forms and toward a certain idea of community. Asamblea Amarika may be the best example of different institutional functionality, because through an assembly format and working without legal status, it ended up managing much of the visual arts budget of the Diputación de Álava.

What is it about the Wikitoki operating model that makes you describe it as an alter-institution?

When we worked with Zemos98 and Rubén Martinez on the Copylove project, we talked about the "vulnerable" multitude that burns in the struggle of life. A monstrous informal community embodied in a kind

of Godzilla assembled out of countless small *cuidadanos*[1]. To me, Wikitoki is simply one part of that great Godzilla. And inside that mix, its specificity is to be a laboratory of collaborative processes, mainly in the professional realm, reconnecting production and reproduction.
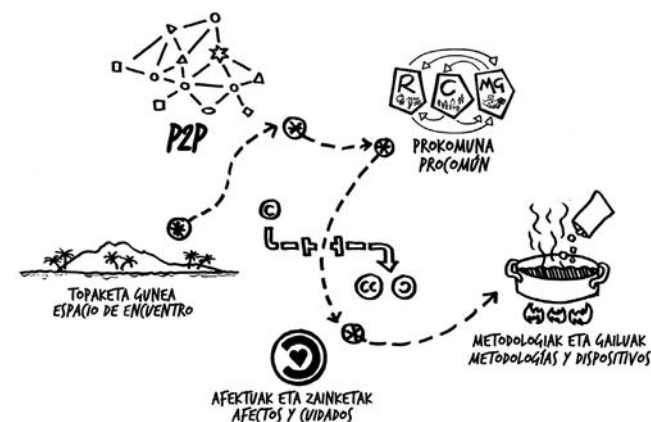
Wikitoki is like an open-source kitchen garden and pantry. With all the ingredients on the table, we try to cook up possibilities that work for us at least a little bit and temporarily. Wikitoki is constantly moving, imperfectly and incompletely adapting. It is born out of precarity and instability, so it requires a lot of attention; it is difficult, exhausting, and full of uncertainty. But it also generates many opportunities for learning along the way.

I don't really know how innovative Wikitoki is, but we are not interested in innovation in the sense of "novelty." We are more of a contextualized remix. Our activities focus on exploring how small organizations can find ways to act and think in a much more shared way, avoiding the logic of competition and trying to meet individual interests and at the same time produce and take care of common returns.

What is an *institution*, from your point of view?

Our work is principally based in the Basque Country, a context with a strong institutional presence, influenced by a very paternalist nationalism rooted in the Christian Democratic tradition. In the cultural sphere, the *institution* has supported a precarious fabric through grants, generating dependence and patronage. It has established very few real channels for participation, and it has had a very instrumental approach to culture, switching between the traditionalist and innovative imaginaries, between sheepdog and *Puppy*.

Basque institutionalism is comfortable, stagnant, and extremely complacent. It does not look outward, it does not open up, it does not learn. Any supposed changes are largely rhetorical and formalist, guided by a bureaucratic and rights-based impulse rather than a true desire to act as a catalyst and transform the public sphere.

To overcome this resistance, we must change habits. We need forums where we can think about what we want public institutions to be, how they could work, and what we are already producing now with public resources (I don't mean just money but also spaces, procedures, channels for communication and legitimacy, civil servants who could become involved in specific projects, international relations and contacts, and so on), In order to move in this direction, we need to set up new dialogues and distribute responsibility in such a way that citizens can become involved and make decisions. We need more open and permeable systems that enable interaction and generate collective intelligence among experts, technicians, citizens, and politicians.

And while we tackle the regeneration of the public sphere, we must also free up space for the commons. Because paradoxically, while the public sphere was being stripped of its functions, it was also being forced to spread into other areas of life that, until quite recently, relied more on community management. As such, we need to relearn to differentiate between the public and the common spheres, so that the public sphere can go back to concentrating its efforts on the good management of certain basic areas. And the commons can diversify, branch out, and spread, implementing socio-economic-political models that are beneficial for society as a whole and for the planet.

1. The term *cuidadanos* is a play on words that combines *cuidados* (care) and *ciudadanos* (citizens).—Ed.

ColaBoraBora, *Parecido no es lo mismo* (Similar Is not the Same), Caring for the City, for Zemos98

How can such an ambitious model be established outside the bounds of friendly institutions?
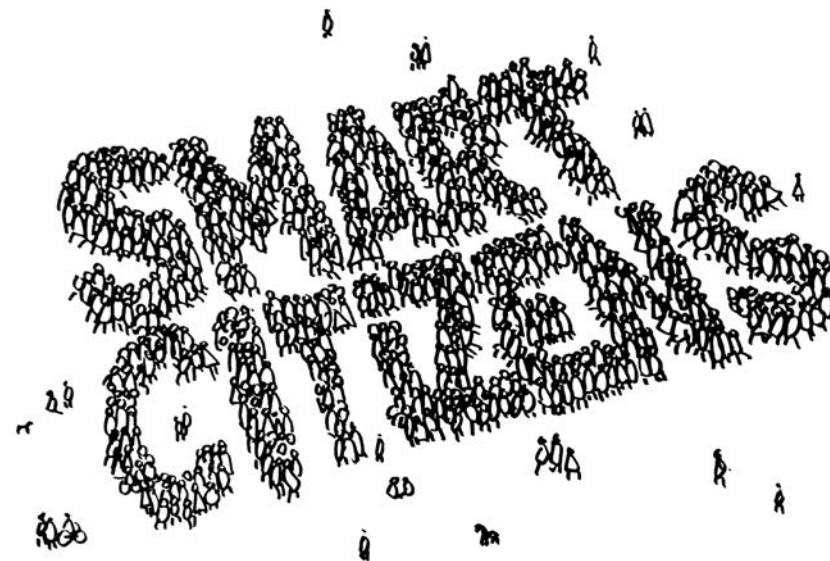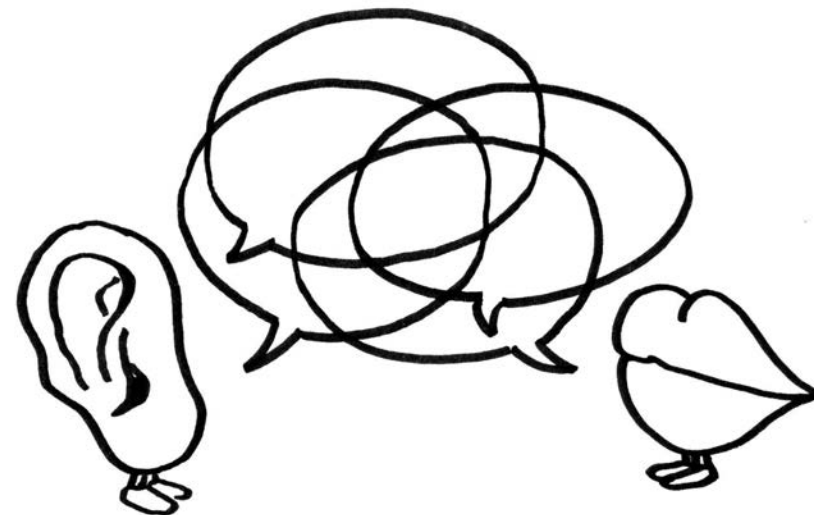
Our idea of a new institutionalism is based on the perspective of the cracks and the seams, of "trans" and remix. In these mannerist times, we believe there is a need for truly monstrous forms of institutionalism. Every civilization needs its monsters, because they mark the limits and bring out our wild, dark, and creative side. We need to liberate monsters, to see ourselves in them and learn from/with them. To recognize the civilizing impulse as monstrous. And to work on our monsters not out of individual fear but through the collective production of mutations and variables, so that they can give rise to this possible new institutionalism.

