

cross currents in culture ●

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Editorial

Glasgow is posed as a poster-child for post-industrial culture-led urban renewal; ex-Council leader Steven Purcell – the schoolboy-like figure, hand outstretched, on the front cover of this issue of *Variant* – placed at its epicentre of city-boosterism. All this is now unravelling; Purcell quitting his posts and Scotland amidst cocaine and alcohol confessions to his regular lunch-colleague at the *Scottish Sun*. Yet straining to be asked, contra the column inches, is how deep does old boys' club cronyism and corruption run in the city elite's pursuit of property and place-marketing in all this?

As Rebecca Gordon Nesbitt annoyingly detailed here of Culture and Sport Glasgow, Council functions have been hived off in quick succession to arm's-length companies with Labour Councillors on board: care services, culture and leisure, catering, City Building for "all your requirements relating to Construction", parking, community safety, city marketing... Anything that can be transmogrified into an AELO has been. The official excuse for arm's-length external organisations, even amidst crunch 'n' squeeze ridicule, is the myth of market efficiency. Still, the costs of this privatisation of control and management of services and assets is borne by the public purse, over-and-above what it would have cost had the services remained in-house, only now beyond the boundaries of public scrutiny and control too. Proliferation of this network of spin-off companies is not unique to Glasgow; its elaborate system of political patronage perhaps is. And only now do we hear belated Scottish government cries for inquiry into spin-off companies where salaries have ballooned, conditions for staff deteriorated, and thousands spent on euphemistic 'hospitality' has circulated back into Party coffers.

Steven Purcell was, in large measure, a media creation of managerial hubris, and his story remains so. We've been led to believe Purcell was the best thing to happen in Scottish Labour politics for decades. The media relaying that he was even a future First Minister. The Glasgow press has paid homage to Purcell all these years, portraying him as the icon of modern sophistication; embodying him as the symbol of market-orientated entrepreneurial governance. Purcell wanted a 'glamorous' Glasgow to lead the headlines – the shops mostly, especially the more expensive ones – not the corollary neglect. But the growth-coalition wizard absconded as Sauchiehall Street, the upper arm of the fabled golden 'Z' of Glasgow retail, degenerates into a combo of Pound Shops and collapsing paving stones.

What happened to the man who wielded a £2.5 billion budget one day and vanished into thin air the next?

This story goes that alcoholism and a breakdown brought on by work pressures (fingering the Commonwealth Games) led Purcell to rush to resign both his Leader and Councillor

posts within days and then flee the country; and in the midst of this mayhem find time to appoint lawyers and a PR company and attempt to gag his former colleagues who've sought to distance themselves, and the Party.

Media coverage has unsurprisingly tended to focus on "demons" and "downfall", on morality and confessional. Yet the personal circumstances of Purcell are, mostly, moot. However, the personification of Purcell with a 'life-style' of conspicuous consumption cuts both ways.

Hoisted by their own petard, the Council has denounced their own managerialist rhetoric of 'strong' Leadership, worried that "everything the council achieved during Mr Purcell's time as leader has somehow been devalued". This acute reversal cautions that the "City is not just about one man", that the city 'transformations' were "not because of the person who was in charge but because of the hard work and dedication of you and your colleagues" – for those who retained their jobs amidst the plunder of infrastructure in the pursuit of urban revalorisation.

The real issue remains that which 'scandal' obfuscates: the cronyism and corruption of a hurried restructuring of local government along lines of market largesse at public expense; how here, as elsewhere, de-industrialisation has spawned an 'economy' of superintended consumerism reliant on exploiting a low-waged vulnerable service class; how property speculation's boom-and-bust has blighted the city and reinforced extremes of inequality masked by pageant.

As a property-market magazine candidly concluded in March, under the banner 'Loss of council's Team Glasgow is huge blow for property': the scandal surrounding Purcell may grab the headlines, but the loss will ultimately be the property industry's. Whereas polite press commentary had been, until late, satisfied running emotive stories of Purcell's personal habits, skirting his otherwise well known relationships with Glasgow property subsidy-junkies.

The dearth of mainstream media reporting led to online speculation of Purcell's all-too-cosy relationship with sectors of the Scottish media and its failure to fulfill its elusive role of holding power to account – namely, the press's part in a regular Friday drinking date, dubbed 'The Ritz Club', which, *Holyrood Magazine* toyed, "included the editors of rival red tops [David Dinsmore], the *Herald's* departing editor-in-chief [Donald Martin] and Purcell himself..." There was no news in the Truth / No truth in the News. But still the complex network of Councillors, businessmen and public sector chiefs, most with connections to the Labour Party, in Glasgow's iconic 'redevelopment' went for the time largely untroubled.

A prickled *Sunday Herald* driven by the *Scotsman* and the *Scottish Daily Mail* to comment responded to "suggestions of a network of

powerful figures working behind the scenes to influence the workings of the city ... that this so-called network includes leading figures from the media [and] is now threatening to undermine public confidence in the integrity of the Scottish press", as there have "been hints that some Scottish newspapers have pulled their punches on the controversy because editors have been too close to Mr Purcell or, worse, they have been cowed into submission by Peter Watson and PR firm Media House." The former was wished away: "Glasgow is a large city but its political and business centre is small. Personal and business relationships meld together, contacts extend and overlap, boundaries blur. Business dinners become social occasions, colleagues become friends."

Culture & Sport Glasgow's hectoring of *Variant* following Rebecca's analysis of its interconnected business interests should be reassessed in light of this epiphany. In 2008, Culture & Sport Glasgow took over the research department and text archive for Newsquest (*Herald*, *Sunday Herald*, *Evening Times*) resulting in job losses. Someone interested in the rudiments of democracy might want to ask how a privatised arm of Glasgow City Council was allowed to become so tightly interconnected with Glasgow's dominant media group, what with the NUJ's Vice-President-come-President also being the head of PR for spin-off Culture & Sport Glasgow at the time?

As Neil Gray, examining Workers' City resistance to Glasgow's 1990 City of Culture to better understand the continuum of dispossession, writes in this issue of *Variant*: "...Purcell only reiterated neoliberal convention when he promised that 'Team Glasgow' (an un-elected cabal of business leaders purporting to represent the wider interests of 'Glasgow') would do everything they could to help businesses 'cope with the downturn': 'The first thing that all public bodies, including my own Council, must do, is to examine where we can help business by being more flexible and willing to do things differently. This is no time for unnecessary rules and processes; this is a time to do everything we can to help'". Quite.

"Discovering the basis for happiness and contentment among frugality is not an individual endeavour...", Gesa Helms too writes in this issue of *Variant*. Taking such a social pursuit of understanding, in this issue we also look further afield for ideas and values in the hope that some seeds might land here. In this spirit – all too aware an entrepreneurial ideology in the public provision of culture has been passed-off onto Scotland – we re-publish the following encouragement from Poland:

Radical Change In Culture / Manifesto

Preamble

Culture is one of the most important fields in the struggle for a more democratic, egalitarian and free society. If the changes currently proposed to this field by the Polish authorities are not subject to a wide social debate, consultation and criticism, they will bring catastrophic results for both the producers of culture and society as a whole. Culture should be perceived as a public good, not a privilege for a selected group of citizens. The dangers embedded in the governmental proposals for reforms in the domain of culture have already been discussed by artists, theorists, cultural and social activists. All agree that culture is a very specific field of production, and that it would be endangered by an exclusively market-oriented

strategy of organizing it.

For the Polish authorities, culture appears to be just another life-sphere ready to be colonized by neoliberal capitalism. Attempts are being made to persuade us that the 'free' market, productivity and income oriented activities are the only rational, feasible and universal laws for social development. This is a lie. For us – the cultural producers – culture is a space of innovation and experimental activity, an environment for lively self-realization. This is under threat. Our lives, emotions, vulnerability, doubts, purposes and ideas are to become a commodity – in other words, a mere product to fuel the development of new forms of capitalist exploitation. It is not culture that needs "business exercises" it is the market that needs a cultural revolution. That

revolution should not be understood as a one time "coup d'état", but as a permanent, vigilant and compassionate dissent, a will to protest against, verify and criticize any form of colonization of the field of culture for the private interests of market players and bureaucrats.

Therefore we say: "We would prefer not to". Our resistance is an expression of our more general protest against the commodification of social relations, its reifying character and general social injustice. We hereby express our existential and political solidarity with the people who oppose this marketization of all spheres of social and personal life. Culture plays an important role as a space for experimentation and reflection, for creating mutual trust and bonds between people. Cultural interactions based on the spontaneous activity of

individuals and groups play a crucial role for the development of the society, including its economic dimension. Recognizing the importance of this is a necessary step in creating a space for self-realization and democratic debate.

We will not be bribed with special privileges like the recently announced “1% of the GNP for culture”. We will not be distracted from our vision of the social world, in which the producers of cultural symbols would be able to pursue their activities in a heterogenous, self-governed community made of free, equal and diverse individuals respecting solidarity. These are the necessary conditions for culture to cease to be a privilege, and to allow culture to become a true right of everyone to freely shape their life. That is what we want and this is what we will aim for.

What Are We Against?

Against bureaucrats and economists governing the domain of culture

The economists tend to misunderstand the distinctive character of culture as a domain of the common social life of the multiplicity of people and their activities. They employ the same theoretical tools to speak about culture as they would to growing potatoes or manufacturing vacuum cleaners. Culture is not subject to the simple calculations of investments and profits. A much more appropriate set of descriptive tools might be provided by concepts such as potlatch, carnival, excess, transgression or generosity. Terms apparently unknown to economists, who not only would not understand them, but tend to seriously misunderstand their power. At this very moment the same hedge fund management and financial specialists, who in the current financial crisis have proven their incompetence, short-sightedness, arrogance, self-interest and greed, are beginning to “reform” and “restructure” another domain: culture.

Against the commercialization of culture

The application of the laws of supply and demand combined with an introduction of concepts such as “market value” into the sphere of culture will certainly have a negative impact on its quality. In our opinion Jenny Holzer’s slogan “Protect Me from What I Want” undoubtedly constitutes a better principle for culture than “free” market values. For the development of democracy, equality an open access to culture is crucial. It provides the society with tools to transform itself and encourages participation in politics too. The ‘free’ market restricts these forms of participation to the economically privileged. We will not hand over our power of collective cultural decision making to finance. We shall not let money be the ultimate condition of the development of culture and society.

Against the instrumentalisation of culture

The efforts by our leaders to use culture as a tool for the accomplishment of short-term and short-sighted aims; such as the promotion of a region or city, electioneering, the management of national identity, and so on, always leads to cultural impoverishment. We therefore want culture to be free from the duties and obligations of professional politics, whether in the form of imposed topical social issues, tying funding to designated political contexts or the promotion of official ideologies. It does not mean however, that we support politically indifferent culture enclosed in its own consecrated world and projecting itself and its own interests back onto the society in which we all live. We believe that the opposition between “pure art” and “engaged art” is false, this has already been demonstrated through the history of the avantgarde, modernism, critical postmodernism and various critical aesthetic theories. Art is most effective and its influence on society is strongest not when it is locked in an

ideological cage, but when it can freely profit from autonomy. We therefore agree with Guy Debord: “The point is not to put poetry at the service of revolution, but to put revolution at the service of poetry”.

Against elimination or impairment of the cultural public sector

Culture is a public good par excellence. All public institutions should therefore guarantee public access to culture and the ability to produce it. One of the indispensable conditions of the autonomy of culture and a necessary element of an appropriate cultural education is the efficient functioning of public institutions – which must act according to their public mission, and not for the sake of the private gain of politicians or municipal authorities.

What We Propose

Elimination of the centralized, bureaucratic model of governing culture and, in its place, the opening of social councils for culture and art

The councils (regional and national) would make decisions concerning all the cultural institutions including art academies. Both the producers of culture and its publics would participate in the councils (and would be chosen according to the principles of participatory democracy, including participatory budget procedures). The constitution of the councils would nevertheless have a mixed character (politeo-democratic or meritocratic-and-democratic) so that the art producers would have more power than could be implied by their sheer number. The councils would transform culture into a genuinely public good, so that it would cease to be state property it wouldn’t be just a toy in the hands of bureaucrats and politicians, who use it for their own purposes of self-promotion, political propaganda, electoral campaigns, etc.). The national or regional offices would only have executive, consultative and administrative functions – councils would become sites of democratic power based on meritocratic principles, not on the needs of particular political groups or markets. The councils would gain real prerogatives and qualifications for decision making and control over the work of officials, which would differentiate them from existing bodies of evaluation and counseling, which generally serve as tokens for bureaucratic control at work.

Equal legal status of various forms of intellectual property

Culture is malfunctioning in a regime of closed intellectual property a regime of copyright, trademarks, and patents – just to mention the most common forms of exclusive legal organization. Ideas, inventions and concepts should circulate freely – be used, modified and cross-connected in order to create new cultural value, not harnessed to the market for the private accumulation of profit. Some currents of contemporary culture, like film or music have already exceeded this legal framework of intellectual property rights and they constantly cross the limits of what would be considered “legal” (i.e. found footage, mash-up, sampling, mixing and other new media techniques). We will therefore promote and apply alternative and democratic forms of protection and redistribution of the author’s rights using “open license” strategies. Meanwhile, we demand the introduction and extension of the existing forms of production and distribution of culture in ways that would be appropriate for the new, horizontal exchange, distribution and circulation of cultural production. We are against restricting the distribution of culture according to the aim of maximising profit.

Social welfare of (not only) art producers

A vast majority of art producers (both – artists and organizers of events) currently live under

conditions of precarity, without social insurance or any hope for retirement benefits. This condition of precarity does not necessarily mean that artists live in poverty, but it forces them into a state of permanent instability and insecurity about their future. The domains where art producers are not benefiting from full employment, like visual art and literature, and where the only way of providing oneself with health insurance or retirement (i.e. buying it), means that they are forced into the marketplace and forced to adapt to its conditions. The art producers who for various reasons do not participate in this “free” market exchange are condemned to live in a state of permanent risk. The market itself cannot provide the distribution of resources which could alleviate that precarity. The market makes us live in a world where everybody works, and only a few profit, whereas an effective development of the process of symbolic production requires the participation of all members of the social network regardless of the ability to pay. Without the whole collective body of cultural producers and their publics (i.e. the art milieu and the art scene) no “genius” will appear – neither in painting nor critical video art, neither installation art nor performance, neither sculpture nor socially engaged practice. The only reasonable solution would be to propose an unconditional guaranteed salary for all cultural producers, which would not be a form of a social hand-out but signify a recognition of their role in creating all the creative and cultural resources of society. In a longer perspective this would lead to the regulation of the legal guarantee for a common wage based on a redistribution of incomes from the top to the lowest level of income, for all members of the society.