The idea is not for those of us who speak in terms of a "new institutionalism" or of "extitutions" to complacently recognize ourselves as monsters, but to explore the potential of the monstrosities of others. The monsters of capitalism, for instance, learn a great deal from the monsters of the commons. But we do not apply ourselves to this process of appropriation and distortion from our side. If they have this capacity, shouldn't we also experiment with bringing over to our side some of the things they generate and that may be useful to us, once we have adapted them?

Companies like Google, Amazon, and Facebook are taking advantage of the obsolescence of institutions. Through their observation of our daily lives, operating in a disruptive way, they have an enormous capacity to generate resources, transactions, and a new institutionalism mediated by corporate values. The way I see it, these are truly monstrous institutions. Which are ours?

What can we learn from these monsters?

If we look at institutional centers such as Medialab and Intermediæ—generally considered "new" institutions—we see that even though they implement innovative programs, they are still conventional in terms of their governance. They have executive managers and a technical team,

and then a series of agents or mechanisms for accessing funding or facilities. But the communities that inhabit them do not have a structured capacity to make decisions relating to the organizational model, budgets, or programming. On the other hand, Spain's new-generation social centers have experimented much more with distributed, horizontal forms of organization that are clearly progressing and maturing but nonetheless still very limited when it comes to scaled management of collective processes.

To attain a new institutionalism we need to shift to a different paradigm, based on what we already have, a kind of transition in which we resignify and reuse existing elements to build something new. And we may still need structural, regulating elements that connect and coordinate without accumulating either centrality or undue power. Institutions that move from "governing" to "inhabiting," as Amador Fernández-Savater suggests.[1] And all of it remixed with open-source technologies, the hacker ethic, and direct economy production models, with a view to generating situated global commons; in other words, a peer-to-peer system with co-responsibility spread among the nodes.

One basic difference between the monster technology companies/ institutions and the new institutionalism that you are describing is the fact that yours springs from the public rather than the private realm. Do you think developments in Spain over the past three years show that new initiatives are quickly undermined when they come in contact with the public institution?

This may be partly happening with the municipalist movements in some parts of Spain. When the "monster" entered the institution, we thought we would be able to change everything. But we soon realized that it would not be so easy.

My most positive reading of this period is that we have learned how the institution works from the inside. Perhaps we were too clever by half at the start, delegitimizing through prejudice and ignorance the work that is done in government institutions, without understanding bureaucracies,

problems, and internal power dynamics, and without sufficiently appreciating the efforts made by most civil servants and politicians trying to get projects off the ground.

One of the lessons (which we may not have really learned yet) is that there is a need for spaces where "insides" and "outsides" mix. It would be absurd, having made it into the institution, to cut ourselves off from what is happening outside. Or to keep seeing the institution, from the outside, as an "other" at which to aim our complaints and demands. A new institutionalism should be much more about mediation, about the relational, about connectivity. A membrane space that enables exchange. The "transware" and "flow communities" that Jose Ramón Insa talks about.[2]

What is the root of our mistrust of the public realm?

Particularly in the context of neoliberalism, there is an interest in destroying our trust in public institutions. The neoliberal program is based on destroying the idea of trust in itself: injecting us with the fear of the other, rather than the desire to be community. It is the business of the industrialization of fear and security.

But the conflict with the public institution does not just spring from this narrative. The fundamental problem is that instead of defending the public realm and the commons, the institutions themselves have been smoothing the way for neoliberalism, undermining the organizational capacity of the civic fabric, turning citizens into clients. Mechanization and dehumanized bureaucratization have been imposed onto the more communal processes that worked on the basis of trust.

In this sense, it is true that there is a certain disenchantment with the public institution, but this does not mean we should give up. Because it may turn out to be the only thing that can guarantee a certain basic infrastructure on which to build the commons. And the danger of delegitimizing the public sphere is that somebody who is not us is taking advantage of the situation to attack and corrode it, to dismantle it completely. **(hea)**

1. See Fernández-Savater, Amador, "Del paradigma del gobierno al paradigma del habitar: por un cambio de cultura política", *Tecnoblandas*, <www.tecnologiasblandas.cc/del-paradigma-del-gobierno-al-paradigma-del-habitar-por-un-cambio-de-cultura-politica>—Ed.

2. See José Ramón Insa, "Transware y ejercicios de contragestión: las comunidades de flujo", *blogZAC*, <www.blogzac.es/transware-y-ejercicios-de-contragestion-las-comunidades-de-flujo/>—Ed.

Interview with Antoni Abad

Antoni Abad (b. 1956, Lleida) has a master's degree in Art History from the Universitat de Barcelona and a European Media Master from the Universitat Pompeu Fabra. Between 2004 and 2014 his activity focused on audiovisual communications projects in the context of *megafone.net*. These projects involved the use of cell phones by groups at risk of exclusion. Since 2015, he has been developing *BlindWiki* project, a citizen's network in which persons with visual diversity use smartphones to publish geo-localized sound recordings. He has participated in the biennales of Venice, Lima, Seville, Mercosul Porto Alegre, and Berlin.

—www.blind.wiki
—www.megafone.net

Since 2004 your work has revolved around audiovisual communication projects like *megafone.net*. These projects encourage collaborative creation and participation. What do collaborative and participatory practices consist of? Is there any difference between them?

I must admit I've never thought about it. For some reason, over the years I've used the term *collaborative* more often than *participatory*, although I have always referred to the people who are inside my projects as "participants."

Although I may have had preconceived ideas at the start of some of these projects, the opinions and needs of the participants determine the content. For example, when I took *BlindWiki* to Sydney, I saw it as a practical, functional project that would help visually impaired people navigate through the city. But one of the participants decided to post geolocated jokes and pranks on the daily route of one of his fellow blind friends, so that he would come across them on his usual walks. From there, the project opened up to a whole series of proposals that enriched the experience, including the sensory aspects, which increased exponentially in subsequent projects.

You recently participated in the Venice Biennale at the invitation of the Institut Ramon Llull with the project *La Venezia che non si vede*. In this case, you worked with blind and visually impaired participants, who interpreted Venice through their own experiences. How do you construct these kinds of projects in which so many people participate? What is your point of departure and what are your curiosities or interests?

Some parts of the projects are calculated and require a certain amount of planning, but I don't usually propose a specific methodology. There is a lot of improvisation. Above all, these projects are designed to be appropriated by the participants and continued after the initial experience. Normally the

first step is to meet the participants and determine their interests, what they want to talk about. This can be the hardest part to understand, but it has to be done. I don't decide what content to post; the participants have to do it themselves.

In the case of *La Venezia che non si vede*, there was some prior background: in 2010, I spent a year working with a group of visually impaired people in Barcelona. During that time we managed to geolocate sound recordings in the city with mobile phones, but the design for the app that made it possible for participants to play back those recordings on their own phones was not developed until 2014. By then, the technology was advanced enough, and thanks to a grant from the Spanish Academy in Rome I managed to develop the *BlindWiki* project for iOS and Android mobile devices.

BlindWiki went to the Venice Biennale as part of the Collateral Events section, representing Catalonia. Unlike the usual national representations at biennales that showcase art made in the various countries, our project in Venice was to act upon the city, and to work with Venetian citizens. In other words, the project was not just site specific but also human specific. In Venice, *BlindWiki* was developed with the support of various associations and institutions, such as the Italian union of the blind, the Italian civil service, the Venetian institute of architecture, and the city council. It then grew to include the network of civic centers and municipal libraries, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, the Armenian Center, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, and the association Venice on Board. The first groups of blind and sighted participants started to post content in February 2017. As the mapping progressed in the lead-up to the public presentation in mid-May, more and more people asked to join the project, creating a Venetian network that is still mapping the city today.

There are probably people who think that these kinds of projects belong in nongovernmental organizations rather than the art world. What is the difference between an artistic project and an artist who generates a social development project?

Antoni Abad, *BlindWiki*, Venice, 2017

Perhaps the objectives of social development projects have to be clearly predefined. Here the objectives and results vary according to the evolution of the participating group as the project unfolds. I think it is still possible to enjoy the illusion of freedom in the art world. There are many different ways of acting in the social sphere, and obviously most of them are eminently practical, designed to solve specific or urgent problems. In the earlier *megafone.net* projects, and now with *BlindWiki*, the idea is to open up different perspectives. In *La Venezia che non si vede*, some audio posts are very practical, like warnings about dead-end streets that lead right into canals, but others talk about tactile aspects, smells, culture, the legends of Venice. Venetians, in love with their city, tell us about it with enormous richness and enthusiasm, generously sharing that particular Venice that you cannot see so that everyone can enjoy it.

You started your practice as an artist in the discipline of sculpture. At what point in your career did you decide to start working with practices that involve more social content? What led you to take that step?

I had always found the commercial art system extremely tiresome. In 2001, my disillusionment with this part of my then artistic practice led me to start working on the project *Z*, a clear precedent of social media, based on the interaction of users who are no longer considered mere observers or visitors.

In 2003, when I came across the first mobile phone with integrated camera and Internet connection, I started the project *megafone.net*, in which users were active participants, creating their own audiovisual content. The content was immediately posted online, so it was accessible to everyone. This shortened the distance between the creation of an idea and its circulation, and it also removed the need for the network of galleries and museums that had until then been the intermediaries of artistic practice. These projects were not intended to be revolutionary, but they did enable certain micropolitical actions and give certain social groups the opportunity to offer their own vision of reality.

The biggest measure of the success of these projects is when the participating groups continue them, as in the case of the taxi drivers in Mexico City, people with functional diversity in Barcelona, and motorcycle couriers in São Paulo. It takes an enormous effort to get these projects off the ground, but then comes the eagerly awaited day when you are on the streets with the participants. Personally, comparing this with the solitude of the artist in his studio, I have to say I would much rather be out there with people, people I would never have had the opportunity to meet otherwise. **(hea)**

Autonomy

Autonomy and Modes of Relation

Jordi Claramonte

Jordi Claramonte (b. 1969, Villarreal, Valencia) is Professor of Contemporary Aesthetic Theories at UNED. He has recently published the first volume of his *Estética Modal* (Modal Aesthetics, Tecnos, 2016) that seeks a rethinking of aesthetics as a triple theory: a theory of art, a theory of sensibility, and a theory of the social and political performativity of art. As a member of the collective Fiambrera Obrera and as a social activist, he has participated in several of the most representative movements of collaborative art in the last twenty years.

The word *autonomy* is one of those terms that should be carefully defined and specified because the effects can vary greatly depending on who uses it and to what end.

Autonomy is not something one can be "for" or "against." Autonomy is, to start, a *manner* of understanding all kinds of biological, psychological, and social processes, among which, of course, we include art and its practices. To quote Francisco Varela, we might say that the new aesthetics, "instead of being mainly concerned with heteronomous units which relate to their world by the logic of correspondence is concerned with the autonomous units which operate by the logic of coherence,"[1] and with the exploration of dissonance.