Basic education about contemporary culture

We demand an introduction of a new topic – contemporary culture – to the basic school education, starting with kindergarten. These lessons would provide knowledge on the main issues in culture of the last 20 years, with a special emphasis on current art production. The lessons should have an interdisciplinary character – developing knowledge and experience in both theory (elements of history of philosophy, history of art, art theory and art criticism) and practice (visits to concerts, exhibitions, theater shows, participation in critical debates). As it can already be understood, this education would not mean a grinding of cultural knowledge, but rather a work on creating self-determined, critical and informed forms of reception and participation in culture. Such knowledge and experience should aim to facilitate the creation of non-hierarchical, nonviolent models for sharing one’s opinions and experiences. It would therefore become a preparatory class for critical reflection, participation and living in a direct democracy.

Signed by the members of the committee for a radical change in culture:

Roman Dziadkiewicz, Grzegorz Jankowicz, Zbigniew Libera, Ewa Majewska, Lidia Makowska, Natalia Romik, Janek Simon, Jan Sowa, Kuba Szreder, Bogna Świątkowska, Joanna Warsza.

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On bullshit in cultural policy practice & research

Eleonora Belfiore

According to Harry G. Frankfurt's best-selling book *On Bullshit*¹, there are two central aspects to the notion of bullshit: "mindlessness", or a complete lack of concern with the truth on the part of the bullshitter, and the fact that behind any production of bullshit lies a bullshitter who is intentionally misleading their interlocutors so as to pursue their own interests and purposes. The concept of "bullshit", and related notions of "humbug", "mumbo-jumbo", "hot air", "gobbledygook", "claptrap" and "balderdash", have all been observed to dominate the modern public domain². However, my focus here is on the prevalence of justifications for public subsidy of the arts and the cultural sector which rely on the rhetoric that has developed around the alleged transformative powers of the arts and their consequent (presumed) positive social impacts.

Not your usual best-seller

Academic publishing does not, usually, attract the reading masses. Even more unusual is for the best-selling book in question to be a tome (albeit a slim one) written by a moral philosopher. The popular acclaim that welcomed Frankfurt's *On Bullshit* is, therefore, an interesting publishing case. The first thing that catches the reader's attention – no point in denying it – is the book's title. Unsurprisingly, the *New York Times* refused to publish it in its entirety in its bestsellers list, referring to it as 'On Bull—'. Yet attributing the book's popularity to its potentially controversial title would be undoubtedly simplistic and would not suffice to explain the 175,000 copies of the book sold in the US alone, and the fact that in just a few months the book had already reached its tenth reprint³.

Whilst its commercial success testifies to the book's capacity to respond to an intellectual curiosity much alive amongst today's reading public, the essay, from which the book takes its title, was not in fact written in response to the spin and mumbo-jumbo of contemporary public life. 'On Bullshit' first appeared in 1986 in the *Raritan Review*, and was eventually included in a collection of essays entitled *The Importance of What We Care About* (1988), which brings together some of Frankfurt's most influential writings on free will, moral responsibility, and ethical action. Although unfair to say that the essay went completely unnoticed when first published, it certainly did not generate the level of interest of the 2005 reprint. The fact that Princeton University Press decided to re-publish the treatise almost twenty years after it was first penned, testifies to its editors' belief in the saliency of Frankfurt's conceptual investigation to contemporary culture and society. Indeed, as the essay's opening lines explain, our society seems to have developed an increasing acceptance of bullshit:

"One of the most salient features of our culture is that there is so much bullshit. Everyone knows this. [...] But we tend to take the situation for granted. [...] In consequence, we have no clear understanding of what bullshit is, why there is so much of it, or what functions it serves."

Frankfurt's theoretical understanding of bullshit

An important element in Frankfurt's conceptual analysis of bullshit is its distinction, in ontological and ethical terms, between lying and bullshitting. Frankfurt concurs with most writers on matters of lying and deception; that intentionality is central

to any definition of lying, as well as bullshitting. As Sissela Bok explains in her influential book *Lying: Moral choice in public and private life*⁴, a false person is not merely one that happens to make statements that are found to be wrong, mistaken or incorrect; rather, the label of 'false' is deserved whenever somebody is *intentionally* deceitful. However, as Chisholm and Feehan show⁵, the intention to deceive and a lie are not identical, and should not be confused. They also argue that different types of deception carry different types of moral weight. In other words, not all types of intentional and voluntary deception constitute a violation of a moral rule as grave as that represented by an outright lie. This concept is clarified by Adler, through his reference to the little insincerities and misleading statements that make up every-day polite conversation:

"Intentional deception is a constituent of many acceptable forms of everyday social life, such as tact, politeness, excuses, reticence, avoidance, or evasion, which are ways to protect privacy, promote social harmony, and encourage interest."⁶

Adler goes on to explain that a lie is "a blunt instrument, easily found, promising an easy success", whereas, "the deceiver takes a more circuitous route to his success, where lying is an easier and more certain way to mislead". This view seems to be shared by Frankfurt⁷ who, reiterating an observation that recurs often in the essay, remarks that our society seems to be prepared to treat the bullshitter with much more leniency than it does the liar.

The originality of Frankfurt's thought might rest precisely in his reversal of this commonly accepted position, and in his suggestions that, from a moral perspective, bullshitting is actually *more* morally execrable and pernicious than outright lying, in that it reveals a disregard for truth and accuracy much more profound than that displayed by the liar. Frankfurt repeatedly maintains that, in his view, bullshit is "unconnected to a concern with the truth" and "not germane to the enterprise of describing reality"; the bullshitter therefore acts "without any regard for how things really are" and is characterised by "mindlessness". They speak "without conscientious attention to the relevant facts", and make statements "without bothering to take into account at all the question of its accuracy". Hence Frankfurt's conclusion: "It is just this lack of connection to a concern with the truth – this indifference to how things really are – that I regard as of the essence of bullshit".

As a moral philosopher, Frankfurt is preoccupied with the ethical consequences that such indifference for accuracy and the resulting "mindlessness" might have on the quality of public life and contemporary culture.

His line of reasoning starts from the observation that bullshit is closer to bluffing than it is to lying, "[f]or the essence of bullshit is not that it is false but that it is *phony*". Falsity is not a prerequisite for bullshit, which "although it is produced without concern with the truth, need not be false. The bullshitter is faking things. But this does not mean that he necessarily gets them wrong".

It is precisely in the extreme carelessness for whether things are in fact true or false from which bullshit blossoms that Frankfurt identifies the moral danger. He explains that, contrary to the bullshitter, the outright liar "is inescapably concerned with truth values". In order to be able to lie, one needs to see and acknowledge the

difference between what is true and what is false: "A person who lies is thereby responding to the truth, and he is to that extent respectful of it".

However, no such consideration for what is true can be found in the bullshitter, who has no concern at all for questions of truth, or even for the difference between true and false. In Frankfurt's own words:

"The fact about himself that the bullshitter hides [...] is that the truth-values of his statements are of no central interest to him; what we are not to understand is that his intention is neither to report the truth nor to conceal it. This does not mean that his speech is anarchically impulsive, but that the motive guiding and controlling it is unconcerned with how the things about which he speaks truly are. [...] [The bullshitter] is neither on the side of the true nor on the side of the false. His eye is not on the facts at all, as the eyes of the honest man and of the liar are, except insofar as they may be pertinent to his interest with getting away with what he says. He does not care whether the things he says describe reality correctly. He just picks them out, or makes them up, to suit his purpose."

Frankfurt's moral concern is that, in a society which tolerates bullshitting and considers it less morally reprehensible than lying, the tendency to make whatever statement or declaration suit one's personal interests might slowly but progressively erode people's regard for the way that things *really* are and, therefore, also an ethics of accuracy and conscientiousness on which a healthy public sphere thrives. It is no surprise, then, that Frankfurt should come to the conclusion that the bullshitter "pays no attention to [the truth] at all. By virtue of this, bullshit is a greater enemy of the truth than lies are".

Lying & bullshitting in politics

The sphere of politics, and public life more broadly, are usually considered as a privileged domain for both bullshitting and lying. As Frankfurt puts it, "[t]he realms of advertising and public relations, and the nowadays closely related realm of politics, are replete with instances of bullshit so unmitigated that they can serve among the most indisputable and classic paradigms of the process".

Politicians themselves have, on occasion, candidly acknowledged the need to forgo of truthfulness in the midst of political struggles. Before his time as UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair declared in no uncertain terms that "[t]he truth becomes almost impossible to communicate because total frankness, relayed in the shorthand of the mass media becomes simply a weapon in the hands of opponents"⁸. Indeed, some have gone so far as suggesting that mendacity might in fact be intrinsic to politics itself. So, for Barnes, "[t]hose who spend their lives in this context [politics] become skilled at lying; it is a requirement for occupational success"⁹. Bailey agrees, and comes to the conclusion that "humbbuggy and manipulation" are central to the very notion of leadership, and therefore an integral part of political life, for "no leader can survive as a leader without deceiving others (followers no less than opponents)"¹⁰. Not only is the notion that lies and politics are *coterminous* quite accepted, but it has even been argued that those in power have a right to lie. The tradition in political philosophy which endorses lying and deceit for the sake of the public good is certainly very long and illustrious. Plato, in his 'Republic', coined the expression





“noble lies” to refer to the kind of stories that the governing philosophers might tell in order to preserve the wellbeing of the polis and promote social harmony¹¹. Needless to say, the rulers’ ‘right’ to lie and to recur to ‘the public good’ as a justification for their lack of sincerity has been strongly questioned¹², and a growing sense of unease has spread for the perceived prevalence of spin, bullshit, and deception in political discourse. Commentators have suggested that we now live in a “post-truth political environment”¹³ in which “[p]ublic statements are no longer fact based, but operational. Realities and political narratives are constructed to serve a purpose, dismantled, and the show moves on”¹⁴. This seems confirmed by studies of public opinion which indicate progressively decreasing levels of trust and confidence in politicians, professionals and public institutions¹⁵. This widespread perception has moved philosopher Onora O’Neill to suggest that we seem to be facing a “crisis of public trust”¹⁶.

However, is bullshit and political lying really on the rise? Frankfurt himself adopts a certain caution, and suggests that “it is impossible to be sure that there is relatively more of it nowadays than at other times. There is more communication of all kinds in our time than ever before, but the proportion that is bullshit may not have increased”¹⁷. The mass media are indeed usually considered responsible for the presumed rising levels of deception in the public sphere, if not for altogether muddling the public political debate, and for promoting the creation of bullshit and lies¹⁸.

In order to better understand contemporary political life, and the role of the communications professionals within it, it might be useful to refer to the concept of the ‘new public’ elaborated by Mayhew. The idea of the ‘new public’ is predicated on the observation that communication in the public sphere has become dominated by professional specialists (as well as professional politicians) who utilise techniques borrowed from advertising, market research and public relations so as to maximise the effect of political messages and minimize the possibility of their scrutiny:

“Rhetoric employs adumbrated, sketchy arguments that amount to symbolic *tokens* of more extended arguments that the speaker purports to be able to expound if necessary. [...] Tokens allow for strategic rhetoric that deliver suggestive cues but avoids confrontations that would require redeeming these tokens with more extensive arguments.”¹⁹

The ‘new public’ paradigm (like Frankfurt’s concept of bullshit) therefore relies heavily on a corrupted form of language that Lutz refers to as “doublespeak”:

“What is doublespeak? Doublespeak is language which pretends to communicate but really doesn’t. It is language which makes the bad seem good, the negative appear positive, the unpleasant appear attractive, or at least tolerable. It is language which avoids or shifts responsibility, language which is at variance with its real or purported meaning. It is language which conceals or prevents thought. Doublespeak is language which does not extend thought but limits it.”²⁰

This alleged corruption of the language of public discourse is not necessarily a recent phenomenon. In 1946, in an essay entitled ‘Politics and the English Language’, George Orwell had already commented on what he saw as a “special connection between politics and the debasement of language”²¹. According to Orwell, who was writing in the aftermath of WWII, politics had become predicated upon the “defence of the indefensible” (such as the persistence of British colonialism in India, or the deployment of nuclear weapons in Japan). This required a political language that “has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness”, the kind of language, in other words, necessary “if one wants to name things without calling up mental pictures of them”²².

Like Frankfurt and the other writers discussed here, Orwell too saw the language of political communication as characterised by “sheer humbug”²³, and his damning conclusion prefigures the arguments of numerous contemporary political commentators: “Political language ... is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind”²⁴.

Having ascertained that lying and mendacity have always been closely connected to the sphere of politics, it remains to be seen if the particular type of deception that Frankfurt is trying to describe through his conceptual understanding of ‘bullshit’ and Mayhew’s notion of the ‘new public’ can offer any further insight to the study of contemporary political discourse.

Bullshit in cultural policy: the UK case

Can we ascertain any evidence to support the hypothesis that a “lack of connection to a concern with the truth” and “indifference to how things really are”, a “laxity” which Frankfurt sees as the essence of bullshit, might be prevalent in present-day official UK cultural policy rhetoric? To answer this, the following analysis centres on public declarations of the social impacts of the arts as a basis for policy-making in the cultural sector, and the importance of their measurement²⁵ – arguably the debate around the socio-economic impacts of the arts has been the defining one of Western cultural policy over the past 10-15 years.

Since the very beginning of politicians’ renewed interest for the social impacts of the arts, the question of evidence has been a delicate one. In 1999, PAT 10 (one of several Policy Action Teams set up by government to ensure each department gave a full contribution to new Labour’s social inclusion and neighbourhood renewal agenda) commissioned a well-respected cultural consultant to produce a literature review in the area of the social impacts of the arts, with a view of assessing the quality of the research evidence available. The report concluded that “it remains a fact that relative to the volume of arts activity taking place in the country’s poorest neighbourhoods, the evidence of the contribution it makes to neighbourhood renewal is paltry”²⁶. Considering that this report was commissioned by PAT10 itself as a guide to its activities, and in view of the government’s explicit and firm commitment to evidence-based policy-making, one would have thought that the admission of lack of evidence would have dampened any early enthusiasm for the arts as a tool for social renewal. Yet that year also saw the publication of another report by PAT10, one that actually celebrated the beneficial impacts of the arts on disadvantaged people and neighbourhoods. In the foreword to this second report, Chris Smith, at the time Secretary of State for Culture, stated with great confidence:

“This report shows that art and sport can not only make a valuable contribution to delivering key outcomes of lower long-term unemployment, less crime, better health and better qualifications, but can also help to deliver the individual pride, community spirit and capacity for responsibility that enable communities to run regeneration programmes themselves.”²⁷

That the evidence to support this was “paltry” as well as anecdotal and methodologically dubious, did not seem to cause much concern. In fact, Chris Smith, in his capacity of Secretary of State, became the champion of the socio-economic impacts of the arts, to which he referred numerous times in enthusiastic terms in his book ‘Creative Britain’²⁸. The use and citation of statistics was always an important ingredient in the developments briefly charted above. In a public lecture delivered in 1998, Smith²⁹ cited extensively some (now discredited³⁰) statistics

derived from the highly influential report *Use or Ornament?*³¹ prepared by François Matarasso for the cultural consultancy firm Comedia, which Smith defined as “compelling”. The reference to the impressive-sounding numbers of Matarasso’s study offered the Secretary of State what must have appeared a precious means to bypass the obstacle represented by what he presumably knew to be “paltry” evidence of impact³². Whether those figures *actually* reflected reality was obviously not a primary concern here.

This is confirmed to be the case by Chris Smith himself, who spoke with uncustomary candour, for a politician, at the 2003 conference *Valuing Culture*. He was at that time no longer Secretary of State, which may explain the frankness of his speech, and this was one of the first public engagements he attended since being divested of his cabinet position. Smith’s words offer a precious insight into the type of bullshit that, in my view, has become orthodox in much of contemporary public and policy discourse around the social impacts of the arts, and they are therefore worth quoting extensively. Looking back at his time as Culture Secretary, Smith comments:

“Spare a thought, however, for the poor old Minister, faced with the daunting task of getting the increased funding out of the Treasury to start with. The Treasury won’t be interested in the intrinsic merits of nurturing beauty or fostering poetry or even ‘enhancing the quality of life’. So I acknowledge unashamedly that when I was Secretary of State, going into what always seemed like a battle with the Treasury, I would try and touch the buttons that would work. I would talk about the educational value of what was being done. I would be passionate about artists working in schools. I would refer to the economic value that can be generated from creative and cultural activity. I would count the added numbers who would flock into a free museum. If it helped to get more funds flowing into the arts, the argument was worth deploying. And I still believe, passionately, that it was the right approach to take. If it hadn’t been taken, the outcome would have left the arts in much poorer condition”³³.

Smith also readily admitted that this method of promoting the interests of the arts sector also poses some difficulties, such as the fact that “any measurement of numbers, quantity, or added value by figures is necessarily going to be inadequate”. Hence his advice to his audience of cultural administrators:

“So, use the measurements and figures and labels that you can, when you need to, in order to convince the rest of the governmental system of the value and importance of what you’re seeking to do.

But recognise at the same time that this is not the whole story, that it is not enough as an understanding of cultural value.”³⁴

Smith is making a clear admission to have used the available data cunningly, so as to make his case for increased departmental funding appear stronger than it might have otherwise been. So, to this end, measurements and statistics that Smith here admits are “necessarily going to be inadequate” were presented as “compelling” in his 1998 book, and accepted as valid ‘evidence’ of impact in policy making and in the process of funding allocations. Am I suggesting that, during his time as Secretary of State, Smith lied? Not necessarily; I am suggesting, however, on the basis of his own reconstruction of events, that he might have been, on occasion, bullshitting. I am also suggesting that Smith’s shrewd use of dubious statistics might be a case of the phenomenon that Darrell Huff, in his still popular humorous essay *How to Lie with Statistics*, first published in 1954, refers to as *statisticulation*³⁵, or, that form of statistical manipulation that aims at “misinforming people by the use of statistical material”.

Smith’s passages above also seem to endorse the acceptance of fibbing for the ‘public good’ examined earlier, and an adoption of a ‘consequentialist’³⁶ ethical position whereby any



bullshit that might have had to be produced and communicated is justified by its desirable outcome in terms of a favourable financial settlement from the Treasury. Questions of the truth-value of the arguments used are clearly of secondary importance to the main objective, which is, plainly, to score points with the Treasury (and, perhaps expectedly, with the audience of his delivery). To quote Frankfurt again, “[h]e does not care whether the things he says describe reality correctly. He just picks them out, or makes them up, to suit his purpose”³⁷. Furthermore, the very fact of Smith’s own frankness about his creative approach to ‘making the case for the arts’ confirms Frankfurt’s contention that bullshitting is widely tolerated in our society, and that the moral censure that accompanies it is relatively minimal (had it not been so, Smith might have been altogether more reticent about it).

Mayhew’s notion of a public sphere dominated by a type of political communication that avoids scrutiny and genuine debate is also of relevance here, especially when it comes to the central place of measurement and statistics in public policy discourse. For how can one respond to such a lucid strategy of ‘statisticulation’ as that described by Smith in the passage above? When value-based (and therefore value-laden) arguments are couched in the apparently politically neutral language of ‘evidence-based policy’, and when impact evaluation and performance measurement and the resulting statistics are used as ‘ammunition’³⁸ in the political debate with little preoccupation for their origins and the rigour (or potential lack thereof) of the methods used to acquire them, what chances are there for a genuinely open political debate around matters of policy and funding?

It would be highly unfair to suggest that Chris Smith was the only Culture Secretary of State or Minister to have displayed that lack of concern with truth, the “indifference to how things really are”, as well as the cultivation of vested interests which Frankfurt attributes to the activity of bullshitting. What makes Smith’s case interesting is that his frank post-ministerial speech makes it possible to ascertain the question of intentionality, which as we have seen, is a necessary condition for the legitimate attribution of the label of ‘bullshit’. The personal essay written by Smith’s successor as Culture Secretary of State, Tessa Jowell, entitled ‘Government and the Value of Culture’ (2004), offers another interesting case study. Jowell had always been a stalwart supporter of the contribution of the arts and the cultural industries to the governmental socio-economic agenda. In a speech delivered at the 2002 Labour Party conference she had stated unambiguously that “[i]nvestment in the arts is not only an end in itself, it is also a means of achieving our promises, our policies and our values”³⁹. But by the time her personal essay was conceived, the shortcomings of the available evidence of socioeconomic impact had become harder to ignore and the sector had been progressively lamenting an excess of instrumentality in the government’s attitude to the arts. ‘Government and the Value of Culture’ is interesting because its stated aim is to reject a narrow instrumental view of the arts, yet throughout the essay a number of exquisitely instrumental considerations are made on the importance, for the government, to support artistic engagement as an antidote to the ‘poverty of aspiration’ afflicting disadvantaged young.

In the concluding section of the essay, Jowell maintains that “we will need to keep proving that engagement with culture can improve educational attainment, and can help reduce crime”⁴⁰, and yet, if it had been possible to demonstrate incontrovertibly a causal link between arts participation and educational attainment or crime reduction, then, surely, there would be no pressing need to *keep proving* it. The problem is that – as Jowell most probably knows – for all the evaluation and performance measurement requirements imposed on the sector, such incontrovertible

evidence of impact simply is not there. This in turn means that many of the claims contained in the essay are in fact based on very little concrete evidence. The circularity of reasoning and the numerous internal contradictions in Jowell’s essay make it, I would suggest, a prime example of the ‘doublespeak’ lamented by Lutz⁴¹.

More recently, James Purnell, during his brief six-month stint as Culture Secretary⁴² provided an interesting example of the type of corrupted political language reprimanded by Orwell in his 1946 essay. In his first speech entitled ‘World class from the grassroots up: Culture in the next ten years’, delivered in the summer of 2007, Purnell declared that “access is now in the bloodstream of British culture”⁴³. I take this to mean that Purnell – despite current attendance data confirming that participation is still strongly linked to educational levels and class status⁴⁴ – is convinced that broadening access is now very firmly rooted in the work of cultural organisations in receipt of public subsidies. Why the bizarre metaphor? I am reminded of Orwell’s⁴⁵ reproach for the “staleness of imagery” and the “lack of precision” that in his opinion are the principal symptoms of that corruption of the English language and of political communication. This corruption he saw as the result of the attitude of a writer who “is almost indifferent as to whether his words mean anything or not”⁴⁶: “By using stale metaphors, similes and idioms, you save much mental effort, at the cost of leaving your meaning vague, not only for your reader but for yourself”.

Yet it was not this rather “stale” image that was responsible for the great interest generated by Purnell’s speech. The cause of the stir was a little phrase towards the end of it, and the promise of a sea-change in public cultural administration that it seemed to bring: “I want to keep the passion and throw away the packaging of targetolatry”⁴⁷. The sector interpreted this as signalling “a change in direction over Public Service Agreements targets for the arts”⁴⁸. Public Service Agreements (PSAs) are official documents which set out the aims and objectives of the various government departments over a three-year period; they describe “how targets will be achieved and how performance against these targets will be measured”⁴⁹. Performance indicators and targets are at the core of the *modus operandi* of PSAs, and it is not at all clear how they could be ‘thrown away’, to borrow Purnell’s expression, without compromising the entire current functioning of government departments and the monitoring of their activities. How it could be possible to justify subtracting the cultural sector from the set of rules and regulation that are in force for the rest of the public sector is also a mystery, which Purnell’s sensationalist speech does not clarify. It seems possible to suggest that Purnell’s speech exemplifies Brandenburg’s contention that political bullshit is “a proactive strategic communication, meant not to hide a truth or reality, or to divert from a particular responsibility, but to create or manage an impression”⁵⁰. In this case, the impression that needed to be created and managed was that of a Culture Secretary sympathetic to the frustrations seething among cultural professionals resulting from the perceived excesses of performance measurement requirements. Purnell’s move to the Work and Pension department just a few months after the delivery of this speech obviously means that we will never know how he would have endeavoured to implement his vision of “setting culture free to do what it does best”⁵¹ (whatever this may be). Yet this does appear like the media-friendly, populist, still unredeemable token of a fully developed argument that Mayhew suggests dominates in the ‘new public’.

There is a broader conclusion to be drawn from this necessarily selective and incomplete examination of instances of ‘bullshit’, ‘doublespeak’ and ‘statisticulation’ in official cultural policy rhetoric. I would argue that what we have been looking at are, in fact, powerful



examples of what policy theory refers to as the “performance paradox”. With this label, policy theorists refer to the unintended and often undesirable consequences that can result from the introduction of performance measurement as a means to enhance public sector’s efficiency and the quality of its financial management⁵². The paradoxical element here lays in the fact that these unintended consequences might actually result in a situation that compounds the very problems that performance measurement was introduced to address. At the heart of the notion of “performance paradox”, thus, is the baffling observation that measures such as the imposition of targets, performance management, evidence-based policy-making, pressures to evaluate the extent to which arts project have the socio-economic impact that policy makers presume they do – or, in other words, a whole range of measures introduced with the aim to improve *transparency* and *accountability* in the public sector – might have resulted, in reality, in more bullshit being produced and injected in public discourses around policies for the cultural sector, and in opaque political messages amounting to little more than doublespeak.

If politics and public policy are a privileged arena for the production and circulation of significant amounts of bullshit, it would be, however, naïve to think that they are the only realms affected.

Beyond the realm of politics: Bullshit of the academic variety

There are two main varieties of academic bullshit relevant to the field of cultural policy. The first is represented by the intentional obscurity and impenetrability of a certain portion of academic writing, and the second is represented by instances of the very same “lack of connection to a concern with the truth” and “indifference to how things really are” that we have just witnessed in the field of politics.

My previous work on the social impacts of the arts and the question of their measurement, carried out with Oliver Bennett, has brought to light the numerous underlying, unquestioned assumptions about the arts, the effect they have on people (which are presumed to be reliably positive), the possibility of their empirical measurement, and the advantages that such measurement can provide in the subsidised cultural sector’s struggle for ever-shrinking public resources.⁵³ Despite the current rhetorical emphasis on evidence-based policy, the set of assumptions outlined above, which has so far inspired cultural policy making, finds no support in actual evidence.

It is my contention that similar assumptions have also dominated the arts’ impact assessment research agenda. A good example would be the aforementioned *Use or Ornament?* (Matarasso, 1997)⁵⁴, which, despite having been criticised for methodological flaws⁵⁵, can be identified as one of the key texts in this area, and as the first attempt to produce an analysis of the social impact of the arts with the aim to develop a replicable methodology for its evaluation. This is stated quite clearly

in the preface to the report, which defines the aims of the project as the attempt “[t]o identify evidence of the social impact of participation in the arts at amateur or community level”, and to do so in a way that could provide means “of assessing social impact which are helpful and workable for policymakers and those working in the arts or social fields”⁵⁶. The unquestioned assumption underlying Matarasso’s research is revealed by his intention to “identify evidence” of impact: this presumes that the impacts are indeed there, and so is the evidence, it is just a question of *identifying* it. Yet, I would argue that the existence of the type of wide-ranging social impact claimed by policymakers is all but self-evident, and far from having been indisputably established.

I have argued elsewhere⁵⁷ that one of the





problems with large portions of research that has so far been carried out into the social impacts of the arts is its being marred by a profound confusion between genuine research and research for the sake of advocacy. The temptation to articulate research questions in policy- or advocacy-friendly terms is evident in this field, so that research has often focused on asking *how* the presumed positive social impacts of the arts might be measured or enhanced, rather than in asking *whether* the arts have social impacts of the sort claimed for them, *if* these impacts can be expected to be positive and, more generally, *whether* it is possible to generalise people's experiences of the arts within art forms, across art forms, and across the very diverse population represented by those who engage with the arts.

This might appear little more than an academic disquisition over what adverb one ought to use at the beginning of one's research questions, yet I would suggest that a concern for how research questions are phrased goes beyond mere pedantry. Policy scholar Deborah Stone offers a clear example of this⁵⁸. She reports that, upon being asked for their opinion on public spending on welfare, 48% of the US public interviewed responded that it ought to be cut; however, when asked about spending on programmes for children living in poverty, 47% of respondents aspired increased funding, and only 9% still felt they wanted the funding to be cut. As Stone herself remarks: "Do Americans want to enlarge or curtail welfare spending? It all depends on how the question is framed"⁵⁹. In matters of cultural policy too, how questions are framed will largely shape the answers reached. Until we accept the need for carefully thought-through, open-ended research questions and for a genuinely exploratory approach to the study of something of such extraordinary complexity as people's experiences of and responses to the arts, the production of bullshit might not be avoidable.



An antidote for bullshit?