But in addition to being a form of intelligence of living processes, autonomy also requires that we draw an axiological horizon without which this discussion would become indiscriminate. The axiological dimension means —to start with a simple example—that it is not the same for a judge to demand autonomy vis-à-vis political power for the realization of his or her work as for a police officer inclined to abuses of the judge overseeing his or her duties.

This is because—implicit in our inquiry into autonomy—it begs the question that autonomy will only be regarded as such to the extent that it is contagious, in other words, to the extent that its application in a particular area will lead to more autonomy in other areas directly or indirectly connected to the first. Thus the judge who demands autonomy vis-à-vis executive power will secure through that demand an extension of autonomy's general domain: we can all organize our own lives with greater guarantees if there is an effective separation of state powers. On the other hand, the officer who demands autonomy in order to torture at their own discretion manages to undermine the general domain of autonomy, because a society in which a police officer can arrest and torture *autonomously* would be a society in which organizing our own lives would become considerably more complicated.[2]

1. Francisco Varela, "Laying Down a Path in Walking," in *Gaia: A Way of Knowing; Political Implications of the New Biology,* ed. W. I. Thompson (Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Press, 1987), p. 50.
2. Using the contagiousness of autonomy as a criteria would help to clarify positions such as that of scientists who demand autonomy from the church in order to be able to carry out their research, or that of a company working with genetic modification that demands autonomy to impose and disseminate genetically modified seeds.

Having firmly established this principle, we can put to bed the institutional and contagious character of autonomy in order to focus on a few other interesting details.

And autonomy, if it is to be contagious, must be organized to meet the demands of different scales of deployment and different functional orientations.

Thus during the Enlightenment—in its salons and its newspapers—there existed a highly influential form of autonomy, an autonomy that basically operated by instituting, consolidating, and multiplying spheres of artistic and intellectual production functioning independently of the court and the all-embracing power of the absolute monarch. This form of autonomy, which was explored extensively by our friend Habermas,[3] can be called the "autonomy of the Enlightenment," or "enlightened autonomy,"[4] and it is a form of autonomy that might function when strategically planned, over a long period of time, creating the conditions for this contagious expansion to occur, and keep occurring. So its expression takes artistic forms such as the sonata, in which musicality has no need to take refuge in or justify itself through moral or religious content, or produces social and intellectual contexts such as cafés, salons, or the first (Renaissance) academies, where the discussion of art need not comply with the official criteria that still govern the political realm.

But, of course, with autonomy the same happens as in many other fields of human activity: we soon forget that which was fundamental to its origins and convert what we do into a sloppy imitation of what it once was. When this happens, enlightened autonomy first stops being "contagious," and then, over time, also stops being "autonomy." This is what happened when the academies were co-opted by the king and the salons turned into mere excuses for chewing the fat, as was the case in France under the Sun King and his successors in the century following.

When this happens, the agents interested in fostering and extending autonomy must find a different way to organize their struggle. There then appeared another modulation we will call "modern autonomy," which is distinguished by its character of being much more tactical, much more adapted to each specific artistic practice. Modern autonomy, already present in the early stages of Romanticism, is notable for exploring and deploying a negativity capable of surpassing the limits of recognized and authorized artistic practices. Artists assume as their irrefutable role that of challenging the formal and material conventions of their art: they find inspiration in the irrational, the primitive, the medieval, the absurd... anything to prevent us from resting on our laurels, from the approval of the new society born as result of the bourgeois revolutions. Here, heteronomy takes on the guise—so reviled by Baudelaire—of the philistine, the normal person, the decent citizen who never steps out of line and who gets on with his or her affairs. Modern autonomy succeeds in continually challenging this model of socialization, and in so doing keeps alive the possibility of self-organizing our own lives, which now are no longer dominated by the absolutism of the ancien régime but by the technologies of the self so characteristic of bourgeois society.

This form of autonomy made sense for over a century and a half, but as occurred with enlightened autonomy, modern autonomy would lose its bearings and prove incapable of adapting to the changes to its context. Thus in the 1970s, when the counterculture was becoming the dominant paradigm, being "odd" or even shocking started to become a marketable distinction, fueling the new consumer economy and the notion of "personalized" design. This is particularly evident in the art world, where the games of avant-garde provocation not only no longer have the catalyzing effect of autonomy present at its origins but rather serve to endorse the existing status quo. Being original or groundbreaking in a consumer economy is by no means a guarantee of autonomy; instead it has become tantamount to an obligation, much like keeping oneself extremely busy, staying young, or traveling a lot. For this reason, institutions like the Turner Prize that once served to probe and expand the boundaries of art end up being the "symbol of the elite that, year after year, laugh condescendingly at the tabloid headlines, incapable of understanding the subtlety of their provocations."[5]

This being the case, if both enlightened and modern autonomy have been overwhelmed and in a certain sense wiped out, can we still contend that the

3. Especially in works such as Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1989).1.
4. The concepts of "enlightened autonomy," "modern autonomy," and "modal autonomy" are discussed in greater detail in Jordi Claramonte, *La República de los Fines* (Murcia: Cendeac, 2007).

5. Pablo Guimón, "Arquitectura no apta para elites," *El País*, December 26, 2015.

notion of *autonomy* itself has any value for us? Our hypothesis will be that if autonomy—as we began asserting—has something to do with the contagious capacity to organize our own lives, then neither the loss of direction nor the oversaturation that have overthrown enlightened and modern autonomy must deter us from thinking about and fighting for it.

In truth, there is no point revindicating this contagious autonomy if all it does is repeat the faults of the earlier forms we have seen enter into crises. We will have to propose a different form of autonomy that manages to steer clear of the shortcomings or "counterproductivities" (to use a term so beloved by Ivan Illich) of previous models, and avoid the loss of the little or lot that was valuable in them.

To do this we must explore some other configuration of autonomy that is compatible both with artistic languages and, inseparably, with the forms of living and organizational modes of our lives. This would bring us closer to the idea of Georg Lukács, who refused to think of artistic autonomy as a sort of fortified isolation, as a dimension unrelated to the social life of the work of art. Thus he affirmed that "the more organic the immanent aesthetic consummation of the work of art, the more able it will be to fulfill the social mission that gave it life."[6]

We will uphold that what is present in this "aesthetic consummation" of the artwork and that also informs about its social deployment, is what we will call "ways of doing (things)"[7] or "modes of relation," which are made manifest in every artistic and social intervention.