It is my belief that not only are bullshit and mindlessness not an inevitable feature of cultural policy research (or, for that matter, any other type of research), but that it is a duty of the researcher in this field, as part of their professional practice, to commit to a way of working inspired by the principle of rigour and precision advocated by Frankfurt in his essay.

A useful starting point is offered by Robert Merton, who in the early 1970s identified four principal values of science as: "universalism", "communalism", "disinterestedness", and "organized scepticism"⁶⁰. Whilst objectivity and neutrality from one's values and (often unconscious) intellectual prejudices might be an unattainable goal for the researcher, the notion of "disinterested" seems to offer a useful pointer towards a research ethos that strives to avoid "mindlessness" in one's professional practice. This, coupled with a healthy resistance (or skepticism, in Merton's words) for any assumption or conclusion that does not withstand close intellectual scrutiny, seems to amount to the first steps towards the development of an antidote to bullshit in the field of research.

Cultural policy studies is a relatively young discipline⁶¹, though, in many respects, it has come a long way in a very short time. Yet, in order for the discipline to continue to develop in interesting and original ways, we need to reinforce the notion of a 'critical research ethos' in this field. 'Critical' is today a very loaded adjective, and it thus requires some qualification. I use it to refer to research that is *disinterested*; that is, indifferent to the requirements of advocacy – advocacy being a fully legitimate enterprise, but one completely distinct and, ideally, separate from genuinely explorative research. By 'explorative' research, I refer to a type of research that aims to explore and illuminate complex questions about the role and condition

of culture, cultural production, consumption, and administration in contemporary society. This is an enterprise that ought to be conducted by way of a research ethos based on accuracy, precision, and rigour: a research ethos, that, to borrow Frankfurt's words, does not intentionally elude "the demands of a disinterested and austere discipline"⁶². The model of research I am advocating echoes what McGuigan defines as "critical and reflexive cultural policy analysis" which, he explains, "is permitted to ask awkward questions about the conditions of culture and society in the world at large that go beyond the self-imposed limitations of management consultancy and policy-wonking"⁶³. To this I would add that this bullshit-free zone for cultural policy research would also ideally be dominated by intellectual *humility*. By this I refer to the acceptance that when exploring complex questions (and cultural and political questions are inescapably complex), the researcher needs to accept that it might not be possible to find easy answers that can tidily fit into a journal paper. Coming back to the impact of the arts debate, philosophers and scholars have struggled to describe and understand the way that people respond to the arts uninterrupted since at least the times of Plato. Any simple, straightforward solution to this riddle, or any impact evaluation toolkit that promises to assess the transformative power of any form of aesthetic experience in 'ten easy replicable steps', thus bypassing or refusing to address such complexity, is likely to be – let us be honest – bullshit.

Conspicuously, from the examination of bullshit and other forms of deception, *intentionality* is key in distinguishing simple, incorrect information from mendacity. In this sense, the researcher will only be a bullshitter when they *intentionally* take intellectual shortcuts or when, moved by a voluntary carelessness for accuracy and regard for how things really are, indulge in mindless intellectual behaviour. This presumes, of course, that researchers operate in relative freedom. And yet, researchers do not operate in splendid isolation from society. Universities are not the detached ivory towers they might have once been, and the conditions in which academic researchers operate also need to be taken into consideration. Particularly in policy-sensitive areas like cultural policy (or, in fact, any other policy-related field of enquiry) where there are pressures on researchers to produce the kind of work that might have a direct influence on policy.

Already in 2000 the then Secretary of State for Education of Employment, David Blunkett, clearly expressed a commitment to include policy influence among the criteria used for assessing research excellence in the government-run 'Research Assessment Exercise' (RAE), a formal process all UK university must undergo so that the quality of the research they produce can be assessed, and this information used as one of the elements on the basis of which public resources are allocated to them. The UK Research Councils have indeed picked up on this political commitment to enhance the policy influence of publicly funded research, and have recently announced their intention to include impact on policy, and the envisioned socio-economic impact of the proposed research project as one of the criteria used to decide on the allocation of research funding⁶⁴. The implication of these developments with respect to my call for an explorative and disinterested research ethos are clear: in a climate where policy influence is considered a relevant, or even a privileged, criterion for the allocation of research funds, the type of research that is more likely to be supported is that which can provide the 'evidence' that politicians and decision-makers obligate. This might be the kind of research, for example, that can provide appealing statistics and other data required for the 'statisticulation'



that so much political discourse is based on. Researchers working within academia might face increased pressures to provide that official "certification of facts" on which, according to Mayhew⁶⁵, political communication relies in the 'new public'. Undesirable (or just not immediately policy-relevant) research agendas might therefore become more difficult to pursue, irrespective of their intellectual merit or methodological rigour.

If the general climate in which the academic cultural policy researcher operates is, if not openly hostile, at the very least less than friendly to the ideal of open-ended, 'disinterested' and rigorous research advocated here, it seems certainly true that the quality most needed in the cultural policy researcher should be a firm commitment to what Frankfurt calls the "demands of a disinterested and austere discipline"⁶⁶. Paraphrasing what Ernest Hemingway noted about writers, I would therefore suggest that the single most crucial quality that any critical cultural policy researcher ought to possess is "a built-in, shock-proof crap detector"⁶⁷.

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<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/10286632.asp>

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44. See Belfiore, E. & Bennett, O. (2007) 'Determinants of impact: Towards a better understanding of encounters with the arts', in *Cultural Trends*, Vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 225-275, 253-6 for a discussion of this data.
45. Orwell, G. (1946) 'Politics and the English Language', in *Why I Write* (1984), London: Penguin.
46. Ibid.
47. Purnell, J. (2007) 'Word class from the grassroots up: Culture in the next ten years', speech delivered at the National Portrait Gallery on 6th July 2007; available from the DCMS web site: http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/minister_speeches/2058.aspx
48. This is the opening line of the cover article of issue 150 of the publication *ArtsProfessional*, 16th July 2007.
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Remembering Brian Barry

Femi Folorunso

For anyone with hands-on experience of the current political discourse of 'equality' in the UK, and who finds in it evidence of liberal guilt, the death a year ago (March 10th 2009) of the political philosopher Brian Barry (born in 1936) must have been a colossal loss. Barry was one of a handful of British academics and public intellectuals who, sometimes belatedly, sought to rescue the public understanding of 'equality' from bureaucratic activism and intellectual game playing.

While it would be grossly unfair to suggest that the idea of 'equality' is still largely a matter of institutions publishing empty statements outlining their commitments to the promotion of equal opportunities, diversity, and social inclusion, it is still largely true that there are no acceptable minimum standards of what should constitute measurable equality in practice.

It seems that large sections of the British public are eager to accept that there may be a connection between the lack of presence of disabled or non-white artists in major cultural venues and prejudices among the elite of the arts professions. Nonetheless, this same public is less inclined to defend its own right of access, when for example, Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti's play *Behzti*, critical of her own religion, was suddenly made the cause of a potential public disorder by Bhatti's co-religionists. This begs the question, what constitutes the secular public interest versus sectarian communal/private interests? Equality cannot be defended without addressing this faultline. It's clear that arriving at such an understanding is always going to be very difficult.

As far as one can gauge from opinions in the popular press, admittedly not a reliable source, the British public is all in support of an egalitarian society and often blames its politicians for their less than honest defence of it. If so, what is difficult to gauge is whether the public is reconciling itself fast, or well enough, to the underlying logic of equality, especially that aspect that seeks to address racial discrimination. For, in the final analysis, this is the central issue at the heart of multiculturalism, which is the most controversial among all the headings that now frame equality in the British context. There is a general appearance of belief that the only way to address racial discrimination is to encourage the non-white orders to pursue their own whims – as long as they are not an economic bother to anyone. By encouraging such beliefs, even if unintentionally, bureaucrats have become complicit in promoting a kind of sectarianism. This unfortunate reality is high among the reasons for recalling the work of Brian Barry.

It is not only that Barry goes further than most other intellectuals or recent writers on equality, but that he instructively historicises the idea of equality, while also showing how constructive changes were achieved. Barry's argument is always that any claim for equality ought not to ignore universal principles, not least those that have framed the incomplete meaning of citizenship in liberal democracy. In this sense Barry should be to Britain what Habermas is to Germany. The neglect of Barry's work by politicians, bureaucrats and anti-racists in the UK is a sign of an impoverished public discourse, and, perhaps too, a sign of the rather brittle nature of the British status quo.

A passage in *Why Social Justice Matters* (2005)¹ reads:

"In every society, the prevailing belief system has been largely created by those with the most power – typically elderly males belonging to the majority ethnic and religious groups, who also run the dominant institutions of the society. It is notable, for example, that almost all religions rationalize a subordinate position for women and explain that inequalities of fortune are to be accepted as part of God's great (if mysterious) plan. Although those who lose out may not fully accept these ideas, because they too obviously conflict with their own experience, few societies in history have ever

offered a fully articulated alternative belief system. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries produced two important bases for a systematic critique of the status quo (p.27)."

Exploring equality through the existing condition of social justice or the field of culture thus raises the question of the ambition of the state and ability of politicians to confront the forces that threaten our understanding of the public good. In this connection, one can talk of a hierarchy of need if genuine equality is to be achieved. The first need is the protection of social democracy, with all its inbuilt mechanisms for safeguarding the common good. As Barry argues: "Social democracy...challenges the assumption that whatever distribution of opportunities and resources arises within a framework of liberal rights is necessarily just and its implications that any departure from the inequalities thus generated must depend on the good will of the beneficiaries. One way in which social justice can be seen as an extension of liberal justice is quite simple. Liberal justice rests on the presupposition that all citizens are equal before the law (*Why Social Justice Matters*, p.25)."

Barry saw clearly, and often demonstrated, that the language of 'equality' as employed in the UK since 1999 is used to justify the erosion of the same principles of equality which are enshrined in the original mandate of public institutions to promote the common good. Any idea of 'individual responsibility' or 'self-empowerment' was for him both vacuous and meaningless given that the real danger to equality lies in the obsequiousness of politicians in government to ideology that only erodes the powers of the State as a moral arbiter. Barry's thinking and exposition are built around the vision of the State as an expression of authority capable of promoting and defending an un-fragmented form of public well-being. This is what is expressed in *Culture and Equality* (2001) and *Why Social Justice Matters* (2005), which were his last two books. For example, in one of the chapters in the former book, appropriately titled 'The Strategy of Privatization', Barry confronts the dogma of multiculturalism and identity politics by highlighting how the promotion of *difference* has also become a technique for achieving market secularisation on one hand and deepening social sectarianism on the other hand. He writes:

"The fact of difference is universal and so is its social recognition. As far as that goes, there is nothing different about contemporary western societies. What is, however, true is that in these societies, differentiation tends to be more complex and to have a larger optional components than is characteristic of traditional societies. The whole concept of a 'lifestyle', as something that can be deliberately adopted and may demand some sort of recognition from others is indicative of a society in which the *consumer ethic* has spread beyond its original home.² (p.19)." Elsewhere in the same chapter, Barry also writes that:

"...the 'politics of difference' is a formula for manufacturing conflict, because it rewards the groups that can most effectively mobilize to make claims on the polity, or at any rate it rewards ethnocultural political entrepreneurs who can exploit its potential for their own ends by mobilizing a constituency around a set of sectional demands (p.21)."

In *Why Social Justice Matters*, Barry offers an empirical analysis of how market secularism and the ideology behind it have become a source of embarrassment to governments all over the world, and especially to mature democracies such as the UK under New Labour or the US, irrespective of which of the two dominant parties is in power in these countries. Here Barry sees the gradual substitution of any idea of social justice through the workings of "causal chains which run back into and from the basic structures of society".

It is worth restating that Barry's concern is always about the first principles. What is absent in his writings on equality is a reflection on the

persistence of 'blood theory' when it comes to citizenship is many Western societies that officially subscribe to universal principles. There is scope for dealing with the ambiguities of theory and legal citizenship within the various frameworks proposed by Barry, nonetheless a greater acknowledgment of the existence of the predicament would have been in order. In some ways this is the terrain which other philosophers, such as Giorgio Agamben, have explored in looking back upon the historic, and now 'extreme', separation of the 'rights of man' from the 'rights of the citizen'.

While the UK has a progressive legal attitude to citizenship, which is understood to date back to the judgement in 1772 by Lord Justice Mansfield in the James Somerset Case, it is still the case that the idea of a multi-racial society may still be regarded with suspicion or cynical ambivalence. The intellectuals of multiculturalism have always drawn their ammunition from the prevalence of such cynicism. As far as the UK goes, the combative self-righteousness of multiculturalists in this country is of course to be derided for what it is – blindness to the connection between reformation of citizenship and the haunting legacy of imperialism and empire. In any critical debate on culture, one must never ignore that there are three constellations worth considering: history, economics, and culture. Multiculturalists, however, tend to believe that only history and culture matter.

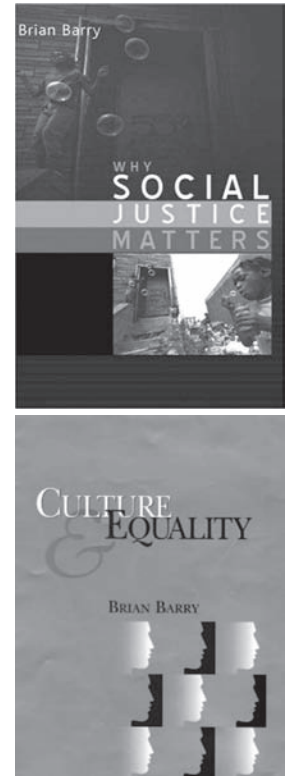
The absence of a more economic approach to the issues of racism is a great weakness (which the far right easily exploits) and must reflect the entrepreneurial basis of a great many immigrant communities in Britain. How else are we to explain why the evidence often relied upon by multiculturalists is based on dubious anthropology? The more they rely on such evidence, the more they segregate their so-called public – the non-white immigrants – from citizenship. There are too numerous examples of how the multiculturalists have become tongue-tied on genuine issues of equality affecting the non-white immigrants in today's Britain. Every episode merely reinforces the obvious – that it is impossible to defend any form of sectarian rights when there is a genuine threat to progressive politics.

Barry was an admirer of George Orwell. It is therefore a fitting tribute to him to conclude here with Orwell's withering attack on the liberals of the 1930s, written in 1939. It fits remarkably well with paradoxes of multicultural politics today, a political form more concerned with upward mobility than equality, and therefore increasingly difficult to disentangle from the arguments of the far right.