This is by no means anything new: in the theoretical texts I wrote together with my colleagues in La Fiambrera in the late 1990s, for which we leaned on masters such as John Berger and Michel de Certeau, we were already saying that what we did could not be understood purely as a work of art, but neither was anything gained by considering it a simple act of activism. We liked to think that what was significant about what we were doing *was a certain way of doing what we had to do*, which we were already calling a "mode of relation."

We undoubtedly wished to emphasize that what was important was not just what we were doing, which clearly had its influence, but above all how we did it, the "mode" from which we viewed the world and the trouble we got into. It seemed to us that this specific "mode of relation" with which we worked was what distinguished us and allowed us to adapt to others, that it was the key to our aesthetic and political efficiency, and was, of course, what we could contribute to our community.

And is was not simply the idea that a task could be addressed in one way or another: often it was precisely the mode of relation that *created* the task, or that allowed us to see it; and not only the task but also the means for carrying it out, and even the values out of which the task becomes necessary and possibly well-resolved.[8]

Obviously, all of this presented us with issues of a clear ontological nature. Would we argue that it was our modes of relation that *created* the world? Or would we, on the contrary, argue that the world was completely impervious to the modes of relation we were able to deploy? The old-fashioned idealists and the shabbiest materialism had agreed to lose their teeth over these stumbling blocks... but we were rather fond of our intellectual dentition.

So we would need specific categories in order to understand how each mode of relation gave rise to a different distribution of entities and contribute to "change it." For us it was clear that there existing—what is called existing—only one world, but that it was not *the same* when a group of unemployed people, who had previously only been a series of government statistics, got organized, took to the streets, and, in the process, took hold of their own lives. These were the modes of relation that interested us, and it seemed that the way artistic practices were carried out, even the most classical of them, could help us understand this.

6. Georg Lukács, *Estética*, vol. 1: *La peculiaridad de lo estético*, trans. Manuel Sacristán (Barcelona: Grijalbo, 1967), p. 369. No English translation available.—Ed.
7. The term *hacer or haceres,* "way/ways of doing (things)," which has taken on a currency in this discourse, was coined by Jordi Claramonte, Jesús Carrillo, and Paloma Blanco in their book *Modos de hacer. Arte crítico, esfera pública y acción directa* (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2001).—Ed.

8. Classical aesthetics understands this well: it is no coincidence that the oldest name we have for ways of doing is *poetics*, which means nothing less than "making." In the book *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt carried out one of the most finest studies about the nuances of "making." *Poiein*, one of these, is a clearly performative form of doing or making, which builds its own task and the means it needs. All of this might help us to get rid of some of the more common misapprehensions in our perception of the aesthetic. To begin with, poetics, like modes of relation, could never be resolved in the clumsy terms of subject and object. We can't say that subject S arrives and manipulates object O as he or she pleases; quite often subject and object seem to coproduce one another, as light-footed Gilles Deleuze astutely observed when he spoke of the "man-horse-stirrup constellation." Each needs the other in order to exist and to become what they can be.

In order to do this we needed a clear comprehension of the inner workings of what Lukács called "homogeneous media"—the units with which it would be possible to fully conceive of a mode of relation, and through it to construct autonomy[9] and give our lives a little dignity.

We then asked ourselves what exactly were modes of relation comprised of. What was in their makeup that could make them contagious, that would make them appropriable and adaptable to the most widely diverse circumstances, so that even poetics developed hundreds of years ago or created in utter isolation could resonate with us and bear fruit in our own work.

Many of the same questions must have been considered by Assemble, the group of architecture students who were awarded the 2015 Turner Prize, and whose work is based more on a manner of proceeding, a way of understanding collaboration, and the social and political articulation of what they do: "We're not heroic characters who turn up and fix everything. We arrive somewhere and talk to people. We're facilitators. It's about working together and finding gaps. And if there are enough people working in the margins, we might find that things start to change."[10]

The issue then is to investigate the conditions of a "modal autonomy," an autonomy of ways of doing or modes of relation, given the objective of arriving at the composition—classically well-proportioned—somewhere between formal elaboration, political efficacy, and fucking fun.

All of my conceptual work of recent years has sought to clarify the manner by which these modes of relation are *produced*, these language games that permit different combinations and levels of experimentation, coherence, and effectiveness. I would like to use these terms to try to evoke the specificity of the aesthetic, the artistic, and the cismundane, which according to Lukács are the categories we should use to measure any aesthetic thought worthy of this name.

This is important if we do not want to keep falling into the traps that any misapprehension on the issue will cause, as occurred with

the aforementioned Turner Prize recipients when, with the best of intentions, they stated that "buildings are not icons or actions, but rather spaces people use."[11] Social or political commitment need not involve an unjustifiable impoverishment of the dimensions of our work. On the contrary, we are clearly committed to constructing and defending complexity and difference. In fact, buildings develop as an implementation of modes of relation in which there inevitably intervenes the effective, cismundane use to which they are put—naturally, and one must defend this—but we are dealing with modes of relation in which ultimately there also intervenes, inevitably and in different proportions, the iconic and the performative, the symbolic and the experimental. Finding the correct proportion between these different modes is vitally important, and it is what furnishes us with a mode of relation that is both powerful and beautiful.

Ultimately, each mode of relation will reveal a specific form of attention, a form of "curiosity," understood in its original etymological sense, whereby the "curious" is he or she who "cures" him or herself of things, in other words, attends to and cares for them.

Or perhaps each mode of relation is a composition of at least three different types of care: repertorial care, which deals with the values of coherence and formal stability; dispositional care, which seeks the vigor of experimentation and play; and care for the effective deployment of all this, of how it occurs in the world and to transform this very world by virtue of its appearance.

Perhaps this is one of the fundamental objectives of modal autonomy: to specify and preserve the composition of our curiosity, to support and sharpen it, thus conjuring up the risk of becoming the figure that Nicolai Hartmann associated with the modern man, "restless and precipitate, dulled and blasé, but nothing inspires, touches, lays hold on his innermost being."[12]

The modal autonomy the collaborative arts struggles for is grounded in these modes of relation. Modal autonomy can only be thought of as a laboratory for the production and the extension of autonomy through art and political action to other areas of our lives, and vice versa.