"In a prosperous country, above all in an imperialist country, left-wing politics are always partly humbug. There can be no real reconstruction that would not lead to at least a temporary drop in the English standard of life, which is another way of saying that the majority of leftwing politicians and publicists are people who earn their living by demanding something that they don't genuinely want. They are red-hot revolutionaries as long as all goes well, but every real emergency reveals instantly that they are shamming. One threat to the Suez Canal and 'anti-Fascism' and 'defence of British interests' are discovered to be identical."³

Notes

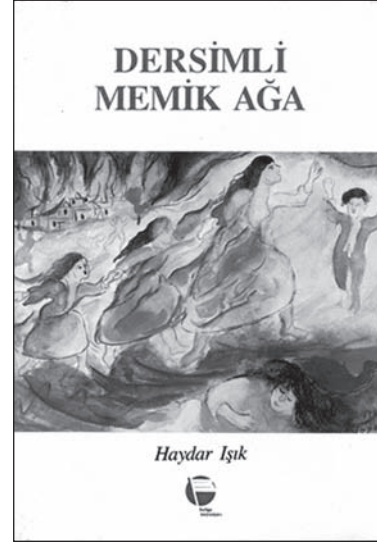
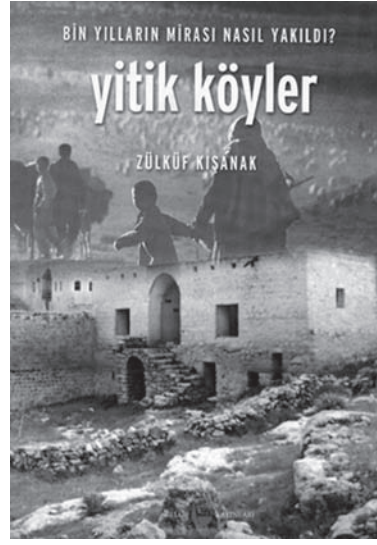
1. *Why Social Justice Matters*, Brian Barry (2005) Polity Press.
2. *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism*, Brian Barry (2001), Polity Press.
3. See, George Orwell (1939) 'Not Counting Niggers', Accessed April 2010, http://www.orwell.ru/library/articles/niggers/english/e_ncn



Launch of 'Friends of Belge'

An Appeal for Solidarity

Desmond Fernandes



Ragip Zarakolu, owner and director of Belge publishing house, was the recipient of Turkey's Journalists' Society's Press Freedom Prize in 2007, alongside the late Hrant Dink and Gülcin Cayligil. He also received the International Publishers Association's 2008 *Freedom to Publish Prize* "for his exemplary courage in upholding freedom to publish", and has been the recipient of other awards such as the NOVIB/PEN 2003 *Free Expression Award*. In 2007, Ragip also participated in the 7th Biennial Meeting of the International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS), hosted by the University of Sarajevo's Institute for Research into Crimes against Humanity and International Law and received the IAGS Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Battle against Deniers of the Armenian Genocide and All Denials of Genocides.

Ragip and Belge publishing (*belge* meaning *documents*) have been subject to targeting in ongoing court cases in Turkey that clearly breach internationally recognised rights of free expression. In November 2009, for example, Ragip and writer N. Mehmet Güler, as defendants, were absurdly "facing prison sentences" based upon the dialogue of a character in a novel. "Publisher Ragip Zarakolu stated in ... [the 19 November 2009] hearing: 'As the chairman of the Committee of Freedom of Expression and Publishing and as a publisher, I cannot do censorship'. Zarakolu is [being] tried ... because of the book *Decisions Tougher than Death (Ölümden Zor Kararlar)* published by Belge Publishing in March [2009] ... [The] defendants are facing prison sentences based on article 7/2 of the Anti-Terror Law (TMY) because characters of the book are called 'Siti', 'Sabri' and 'Şiyar'. Zarakolu has been chairman of the Turkey Publishers Association (TYB) Committee for Freedom of Publishing for 15 years. He stated: 'The novel plays in [a] historical period Turkey lived through. There are similar examples in world literature. Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, for instance, deals with the Spanish civil war ...' ... President Judge Zafer Başkurt reviewed the file and decided to postpone the case till 25th March 2010. Zarakolu stated that the pressure 'has come as far as prosecuting the heroes of a novel'. ... Istanbul Public Prosecutor Hikmet Usta based his indictment of 22 May on dialogue in the novel" (BIA, Erol Önderoğlu, 20 November 2009).

As Vercihan Ziflioğlu noted in a 9th December 2009 article entitled 'Fictional characters from book on trial in Turkey': "Fictional characters are being put on trial again in Turkey. *Ölümden Zor Kararlar (Decisions Tougher than Death)*, a novel by N. Mehmet Güler that was published through

Belge International Publishing last March, has become the focus of a criminal case ... Author Güler and publisher Zarakolu are standing trial at the Istanbul Court of Serious Crimes. The novel was added to the list of banned books in June and copies have been recalled from the market ... Many writers and translators have been put on trial in recent years under Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code. The first example of *imaginary characters* standing trial occurred with Elif Şafak's novel, *The Bastard of Istanbul*. Şafak stood trial for 'insulting Turkishness' through an Armenian character in her novel and was acquitted ... 'The trial turned out to be like a present for my 40th anniversary in journalism', said Zarakolu, who is a found[ing member] of a human rights association and won many national and international prizes for journalism. 'Over 50 cases have been opened against me...', he said. 'Should the writer be free

"I am here today since *thought* has been deemed a 'crime', indeed a *terrorist crime*"

in his thoughts or should he serve the principles of the state and militarism?' He compared current conditions to living in the era of Sultan Abdülhamit and noted that the 'oppressor mentality' must be overcome ...".

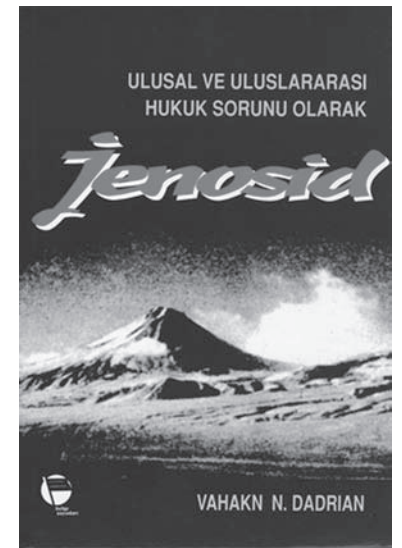
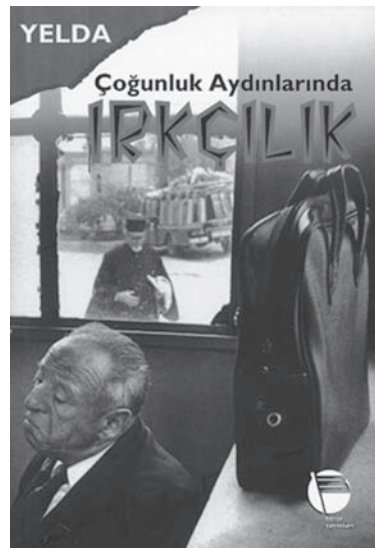
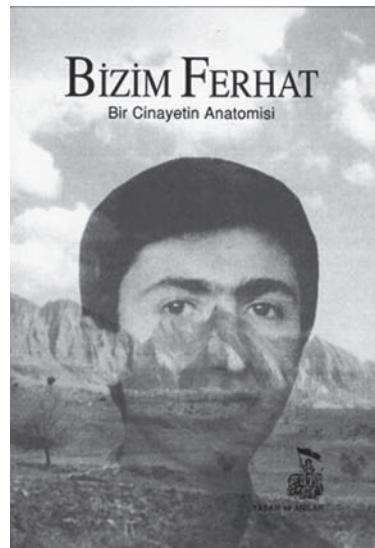
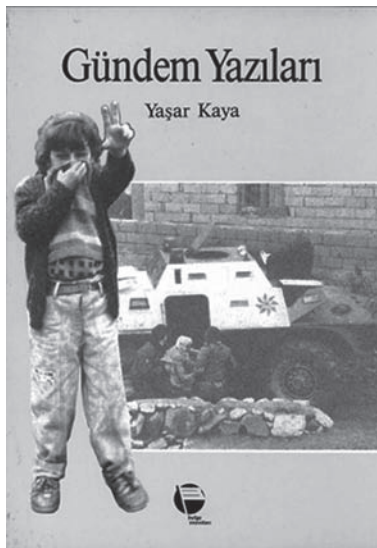
Previously, cases were initiated against Ragip and Belge for publishing Professor Dora Sakayan's *Garabed Hacheryan's Izmir Journal: An Armenian Doctor's Experiences* and George Jerjian's *The truth will set us free/Armenians and Turks Reconciled*. As Bjorn Smith-Simonsen, Chairman of the IPA Freedom to Publish Committee, had observed at the time: "Ragip Zarakolu has been subjected to a series of long, time-consuming and expensive court hearings ... The conduct of the trial in itself has begun to take the form of harassment and punishment against the defendant for *daring to produce works that touch on sensitive issues*" (IPA/IFEX, 14 December 2007).

As BIA News noted in 2002, whole print-runs of dozens of books at Belge had previously been confiscated and in 1995 the offices of publishing house Belge, run by Ragip and the late Ayse Zarakolu, "were fire-bombed": "Run from a basement in Istanbul, Belge published pioneering books acknowledging the Kurds' very existence and historical works on the atrocities in the early years of the twentieth century against the Ottoman

Empire's large Armenian minority Armenians – and on the Greeks ... The publication in the early 1990s of the poems of Medhi Zana *in Kurdish* was enough to bring charges of *separatist propaganda* under the draconian anti-terrorism law. In 1997, [Belge] published in Turkish *Wie teuer ist die Freiheit? (What's the cost of freedom?)*, a collection of articles and reports by German journalist Lissy Schmidt, who had been killed three years earlier on assignment in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq. The book was banned and confiscated by the government, while [Ayse] Zarakolu and the book's two translators were sent for trial ...

"In 1977, [the late Ayse] and Ragip set up Belge with the mission of 'striking down taboos' and 'investigating the rights of minorities' ... In 1990, [Belge] published a work by Ismail Besikci, a sociologist who was the first academic to work on ... the Kurdish question and about the Kurdish people in Turkey and who was imprisoned for 15 years for his books. [Ayse] Zarakolu became the first publisher imprisoned under Turkey's 1991 anti-terror law when she was jailed for five months for printing another book by Besikci in 1993. 'I am here today since *thought* has been deemed a "crime", indeed a *terrorist crime*', she wrote from her prison cell. 'Like writers, publishers are also preparing their suitcases not for new studies and works but for prison ... As long as people cannot express their identities and their views, they are *not* really free', she wrote just before her arrest in 1994. 'We believe in what we are doing. Despite fines and possible future prison sentences, we at Belge will continue to give suppressed voices a chance to be heard. If we persist, we will win'."

Belge has also faced court cases for publishing Vahakn Dadrian's *Genocide as a Problem of National and International Law*. Other published books have included: Migirdich Armen's *Heghnar's Fountain*; Franz Werfel's *Forty Days in Musa Dagh*; Tessa Hoffman's *Talaat Pasha Trials in Berlin*; David Gaunt's *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors (Katliamlar, Direniş, Koruyucular)* about the Assyrian Genocide (in Turkish); Avetis Ahorianian's *The Fedayees*; Peter Balakian's *Black Dog of Fate* and the Turkish translation of *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*. A book on the history of the Turkish Communist Party, published in 1982, "was banned and later burned by the generals as a threat to social order and Ragip's wife was brought to trial" (BBC News, 12 April 2008). Targeting has taken on many forms: Ayse was "denied a passport between 1993 and 1998 (it was returned the day after she had been due to fly to Germany to pick up an award at the Frankfurt Book Fair)" (Bianet, 15 February 2002). Ragip "was banned from travelling outside the country between 1971 and



1991” (Kemal Ozmen, Bianet, 18 January 2005).

As Jean Rafferty has noted with concern: “Ragıp Zarakolu has spent a total of two years in prison, some of it *in isolation*. His publishing house has been firebombed; he has had constant financial struggles, but still he carries on, not just writing his own articles but publishing [via Belge] and distributing radical literature by others ... In 1977, he and his wife Ayşe set up a publishing house to print the works of independent thinkers. Their range included classic political theorists such as Tom Paine and John Stuart Mill ... In the 1980’s, after the military coup by General Kenan Evren, the couple began publishing a series of works by people who had been in prison. ‘They were writing their poetry on little pieces of paper, which they sent secretly, sewn into shirts and other things. Nearly half a million were imprisoned in five years. A generation of university students stayed there a long time. With my wife, we thought it was very important to get their voices to the outside. The military authorities thought all the younger generation were *terrorists* but we wanted to show their culture. We published poetry, novels, stories, reportage. Some of them won awards’. And some of them were sentenced to death ... Ragıp Zarakolu and his wife were watched the whole time, their phones tapped. Many other publishers were unable to take the pressure. They themselves closed their own publishing houses and bookshops. Some even burnt books in their own homes”. But Ragıp and Ayşe continued to publish. “He was arrested in 1982; she was arrested in 1984. She was tortured ... Ayşe was a remarkable woman who was tried many times and who won many humanitarian awards in her lifetime. In 1984, she was arrested because she had given a job to a student who was wanted by the police. They tortured her to find out where he was. She refused to tell them ... ‘She was a very courageous woman’, says Ragıp. ‘She always succeeded not to go into depression or helplessness. She felt good because she could do something against power. She felt solidarity with people suffering’ ... The ‘Kurdish question’ – otherwise known as the genocide of ... Kurds – is one of the most contentious issues in Turkey today. Both Zarakolus had spoken out openly about it and about the genocide of a million Armenians from 1915 till the establishment of the Turkish state in 1923” (Jean Rafferty, Norsk PEN – Accessed at: <http://www.norskpen.no/pen/Zarakolu2.html>). In 2004, the European Court of Human Rights “condemned Turkey ... for convicting publisher Ayşe Nur Zarakolu for publishing a book about the murder of journalist Ferhat Tepe” (*Reporters Without Borders*, 19 August 2007).

English PEN has confirmed that a trial against Ragıp and Belge “opened on 24 September 2003 under article 312 of the Penal Code for publication of the book *12 Eylül Rejimi Yargılanıyor* (*The Regime of 12 September on Trial*), edited by Dr Gazi Çağlar. [It was] said to have referred to the activities of the Turkish forces in South Eastern Turkey as ‘organised genocide’” (English PEN). Owen Bowcott (*The Guardian*, 13 April 2002) also noted the way in which Ayşe Zarakolu was being targeted by the state even after she passed away: “Two weeks after the death of this internationally renowned publisher, a letter arrived from No 1 state security court, ordering her to appear at 9am on March 21. ‘We have opened a case against you, in absentia’, the summons warned. ‘If you

do not come, you will be arrested’. After her son was arrested for his funeral oration, the trial date arrived. The lawyers assumed their positions and proceedings began. ‘It was like something out of the pages of Kafka’, says her widower, Ragıp Zarakolu. ‘Everybody was there: the prosecutor, advocate, judges, correspondents, friends. Only the place of the accused was empty’ ... Zarakolu’s alleged crime involved publication of a work entitled *The Song Of Liberty* by Huseyin Turhali, an exiled Kurdish lawyer. She is also being summonsed from her grave to answer charges that she published *The Culture Of Pontus*, an anthropological study by Omer Assan examining the ancient Greek heritage of the region around Trabzon on the Black Sea ...”.

A joint June 2008 statement by International PEN Writers in Prison Committee and the International Publishers’ Association confirmed, after another trial that Ragıp Zarakolu and Belge faced, that: “Observers believe that Zarakolu is being singled out by the more conservative elements of the judiciary because of his decades of struggle for freedom of expression, and particularly his promotion of minority rights. Throughout his life, Ragıp Zarakolu has been

pressure “has come as far as prosecuting the heroes of a novel”

subjected to a series of long, time-consuming and expensive court hearings. The conduct of the trial in itself took the form of harassment and punishment against the defendant for daring to produce works, which touch on sensitive issues such as the Armenian question, Kurdish and minority rights. The condemnation of Ragıp Zarakolu shows that the recent cosmetic change to Article 301 TPC was not enough to put an end to freedom of expression trials in Turkey. Turkish legislation ... must be amended or repealed to meet international standards, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union”.

Ragıp’s 2008 acceptance speech for the IPA Freedom to Publish award noted the following: “A deeply militarist mindset lays deep roots ... Unfortunately, since September 11, 2001, national security state anti-terror laws have been given even more power in Turkey – indeed, in many countries – to restrict freedom of expression. Our publishing house, Belge International Publishing, was targeted under anti-terror laws when we published books about the Kurdish Question and the Armenian genocide. *Books that critiqued state terror and condemned terrorism were accused under anti-terror law*. The Erdoğan government reformed the anti-terror law in 2004, deleting a clause that controlled the opposition press. But in 2006 the National Security Council demanded that the clause be restored in a stricter form. Now the Kurdish and opposition publications may be silenced for a year waiting for trials to begin. Their defence lawyers’ rights are restricted. Jailed journalists are sent to special isolation prisons where they have fewer rights than ‘ordinary’ criminals ...”.

The “Friends of Belge” Initiative

One of the aims of ‘Friends of Belge’ is to raise a solidarity fund to support Belge as it continues to be targeted in the ways outlined above. As Ara Sarafian observed in 2009, Mr. Zarakolu of Belge Press, amongst other things, “has been persecuted by the state for his involvement with the Armenian issue. Zarakolu is now facing considerable difficulties because of the cost of remaining active in Turkey. *When you are prosecuted, your offices bombed, your books banned, or bookstore owners ‘discouraged’ from carrying your books, there are inevitable consequences. Zarakolu needs financial support to remain afloat*” (Vincent Lima, Armenian Reporter, 1 July 2009). Bjorn Smith-Simonsen, Chairman of the IPA Freedom to Publish Committee, further confirms that “Ragıp Zarakolu has been subjected to a series of long, time-consuming and expensive court hearings. [One] case was postponed at least seven times since the first hearing in March 2005” (IPA/IFEX, 14 December 2007). In April 2008, four members of the European Parliament – Mrs Koppa, Mr Toubon, Mr Gaubert and Mr Kasoulides – “sent a letter to the Turkish Minister of Justice, Mr Sahin, in order to inform him of the Unions concern about the trial developments” facing Ragıp Zarakolu and Belge Press. “The MEP’s mention[ed] that the ‘long, costly and morally exhausting’ trial” he faced came “from ‘judicial relentlessness’”. They were also “worried about Mr Zarakolu’s ‘physical security’ regarding ‘nationalistic renewal in Turkey’, especially revealed by the ‘murder of Hrant Dink and the revelations referring to the criminal organization Ergenekon’. The MEPs ask[ed] Mr Sahin to ‘abrogate without any delay the 301 article and similar clauses’ of the Turkish Penal Code and ‘other legislative and statutory texts which are effective in Turkey’. They also ask[ed] for the cessation of ‘iniquitous prosecutions’ [against Mr Zarakolu]” (European Armenian Federation, 20 April 2008).

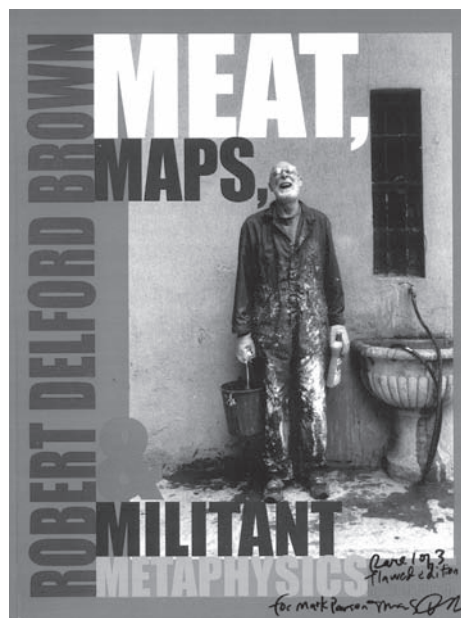
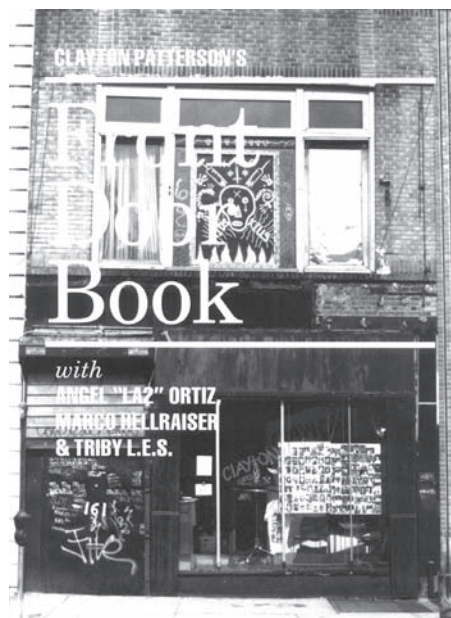
As ‘Friends of Belge’, we aim to provide whatever international solidarity and financial and moral support we can offer Ragıp Zarakolu and Belge Press. ‘Friends of Belge’ will issue regular press releases and e-bulletins to members alerting ‘friends’, concerned members of the public, human rights and freedom of expression campaigners, organisations, MPs and MEPs about the ongoing nature of court cases against Belge and other publishers in Turkey facing similar problems. We invite you to become a ‘Friend of Belge’ by emailing us and informing us of your interest in becoming a member. There is no fee for membership. If you are able to contribute in any financial manner towards the solidarity fund, please contact us to do so – all proceeds go to supporting Belge Press. No sums of money are diverted in any manner towards those running ‘Friends of Belge’. For any further information, or to request becoming a ‘Friend’ and/or to receive free e-mail updates, please contact us at: friendsofbelge@gmail.com or via ‘Friends of Belge Publishing’, 7 Nant Ffynnon, Nant Peris, Gwynedd, LL55 4UG.

We hope you will join and support us in this initiative.

‘Friends of Belge’: Patrons Professor Noam Chomsky and Rosie Malek-Yonan

Print Creations

Comic & Zine reviews Mark Pawson



When I first visited New York in the mid-1980s the Lower East Side (LES) seemed to be sporadically dotted with small street-level windows full of photos, prints, drawings, and other interesting objects. These ad hoc displays looked intriguing but it was hard to tell if they were notice boards, entrances to galleries, shops and studios, or just the creatively decorated front window of someone's apartment? Having read Clayton Patterson's *Front Door Book*, I discovered that the storefront at 161 Essex Street was at various times a gallery, shop, studio, workshop, community notice board, and home. For 30 years it's been the headquarters of artist and activist Clayton Patterson, who's tirelessly documented his neighbourhood in photographs and on video. His 3½ hour videotape of the 1988 Tompkins Square Park Riot led to as much controversy in New York as the 2009 capturing of Ian Tomlinson being attacked by riot officers in the City of London did in the UK. Clayton Patterson's front door photos were a long term collective portrait of his neighbourhood. From 1985 to 2002 each week he took hundreds of photographs of local residents in front of his graffiti encrusted front door, displaying a selection of them the next week on the constantly changing Hall of Fame notice board in the front window. This large format, full colour book reproduces 300 front door photos of families, workers, teens, courting couples, bowery bums, and kids who look far too young to be out on the street on their own. Patterson also managed to charm the local tough guys and bad boys into flashing smiles for his camera. Spanning a period during which the LES, once generally considered by outsiders as a drug- and crime-ridden no go area, had been 'cleaned up' and succumbed to the pervasive forces of gentrification and hipsterization, skyrocketing rents mean that many of the predominantly Hispanic LES locals in Clayton Patterson's photos have been displaced forever. The photos are accompanied by Patterson's extensive reminiscences of 30 years as a socially engaged LES resident, of a 1980s career as a hat designer making distinctive baseball caps embroidered all over with vibrantly coloured urban tribal symbols, and curator of tattoo and outlaw/outsider art exhibitions, together with oral history recordings and interviews with local characters like graffiti artist LA2 (who was Keith Haring's mentor and collaborator for a significant period of Haring's brief career and has largely gone unrecognised and unaccredited). *Clayton Patterson's Front Door Book* is a rare gem of a book, crammed with a wealth of information and seldom heard voices.

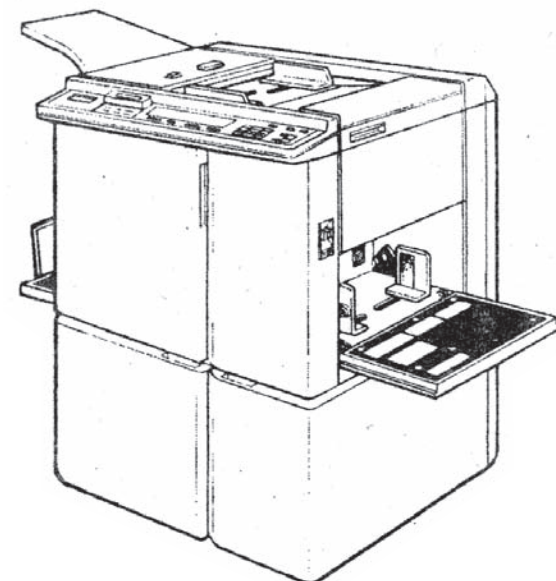
Robert Delford Brown (RDB) was another maverick New York artist, his provocative 1960/70s works received widespread attention at the time but have been largely forgotten since. After not selling any work from his first gallery show in 1952

he torched the lot, then hung out with painter Ed Moses and curator Walter Hopps in LA. RDB moved to New York in 1959 just as several major art movements were starting to emerge. He seems to have participated in almost every aspect of the avant-garde scene and somehow upset many of the other participants by always pushing the limits and being a little bit too extreme and 'out there'. The scope of his work included pop art, assemblage, conceptualism, happenings, performance, fluxus, mailart, installations, appropriation, readymades and artist's books. **Robert Delford Brown: Meat, Maps & Militant Metaphysics** is an affectionately compiled 156 page scrapbook of RDB's reminiscences, photos, articles from several notable critics, extracts from his books, press clippings and other ephemera, meticulously assembled by Mark Bloch shortly before Robert Delford Brown died in March 2009. Just a few examples illustrate how prescient RDB's work was: *The Meat Show* (1964) was an installation of 6,000lbs of raw meat hung against yards of sheer white fabric in a walk-in refrigerated locker, giving the effect of a butcher's boudoir, admission was 75 cents and the 3 day show received international press coverage. *Ideal Self Portrait* (1966) was a reconstructed portrait of the artist made by a professional photo retoucher who worked from a mangled passport photo of RDB. His tinted photographs series (1965-72) were laboriously hand tinted large scale photo enlargements of Victorian pornography and photos from medical text books intended to be more shocking than Warhol's *Death and Disaster* paintings. *The First National Church Of Exquisite Panic Inc.*, legally founded in 1968, was his very own 'whatever the heck I want it to be' fake religion which issued numerous goofy manifestos and doctrines and appointed its own saints. More recently he organised the collaborative collage events *Sacred Action Glueings*. Robert Delford Brown was too much of an iconoclast to be part of anyone else's scene or movement, he was his own happening.

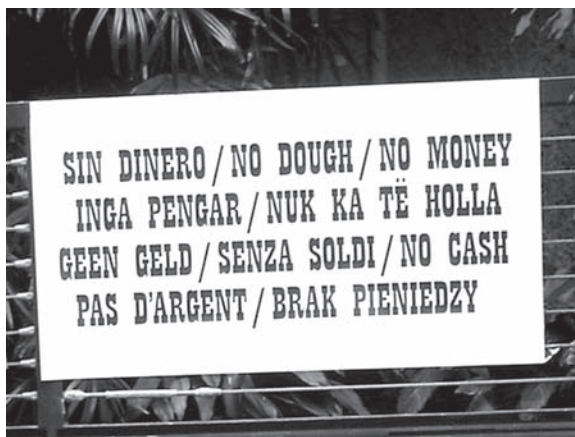
Graffiti on subway cars crosses the city once or twice before being buffed off with acid and high pressure water jets. Freight train graffiti can travel across a whole continent, coast-to-coast for years, slowly being eroded by the sun and rain. **MOSTLY TRUE** is a compendium of railroad graffiti, hobo culture and trainhopping lore, a retro-styled miscellany of over 50 years of writings, press clippings, interviews and photos, looking at traditional odd-jobbing migrant hobos and their modern day eco-punk counterparts, railwaymen who use chalk or paintsticks to embellish hundreds of wagons a day with their quickly executed flowing sketches and pseudonymous tags, aerosol brandishing upstarts, and contemporary street artists exploring the heritage and predecessors of their mark-making activities. **Mostly True** explores the multiple layers of freight train graffiti,

which is complicated and enriched by successive generations of moniker-mongers with pennames being bequeathed and borrowed, infamous graffiti tags being re-drawn, imitated and adapted. There's a photo album of train tagging by San Francisco artists Barry McGee and the late Margaret Kilgallen, who subtly blended their street tagging and painting styles with traditional freight train graffiti formats, plus an interview with railwayman Buz Blurr (a.k.a. Colossus of Roads) who has for 35 years sent his drawings travelling simultaneously via the railway and international postal art networks. The romance of freight train tagging and mysterious identities of some adherents is clearly what attracted **Bill Daniel** to the subject. He's accumulated a wealth of source material over 25 years of research and by juxtaposing the old and new, genuine and fake materials with no clear distinction he's careful to leave some of the mystique intact for readers of this book, as it says on the cover: **Mostly True**.