9. What this autonomy would consist of, and the different versions of it that had surfaced in aesthetic thinking from the Enlightenment to the lamest postmodern versions, was something that preoccupied me to the point that I dedicated a PhD thesis and later book, *La República de los Fines*, to the subject.
10. Anthony Engi-Meacock, quoted in Guimón, "Arquitectura no apta."

11. Ibid.
12. Nicolai Hartmann, *Ethics*, vol. 1: *Moral Phenomena*, trans. Stanton Coit (London: G. Allen & Unwin Limited, 1932), pp. 44–45.

This is, among other things of varying benefit, what a large group of investigators were doing in the Laboratorio del Procomún (Commons Lab), particularly in the research group on "Aesthetics and Politics of the Commons." On this occasion it was necessary for us to go much further and to broaden our vision beyond the activism we had been doing. We needed to put ourselves in the shoes of people who do flamenco or participatory urbanism[13]... and to be able to embrace ancient practices, such as Chinese wushu, and others that were only taking form, such as parkour.

We knew that some of these modes of relation, the most ancient or those linked to tradition, contained a great deal of what Lev Vygotsky called "crystallized imagination."[14] These were practices that, though by no means static, were presented as well-developed poetics with a relatively stable repertoire of forms, a repertoire that accepted those nuances of experience, those areas of sensibility that the poetics in question could embrace and assimilate.

On the other hand, the aesthetic commons is incomprehensible without other poetics that, perhaps because of their relative newness, placed more emphasis on what Vygotsky would have called "fluid intelligence," which depended, to a large extent, on the variations and explorations that their users make in accordance to their ingenuity, or to the talent and disposition of those they rely on.

Thus, a great diversity of modes of relation would seem to be distributed according to the affinity shown toward what we will call either the *repertorial pole* or the *dispositional pole*. Undoubtedly, no mode of relation would lean entirely toward one pole or the other, but rather any poetics or any mode of relation could be understood as a specific though variable proportion, an alloy of crystallized and fluid intelligence,[15] a mixture in which there might predominate either the maintenance of a relatively established repertoire or the dispositional variations that are still in the process of creation.

And yet, no mode of relation, no equilibrium between repertoire and dispositions takes place in a vacuum, in isolation from thousands of other equilibriums being forged at the same time. Moreover, whatever form the equilibriums ultimately assumed, if in fact viable, was something that exceeded the limited frame of each poetics: the craftspeople of the Arts and Crafts movement of the late nineteenth century, or the peasants of Chiapas in the late twentieth century, not only depended on their own particular modal equilibrium, but were rather grafted onto, inserted into, an incessant struggle with a complex landscape that preceded them and situated them, a landscape that they could also change but with which they obviously needed to reckon. Every mode of relation thus appears as the articulation of a repertoire with certain dispositions in a landscape.

So, without too much struggle, we found ourselves equipped with three modal categories:[16] the repertorial, the dispositional, and the landscape, which not only explained the contexture of the modes of relation that we were investigating but also permitted us to take a critical approach to them.

We could evaluate the comprehensiveness or expediency of repertoires, the vibrancy or variety of the dispositions, and the level of hostility or complicity the given mode of relation might encounter in the landscape. We could compare different modes of relation, explore their strengths and weaknesses, rigidities or instabilities, their potential alliances with others...

I think that all of this opens up a fascinating field of study in which the aesthetic is interwoven with the social and political, carefully respecting the specificity of each, but revealing exactly the commonalities in their makeup.

There is still much left to explore in the field of modal aesthetics,[17] but it is obvious that the concept of modal autonomy can be as vitally important for aesthetics as the principle of autopoiesis was for contemporary epistemology, in showing us that from sand dunes to social systems, the key is learning to differentiate the forms of self-organization.

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13. Or both, like Curro Aix and Santiago Barber, my colleagues from La Fiambrera in Seville.
14. Lev Semenovich Vygotsky, "Imagination and Creativity in Childhood," trans. M. E. Sharpe, *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology* 42, no. 1 (January–February 2004), pp. 6–16.
15. As occurs in a metal alloy such as bronze, a mixture of copper and tin, the resulting modes of relation show new mechanical properties (hardness, malleability, resistance, etc.) while retaining the physical and chemical properties of the constituent parts.

16. We could call these "modal categories" insofar as they allow us to apprehend something in a certain mode. For example, we could think of Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences in a repertorial mode, because they form an internally patterned set, or in a dispositional mode, because we can examine the details of how a single one of them reveals itself without relating it to the others. Repertorial and dispositional modes do not refer to different objects, they refer to the same objects in a different way; unlike what often happens with paired categories of content (organic/inorganic), modal categories do not have to be exclusive.
17. Here, I must refer to what I have been publishing online <www.esteticamodal.hypotheses.org>, and the first section of *Estética Modal* (Model Aesthetics, Jordi Claramonte, Tecnos: Barcelona, 2016).

Interview with Rogelio López Cuenca

Rogelio López Cuenca (b. 1959, Nerja, Malaga), who studied philosophy and literature, uses language as the core element in his projects. In the 1980s, he began his work as an artist, both individually and collectively as a member of the now defunct group Agustín Parejo School, where he developed initiatives in the visual arts for implementation in social and political contexts. Appropriation is a constant in López Cuenca's work, taking elements from our imaginary and both questioning and defending the use of such resources as a creative material. He thus challenges issues related to copyrights, encouraging the free and open sharing of our cultural resources.

—www.lopezcuenca.com

As a member of the former Agustín Parejo School collective, which was active between 1982 and 1994, you worked in collaboration. What led you to abandon collaborative work after APS dissolved?

The APS experience was very vital, very organic. The group was never created nor did it ever dissolve; it was just a handful of people who worked together for a while and did different things. As the group emerged out of a specific set of circumstances and a specific desire, when those circumstances disappeared and the desire waned the activity gradually slowed down and eventually stopped altogether. APS is the name that a group of people gave to the things they were doing, and to the life we were sharing at that time. To paraphrase Guy Debord, APS was a group of people who for a certain period of time "happened to be there." We began when we were students, but little by little most of the others found jobs of one kind or another, and ultimately I was the only one who became a professional artist. The truth is that I didn't come across any collaborative opportunities or people motivated by a spirit of collaboration until early 2000, when a series of workshops on public art and urban interventions started to bring together, temporarily, several groups that gave new impulse to collaborative forms of work that since them have become increasingly common.