There seems to be a new wave of printers and publishers in the London getting their inky hands on stencil printers – recently I've picked up copies of **The Incidental**, a daily newsletter produced during the London Design Festival, and a booklet accompanying the **History Of Irritated Material Exhibition** at Raven Row which were both printed using this method. Digital Stencil Printers are low-cost, good quality, high-speed, eco-friendly printers. They're easy to use and are particularly suited to print runs of 100-1,000. They're the modern descendents of the duplicators and mimeograph machines made by Roneo and Gestetner. They look like photocopiers, but inside the greige plastic exterior is a drum of liquid ink and mechanism which automatically cuts a plastic stencil and wraps it round the drum. Japanese company Riso is the market leader with their range of Risograph machines – in recent years



the print quality has improved substantially and range of suitable papers has increased. Knust Stencildruk in Nijmegen, Netherlands, have been the acknowledged masters of stencil printing since the 1990s. I've printed a couple of my own books there, but for some reason Stencil Printers have taken a while to catch on in the UK. Digital Stencil Printers are relatively affordable making it possible to own the means of production. South London-based anarchists **Shortfuse Press**, with links to the long running **56a Infoshop**, recently printed **Everyone to the Streets**, a booklet of texts and communiqués from the 2008 Greek Uprising. They've had their Risograph for a couple of years and it's great to see that they've recently been joined by two East London groups with stencil printers – Ditto Press in Dalston and Landfill/Manymono in Hackney both seem to be focused on the art, design and illustration side of things. They both offer printing services and also sell their own publications and prints. There's been a significant increase in small press and self-publishing activity in the UK over the last 3-to-4 years, digital Stencil Printers are ideally suited to producing this type of material and I'm excited to see a new wave of small print shops appearing. I've enjoyed travelling to the Netherlands and staying to make books but the thought of being able to walk 15 minutes up the road in east London and do a small print job in an afternoon looks very attractive...

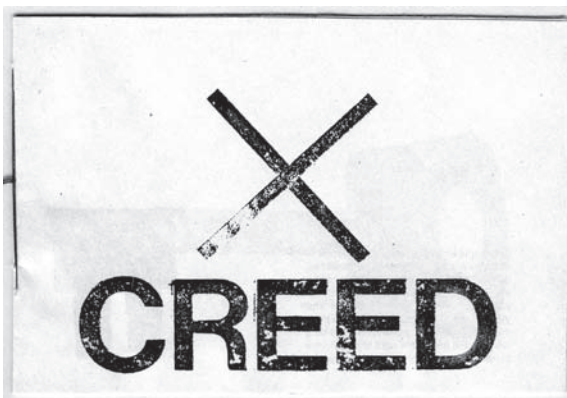


"London's first **Barterama**, the printed matter swap fair" was a one day event that took place as part of the 2009 **Radical Nature** exhibition at the Barbican. I wanted to take part, but for someone who for over 15 years has made their living, in part, from selling things at bookfairs this was going to be a challenge! At bookfairs there's always a small amount of trading between stallholders, which is part of the atmosphere, but compulsory bartering with anyone and everyone was going to be interesting. I packed an assortment of books, zines and badges plus a few things I just wanted to get rid of, but left the silkscreened limited edition £65 books at home. I didn't want to come back with a big pile of junk that I'd swapped for just out of politeness, so decided to mainly swap for books that I knew I'd read. There were about 18 stalls in the luscious tropical Barbican Conservatory, the only bookfair I've been to where there was a risk of getting parrot droppings on your books! There were plenty of graphic designers alongside donations from the Barbican Library and several publishers and bookshops who'd had stock cupboard clearouts. It looked like a jumble sale had collided with a bookfair, with old and new books, treasure and trash all mixed up together. The selection of stalls was enlivened by the late arrival of illustrator Jane Smith who brought along a selection of old board games, brightly coloured paper ephemera and collectible Barack Obama election campaign memorabilia. Through the day different trading strategies and tactics emerged, ranging from the equitable "One of mine for one of yours?", the economic value based "This is worth £10, what've you got that's worth £10", the cheeky

"Can I swap this book I just got at the stall over there and aren't really interesting in for something much better off your table?", and the desperate "Please just take some of these things away!" Some of most interesting exchanges were with visitors who didn't really know what to expect but had entered into the spirit of things by grabbing a few unwanted items off their bookshelves: "Yes I'll trade for the book you self-published about drawing", "No I really do not want to swap for a set of The Clash cocktail coasters!", "Well if you really haven't got anything at all to trade with, how about a black coffee from the cafe?" For those with long memories it's ironic that this small attempt at establishing an alternative economy took place in the shadow of the Barbican Business School's former location. **Barterama** was one of the most unique and enjoyable events of last year and has also importantly created a useful template which can be used for future exchange only events.



Village Pub Cinema by **Henry Ireland** is a tiny, rough-as-nails lino print book which tells a charming one sheet of paper one sentence story, and uses the foldout centrespread for a clever cinematic reveal. It looks like he was in such a hurry to make the book that he ripped up a kitchen floor tile, carved the images and text with a bread knife, and then printed it with axle grease! I may have over emphasized slightly. He's definitely been along to the art supplies shop and he probably knows who Frans Masereel is. What drew me to this book is the rawness and sense of urgency it conveys, reminiscent of Billy Childish's early books and prints.



Creed by **Kris Skellorn** shares the small format and rough edged black and white aesthetic of **Village Pub Cinema**. On a first glance at the cover stamped with a bold black cross I wrongly assumed that **Creed** was a product of the abstinent Straight Edge brand of 'Punk'. Inside the creditcard-sized booklet **Kris** lists his personal system of beliefs and principles in seven sections: Truth, Passion, Knowledge, Honour, Vigilance, etc. Short succinct paragraphs, each accompanied with a single hand drawn graphic: Key, Pill, Book, Samurai Sword, Hourglass. It seems eminently reasonable

in tone and manages to avoid preaching or bossiness, showing careful consideration by the author. Stating your creed seems a profoundly unfashionable thing to do these days, an outdated format a bit like publishing a handbook on manners and etiquette. But in an age of vacuous corporate Mission and Vision Statements it strikes me as quite a brave act to put yourself on the line in this way – I wouldn't have the courage to do it. Clayton Patterson also includes his personal credo in **Front Door Book**. Hmm, maybe this is a new trend that's somehow passed me by and everyone's doing it these days?



Book trade labels are the small printed labels which old booksellers used to stick inside the endpapers of books that passed through their hands. Fraser Muggeridge studio have published a small foldout poster that reproduces 80 vintage book trade labels, an instant collection of these small functional embellishments which neatly combine the booksellers address and decoration – all the examples are shaped like open or closed books. Printed in an appropriately old fashioned black, red and navy blue colour scheme, it's essential eye candy for image junkies, graphic design geeks and antiquarians alike.

Info & orders

Clayton Patterson's Front Door Book
www.oh-wow.com
patterson.no-art.info

Robert Delford Brown: Meat, Maps & Militant Metaphysics
www.panmodern.com

Mostly True
www.billdaniel.net
www.microcosmpublishing.com

Stencil Printers
shortfuse@alphabetthreat.co.uk
www.dittopress.co.uk
www.landfilleditions.com
www.extrapool.nl

Barterama
www.occasionalpapers.org

Village Pub Cinema
www.folksy.com/shops/hrjireland

Creed
kris.skellorn@gmail.com

Book Trade Labels From Around The World
pleasedonotbend.co.uk
www.sevenroads.org

Doodley-doo? Doodley don't!

Life and Sabotage

Gesa Helms

The Doodle Notebook.
How to Waste Time in the Office
Claire Faÿ (2006) Thames & Hudson

Sabotage in the American workplace.
Anecdotes of dissatisfaction, mischief and revenge
Martin Sprouse, ed, (1992) Pressure Drop Press and AK Press

1. Doodling

In early 2008 a series of publications appeared. They were targeted at the creative public, or more precisely, the creative office worker. These publications were treated in media reviews as a bit cheeky, a bit mischievous. *The Guardian* produced a 20-page supplement¹ in conjunction with the publisher, Thames & Hudson, of one of these publications; Claire Faÿ's *The Doodle Notebook. How to Waste Time in the Office*. *The Doodle Notebook* had originally appeared in French in 2006, and its English translation was noted with the usual exoticism of anything from the continent and that peculiar mix of admiration, envy and derision that accompanies British reports on strikes across the Channel and how they impact on British life.

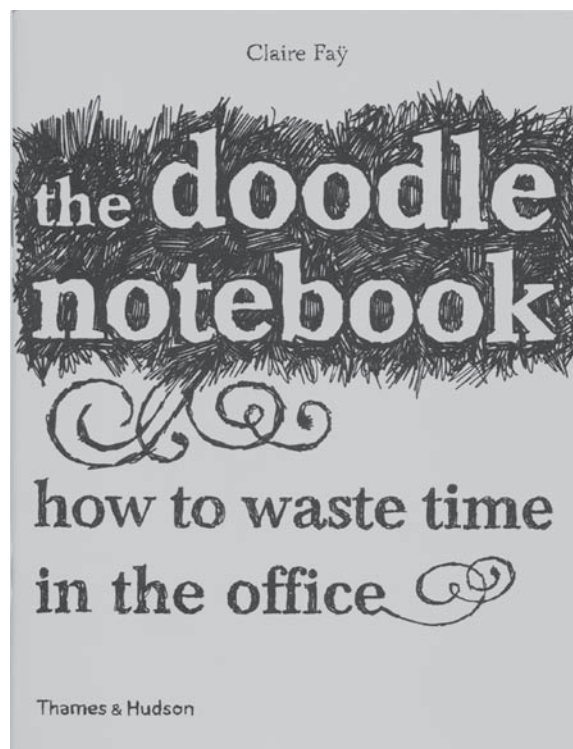
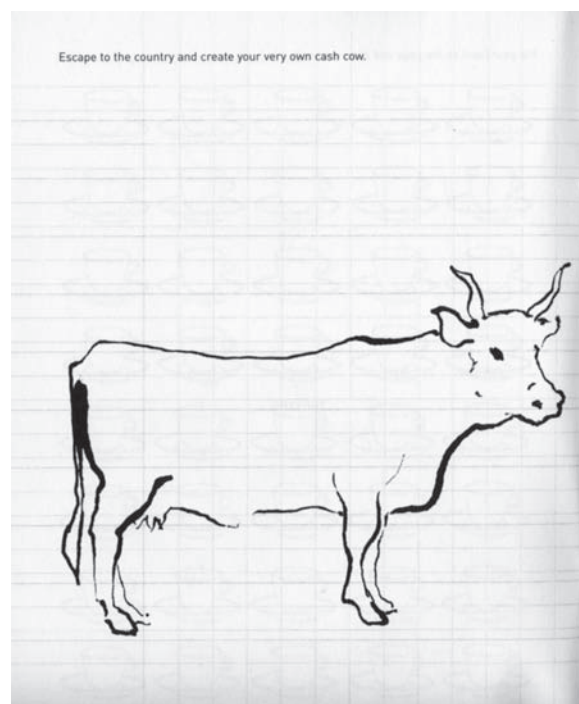
Published in the shape of an A5 sketchbook, in softcover and stapled, *The Doodle Notebook* is a colouring book for the bored office worker. In fact, it is so much more if we read the back cover:

"Here is a book that will enable you to take on the daily grind of office life armed with nothing more than a sense of humour, a wild imagination and a few bits of stationery. Your inner child will be endlessly entertained. And your co-workers will be envious in the extreme..."

There are two lines of enquiry for this review (of an admittedly rather unimportant book that has already received far more than its fair share of coverage):

- what kind of practices are proposed "to take on the daily grind"?
- who can propose such practices and who can engage in them?

Following these two lines, I want to critically engage doodling in a debate over work-place agency, resistance and sabotage; to draw out the limitations constructed for creative office



workers; and provide a couple of openings to raise implications for a politics on work, autonomy, subversion if we were to arm ourselves with a bit of stationery.

a. The practices proposed.

These are, in the main, individualised: to be done at one's (hot)desk, possibly to show off the artwork to colleagues over lunch, always supposing you have lunch at the same time and communally. Doodling is designed to let off steam and to help you progress with your career.

How are we enticed to doodle? Firstly, by filling in our name, age, qualifications, what we wanted to be when we grew up, what we actually do now, and when we started the book. Over the thirty-odd pages, in a retro-style quaint font type accompanied by affected pen-and-ink clip-art, the pages invite you to doodle, to punch holes with a paper punch or knitting needles, to staple the drawings provided. Some invite you to involve your colleagues; they concern your state of mind, your happiness, the office boredom, but also your career prospects. For example:

- "Problem solving made simple: cross it out and turn the page"
- Filling up rows of tea cups "should be just our cup of tea"
- An image of a cow encourages us to "escape to the country and to create our very own cash cow"
- "Appraise and erase: name your team, wield your pen, and perform some strategic downsizing" in a page full of stick people
- "Take your pick. Which direction is your career about to take?"
- "Draw your boss's boots and lick as often as necessary"
- "Draw your icing on the cake"
- A page full of sugar cubes is to be torn into small pieces, "Then give a little sprinkle to anyone who's feeling bitter."
- "Let your life spiral out of control" by completing pre-drawn spirals
- "How are you feeling? Join the dots and find out."

Oh, and did I mention its gender politics (on the quiet)?:

- A plate is to be filled "with all the food your heart desires" for "a low-calorie lunch break"
- "Who has the biggest mouth in the office? Draw her and tape her mouth shut." All we see to start with are a pair of seductive eyes.



How does this involve a "wild imagination" as promised on the back cover? The suggested doodles are terribly restrictive: they are about drawing by numbers, tippexing out and stapling. If they invited readers to develop their own little schemes, fair enough, but as it stands this is rather lame. Lame in the sense that it is a prescriptive, highly regulated activity. And in this, it is well adjusted to the prescriptive and regulated office environment. Boredom rules but not in the way of unproductive timewasting but highly regulated routine tasks which are timed, divided and targeted. The extent to which regulatory surveillance is part and parcel of the contemporary office environment is shown by the "militant enquiry" undertaken by the German libertarian communist group Kolinko in call centres in the Ruhr area.²

b. Authors and workers.