You have realized projects with other creators, including *El arte de la seducción* (The Art of Seduction), in which you and Daniel García Andújar brought together your archives.

And also with Antoni Muntadas and Eric Baudelaire, and these experiences have always been excellent, regardless of how the work ended up moving in one direction or another. Either way, even work that is typically seen as individual, or more solitary, inevitably seems collective to me, inasmuch as we are working with languages that, by their very definition, have a social and collective character. One invariably uses tools that one did not invent,

nor how they are used—at least not in the most common form. There is an infinite number of voices and viewpoints with which one is always in dialogue or discussion, as much as with reality and contemporary debates as with aspects of the culture of the present and the somewhat recent or more distant past.

You have developed a number of projects with Elo Vega. Do you view your work with her as somehow following a thread connected to collaborative artistic practice?

Yes, with Elo there is the same naturalness that I mentioned with regard to APS, a permanent and fluid exchange. And with her as well, dialogue, criticism, or support often results in collaborative work, shared authorship.

I think we could pinpoint certain extremes of this question and the earlier ones in that: (a) one is living and doing things; (b) this living and doing invariably has a shared, collective character; (c) some of those things can come to be considered artworks or artistic work; (d) this condition is also assigned collectively or socially: it is granted or denied by the public, by users, institutions, the channels in which it circulates, the codes it employs, and so on; and (e) authorship is a cultural convention rooted in the idea of modern individualism. This last is very important for art history, which has constructed an entire mythology based on the achievements of great artists and masterpieces, and the market, which demands the identification of the uniqueness of a creator with a unique artwork, endowing it with exceptional value. All of this often makes it difficult to include information about the productive process, as both academia and the market consider it unnecessarily bothersome, a source of noise and something that devaluates the price of an artwork.

What do you think participatory or collaborative works can contribute to the social fabric?

Getting past art as consumption, entertainment, and spectacle. Combining it with other scientific disciplines and with social activism is what can

grant to artistic practice an active role in rebuilding society in the face of the market's monolithic power over every facet of life. I believe that the larger and more diverse the number of agents involved in an artistic or cultural project, the more likely it is to have consequences in this sense. But I should also point out that the most harmful and dangerous element is always fashion, the adoption of approaches that are only superficially collaborative methods of working, in other words, the aesthetization of participation. **(A.G.A)**

Rogelio López Cuenca and Elo Vega, *Saharawhy*,
installation, public intervention, and website, 2012

Interview with Alexander Ríos

The work of Alexander Ríos (b. 1984, Bogotá, Colombia) explores other forms of encounters and collective experiences that respond to diverse relationships between art, everyday life, and capitalism, and that use media such as performance art, writing, and installation. Through simple, commonplace actions, Ríos seeks to create a dialogue between art and daily life. During his project *Nómada* (Nomad), for three years he lived in different homes in various countries throughout the Mediterranean, exchanging his work as an artist for room and board.

—www.alexanderrios.wordpress.com
—www.proyectonomada.wordpress.com

One of the most important aspects of your work is the bond between everyday, socially active life and artistic work. For you, is this the social role to be played by art, creating spaces of time and encounter?

Yes, I believe that art consists precisely in inventing and developing other ways of doing things, of encountering and communicating with others, especially within today's system, which persists in standardizing and commodifying everything we do. This is why it is interesting that art as a creative force is trickling out into all places and situations on a daily basis: a constant questioning of what we know, a realization of possibilities.

It was need and recursiveness that made me combine artistic practice with everyday life. I organized my first exhibition about ten years ago in my home in Bogotá, while my parents were away on a trip. It wasn't a conscious decision, it was simply the only place available to me. It was the same with *Nómada*. I had no way to pay my rent, so I came up with the idea of moving from house to house. At the beginning, I wasn't very conscious of what I was proposing, but I later began to realize the potential in working as an artist out of other people's homes, within people's everyday lives, outside of the traditional places for creating art. So, throughout those three years, I experienced firsthand the importance of helping each other, loving each other, and encountering each other. And this is what I want to try to do through my work, hoping that this makes a real contribution to people's lives, that it gives them something in a more direct manner. I like it when the word *art* becomes more difficult to define, when it becomes intertwined with our everyday actions.

Your projects could not be realized without the collaboration of other agents. Notwithstanding, would you define your work as a form of collaborative artistic practice?

Absolutely. *Nómada* became possible thanks to the cooperation of the people who agreed to host me in their homes. Let's just say I was the one who came up with the project and put it into action, but it only worked and came to life because of other people's participation.

My artistic work over the last year has resulted in collaborative projects, although at the beginning the proposals seemed to be headed in another direction. I was invited to exhibit *Nómada* at the Sala de Arte Joven in Madrid in June 2015. But how do you exhibit an experience without killing it? That is how *Lo posible* (The Possible, loposible.wordpress.com) came into being, as a point of encounter, based on the relationship between art, everyday life, and capitalism, in which many people participated in an active way. Thus, the exhibition had to transform itself into a collaborative project so that it could describe another. Months later, I began work on a project for the Museo Reina Sofía's Department of Education, designing a workshop for young people. I thought it would be important to try to have a direct and, hopefully, permanent impact on their daily lives, so I proposed taking a trip to visit other art spaces and events, in dialogue with the museum, relying on the help and collaboration of more artists and cultural managers.[1] In both of these cases, my role as an "artist" had been that of managing and organizing what was needed so that others could act, open themselves up, and get to know each other, discovering in this collaboration the very meaning of the projects.

Your project *Nómada* consisted in fleeing from a dependence on the art system and seeking protection and your livelihood in local networks and friendship. After this experience, would you say you have achieved greater autonomy?

In late 2012, I tried for a year to live off of art. I applied for several candidacies, while at the same time I began other processes that depended on me and put me in direct contact with people. I published the book *101 soluciones para salir de la crisis* (101 Ways to Get Out of the Crisis), I exchanged messages for change on the Metro to pay for my tickets, and I began to live life as a nomad. It was wonderful not to need someone to validate my work. I just offered something to people, and they decided whether they wanted a copy of the book, or a message, or to offer me lodging.

At the same time, living as a nomad I became dependent upon the people who took me in, and I had to adapt to their schedules, customs, and spaces, which was positive, because I had to develop my adaptability and repress my ego, but also, even though I had proposed an exchange, at times I was a burden on people. Because I had no home, I was constantly forced to ask for help and be dependent on others. On the other hand, I wasn't economically independent either. I spent little, but that small amount my family sent to me.

That was an important part of the process, because I received a great deal from people. And only just now, because I have managed to realize my projects and receive so much support, am I starting to live on the other side. With a bit of money from the projects that have emerged I was able to rent an apartment in Madrid, and from that economic and spatial autonomy I will try to give as soon as I can.

At what point do you believe an artist can reach the highest degree of autonomy? Does being autonomous mean being conscious of your multiple interdependencies and being at ease with them?

Perhaps the time will come when we no longer depend on the idea of autonomy to create. That is to say, from the place we are at right now, based on our current situation, we can create; something like "do it yourself using what you've got and what you are." I mean that we will always depend on something or someone, so it remains to be seen how we will deal with this and take advantage of it. Hopefully it is possible not to depend on mechanisms and structures that do not share our ideology—with how complicated that is—but for the time being we have to try, taking advantage of that very condition of impossibility or contradiction in order to create.

On the other hand, I believe it is beneficial as artists to activate other more direct and more horizontal networks of interdependence with people, without necessarily needing the meditation of art institutions and without our artistic practice depending upon the approval of curators, commissioners, and juries. (hea)

1. See Alexander Ríos, ¿El Museo es necesario? (Madrid: Ahora o nunca [self-published fanzine], 2016). See also <www.museoreinasofia.es/actividades/viaje-al-mas-aca>; <www.alexanderrios.wordpress.com/2016/11/21/viaje-al-mas-aca-2/>.

Alexander Ríos, *Nómada con Peppe Giordano, Andrea Giordano, Enrico Giordano y Marilena Migliorisi*
(Nomad with Peppe Giordano, Andrea Giordano, Enrico Giordano, and Marilena Migliorisi), Ragusa, 2014

Alexander Ríos, *Lo Posible* (The Possible), Sala de Arte Joven, Madrid, 2015

Impossible Glossary is an editorial initiative by hablarenarte that follows the CAPP project, until 2018. This edition of January 2018 is comprised of ten chapters:

Collaboration
Visionaries, Authors and Mediators: Approaches to Collaboration
hablarenarte
Interviews with Maider López
and DEMOCRACIA

Context
Walking in Ice: Artistic Practices in Context
Francisca Blanco Olmedo
Interviews with Orquestina de Pigmeos and El Banquete

Work
Down to Work! Ways of Doing and Activating Within the Social Network
Selina Blasco and Lila Insúa
Interviews with Juanli Carrión and David Crespo

Authorship
Going Beyond Artistic Authorship
Diego del Pozo Barriuso
Interviews with Christian Fernández Mirón and Federico Guzmán

Trust
(Mis)trusting Strangers
Aida Sánchez de Serdio
Interviews with Saioa Olmo and Eva Fernández (Cine sin Autor)

Failure
Policies of the Situation, or Going Beyond the Success-Failure Logic
LaFundició
Interviews with Roger Bernat and Roberto Fratini, and Todo por la Praxis

Return
The Return Is the Commons
Haizea Barcenilla
Interviews with Fernando García-Dory and Alberto Flores (Makea Tu Vida)

Agents
Constellations, Glossaries, and Functions
Es Baluard, Museu d'Art Modern i Contemporani de Palma
Vanishing Points
Javier Montero
Interviews with Núria Güell and María Ruido

Institution
Institutions and Institutionalism Beyond the Ruins of the Museum
Jesús Carrillo
Interviews with Ricardo Antón (ColaBoraBora) and Antoni Abad

Autonomy
Autonomy and Modes of Relation
Jordi Claramonte
Interviews with Rogelio López Cuenca and Alexander Ríos

The interviews with Juanli Carrión, DEMOCRACIA, María Ruido, and Rogelio López Cuenca were conducted and edited between October 2015 and January 2016 by Ana García Alarcón (A.G.A.). She is a researcher, curator, and Doctor in Theory and History of Art from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Recently she has published *ARTE versus PUBLICIDAD. Critical (re)views from contemporary art* (Universidad de Zaragoza, 2016). Along with Isabel Durante and Miguel Ángel Hernández she is a member of the curatorial collective 1erEscalón.

The interviews with Maider López, Orquestina de Pigmeos, El Banquete, David Crespo, Christian Fernández Mirón, Federico Guzmán, Saioa Olmo, Eva Fernández (Cine sin Autor), Roger Bernat and Roberto Fratini, Todo por la Praxis, Alberto Flores (Makea Tu Vida), Fernando García-Dory, Nuria Güell, Ricardo Antón (ColaBoraBora), Antoni Abad, and Alexander Ríos were conducted and edited between October 2015 and December 2017 by hablarenarte (hea).

The content of this second edition of the *Impossible Glossary* is an expanded and revised view of the first digital-only edition, which was published in March 2016. Both are downloadable at www.cappnetwork.com and www.hablarenarte.com/capp.

COLLABORATIVE
ARTS PARTNERSHIP
PROGRAMME

The Collaborative Arts Partnership Programme (CAPP) is a transnational cultural program (2014–18) focusing on the field of collaborative and socially engaged arts practice across artform and context. CAPP is made up of a nine-organization network, led by Create, the national development agency for collaborative arts in Ireland.

CAPP is a diverse range of dynamic cultural and artistic organizations supporting the development of artistic projects of excellence. Partners include: Agora Collective (Germany), head partner Create (Ireland), hablarenarte (Spain), Heart of Glass St Helens (UK), Kunsthalle Osnabrück (Germany), Live Art Development Agency (UK), Ludwig Múzeum. Museum of Contemporary Art (Hungary), m-cult (Finland), and Tate Liverpool (UK).

The overall goal of CAPP is to improve and open up opportunities for artists who are working collaboratively across Europe, by enhancing mobility and exchange while at the same time engaging new publics and audiences for collaborative practices. The different strands of the CAPP program consist of national and international professional development opportunities, artist residencies, commissioned works, touring and dissemination, and a major showcase in Dublin (Ireland), 2018.

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