The Doodle Notebook's author is present through her absence, as she only surfaces in an endorsement on the back cover:

"Claire Faÿ is a successful author and graphic designer in her native France."

Faÿ joins the increasing number of freelance creative folk who turn their hand to anything and anything turns to added value in the process. There are visionary artists who have rediscovered car boots sales as a way of beating the recession³ and there are young fashion designers who design out of an outbuilding on their parents' farm⁴. Alongside this value production goes the promotion and making of personality by CV, statement and press release, with a key ingredient being the proclamation how all of this is done for oneself. The desperation in attached CVs, redundant press releases and the demonstration of creative frugality remains silent and so obvious in omission. Because: These authors, artists, designers are successful in what they do. For Faÿ, being "successful" is the condition *sine qua non* for publishing her book. She can promote mischief precisely because she is not on the dole, she is not a benefit scrounger. Instead, she puts it succinctly herself in the *Guardian* supplement:

"The 30-year-old graphic designer insists her mission is constructive: she is not to knock the business world or incite mutiny among office workers. The basic principle is to doodle to evacuate your stress, your dark thoughts, your boredom, whatever riles you, and to transform

it into positive energy,' she says. 'When we evacuate stress we become more efficient at work, because we managed to release what's been blocking us.'⁵

The notebook is dedicated: "To Véronique, who needs a job, and to Violette, who needs a more exciting job." It closes with: "THE END Véronique has a new job, and Violette isn't bored at work any more. How about you?" The author remains invisible other than as a designer for the doodle pages and for this dedication and closing statement. The dedication and its conclusion at the end of the notebook are full of implication. Their implication is one of progression and development: just as much as Faÿ is successful and well integrated with her (now freelance) work, doodling will also help you and me to become a better and more productive worker.

2. Labour process and wilfulness (i)

Faÿ's mischievous doodling briefly opens the door towards labour process studies and social history, by seemingly acknowledging subversiveness in the workplace, but really only to wave through the business consultants to promote more 'creative' self-management to boost performance. Let's not let the consultants in, and instead consider how labour process and social history have pinpointed a whole field of precisely what constitutes work/place/struggles?

For this, I would like to draw on the work of German-speaking everyday historians and their studies into factory, home and state control/routines and practices.⁶ At the centre of Alf Lüdtke's and his colleagues' work⁷ resides the concept of *Eigen-Sinn*:

"... wilfulness, spontaneous self-will, a kind of self-affirmation, an act of (re)appropriating alienated social relations on and off the shop floor by self-assertive prankishness, demarcating a space of one's own. There is a disjunction between formalized politics and the prankish, stylized, misanthropic distancing from all constraints or incentive present in the everyday politics of *Eigen-Sinn* ... It is semantically linked to *aneignen* (appropriate, reappropriate, reclaim)."⁸

Eigen-Sinn as wilfulness and distanciation is employed to study the continuous struggle over workplace practices, such as the measurement and definition of what constitutes worktime: both the extension of worktime and attempts to limit or to 'rationalise' breaks and maintenance routines. These struggles are traced through workplace

regulations and archival material, following Lüdtke's⁹ acute observation that the multitude of worktime-related warnings and regulations, frequently issued by factory owners, signal a constant need to keep controlling worktime to increase productivity.

Along with E P Thompson's work¹⁰, it sheds doubt on those approaches to industrial relations that regard the implementation of a mechanical discipline of time as a given fact of industrialisation.¹¹ Important to Lüdtke are those acts of re-appropriation of time by the workers. In historical diary entries and observational records of the time, he finds those practices by which time was appropriated for sociality and recreation within the working day. To a large extent of a practical, embodied nature, these practices were not primarily supporting political discussions and debates but arose out of individuals working together on a daily basis and a resulting intimacy that expressed itself in good-humoured practical jokes:

"Above all, (whenever you could) you enjoyed a joke, a tease or pulling someone's leg. Among close colleagues, who understood such teasing, everyone tried to play a trick on someone else. One hid and threw clay at unsuspecting passers-by, another secretly pulled apron strings, or pulled out seats from underneath during a break, or suddenly stood in someone's way, or they just made fun of each other."¹²

Here we have a whole series of practices that workers engage in which are about self-expression, about stealing and making time out of the routine of factory work. Many of them are individual attempts to "take on the daily grind" but in contrast to doodling they are not about being a more productive worker at the end of it.

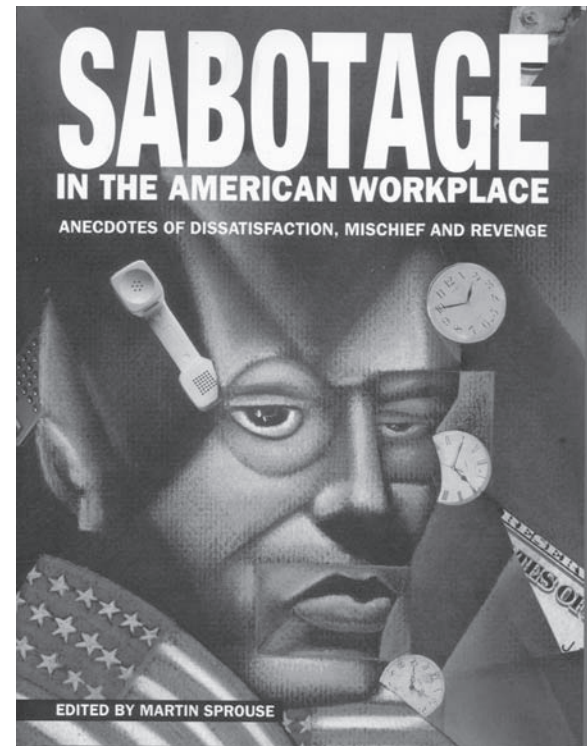
3. Sabotage at work

The second book in this review is very much concerned with "taking on the daily grind", and does so explicitly in opposition to becoming a more productive worker. It is Martin Sprouse's edited collection of *Sabotage in the American workplace. Anecdotes of dissatisfaction, mischief and revenge*, published jointly by Pressure Drop Press and AK Press in 1992, nearly two decades earlier (and now out of print).

The book contains a short introduction by the editor and more than 130 individual stories, written in the first person as told by the saboteurs themselves. The stories are structured by industry sector, including, for example, transportation, food processing, catering, office work, creative industries, military, sex work, and manufacturing. Each story is a few paragraphs long and is accompanied by varied additional material such as excerpts from newspaper articles, employment manuals, poetry and statistics.

In the introduction, Sprouse explains how he developed the publication when he took employment in a mail room at the bottom of the pecking order in a San Francisco financial magazine in the late 1980s. To him it was clear that he had to take this poorly paid and uninspiring job. Not only in the mail room but right across the company he realised that his co-workers shared his attitude of minimal commitment:

"Dissatisfaction started with us in the basement [where the mail room was located] and rose all the way up to the desk where the CEO's secretary worked. Discontent was matched by an equal amount of sabotage. The company postage machine, long distance telephone lines and expense accounts were considered public domain... There I was in a typical American office, witnessing sabotage done by almost every level of staff. It was a clear reflection of how they felt toward the company and it made their jobs more tolerable.

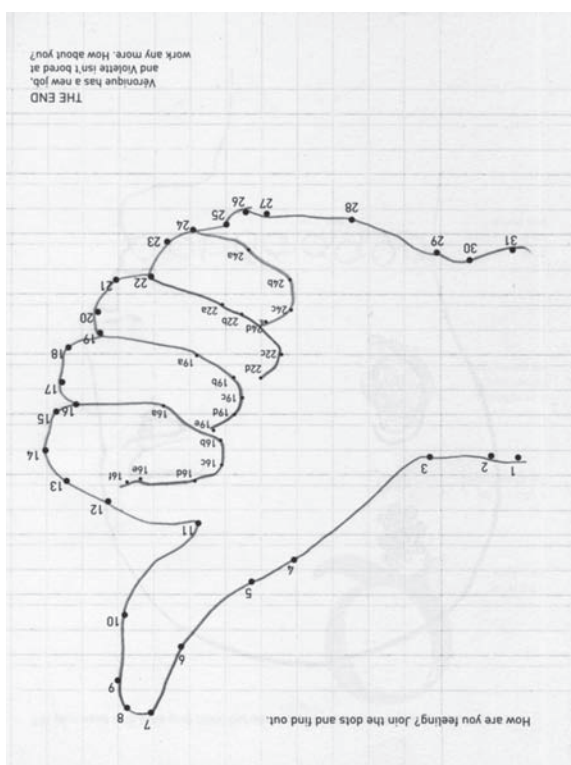


Sabotage was part of most employees' daily routines, and so widespread that it was barely noticeable. I doubt that even the most observant of managers had a clue about what was going on." (p. 2)

Following this work, he began to search for stories of sabotage, which he defines loosely as "anything that you do at work that you're not supposed to do" (p. 3). For the book, Sprouse started by approaching (with little success) financial workers during lunch hours but quickly changed to recruiting through friends and colleagues. Once people knew about his project they approached him. He also followed up stories that he read in newspapers. One of the motivations for the project arose from the almost exclusive focus of (US) labour history on strikes and walkouts in the early 20th century, while sabotage was given little attention. Here, his motivation resonates with the everyday historians' interest in workplace practices such as those over work time. With the project, Sprouse discovered the wide range of reasons and choice of means for different types of sabotage; he saw as such, the practice as reflection of personal characters and particular jobs. The motivation ranged from altruism to revenge. Some of his interviewees barely survived on meagre wages, others were earning significant amounts of money. Some acts of sabotage were highly dramatic, others very quiet. Take for example:

- Lazlo, computer programmer. He was employed to improve what he saw as 'one of the worst designed systems' for a large bank payroll software. He was angry that he was only allowed to patch things up for a waste of a programme and for that he wasn't given the time he needed yet had to take the blame for shortcomings of the main software. The dispute escalated to the point that he decided to replace the old payroll programme with a new one which would delete the software entirely. 'Once it started failing, all the other programs started deleting themselves. The logic bomb had a chain reaction effect. It started out small, but then all of a sudden the entire system was corrupted.' (p. 24). While nobody got paid on pay day on the Northern California network and workers were out of pocket, Lazlo sees the resulting damage to the bank's respectability far more significant as well as the fact that some supervisors were fired. While everyone knew he did it, he legally didn't commit an offence as deleting data wasn't a punishable act at the time.

- Harvey, mural painter. His bosses don't like painting people in their commercial projects neither do they like anything conceptual. All the while, they want to be seen as artists. So, while Harvey tries to focus on the upsides of his job such as little monotony, he nonetheless gets very wound up by the pretend nature of his bosses' art. His outlet is to introduce Francis Bacon portraits and a SS stormtrooper into a mural funded by Walt Disney Corporation to provide a social commentary on the world elsewhere. Yet, he says that "it's really hard to get away with anything more. I've been told to repaint fruit in still lifes because they were too suggestive. I didn't do it on



purpose, but once they called my attention to it, I started to figure out ways that I could do it and get away with it" (p. 30).

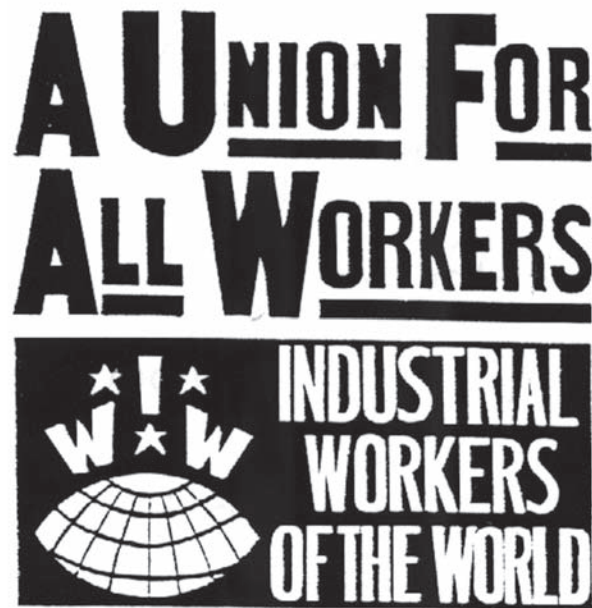
• Christian, executive assistant. After some progression at work in a large retail corporation, Christian saw not much chance for further career advancement since no women were in any senior management positions in the company. For three years, she published a magazine out of her main job: by photocopying around 8,000 sheets of papers for each issue. She would do this in early morning shifts before her co-workers arrived and smuggle the paper out little by little, worried the security guards would catch her but they never approached her. Besides, she "stole anything [she] could get [her] hands on and sold it at yard sales...It didn't even have to be anything I needed or wanted" (p.61). Her rationale? "They could have paid me thirty times more for my work and it still wouldn't have come close to how much they profited from me... I think good mischief is well worth the personal effort, especially when people are so incredibly underpaid for their efforts" (ibid).

Sabotage in the American workplace is a fascinating account of US workplace practices across a restructuring economy towards the end of the 20th century. With this, Sprouse and the wider project has provided an important contribution as well as a corrective to some of the conventional stories of labour history. It also provides a reference point in the late-20th century to the Industrial Workers of the World, the only major union to advocate sabotage as a means of struggle. The project is firmly situated within (albeit non-syndicalist) anarchist traditions. Its self organisation (rather than on the back of a funded academic research project) is visible throughout the publication, its framing and its construction. It is able to trace and make visible practices of sabotage as wide-ranging and wide-spread as letting an unsafe bus run out of oil (Preacher), deleting out-dated software (Lazlo), or ignoring the 'Oh, Miss' calls from passengers by flight attendant Rita. The publication provides evidence for its starting point that:

"[a]s long as people feel cheated, bored, harassed, endangered, or betrayed at work, sabotage will be used as a direct method of achieving job satisfaction--the kind that never has to get the bosses' approval." (p. 7)

However, the project's origins and its presentation of well over one hundred individual accounts is also part of the book's problem: we are provided with a multitude of rationales, practices and contexts for individuals' acts of dramatic or quiet sabotage. The interviewees provide accounts of how, of course, many of their practices result from social and collective experiences. I would have liked to have seen this being developed further within the publication – and I am making this point while being aware of the constraints of self-organising such a large project. Here, Kolinko's enquiry into the working conditions, contemporary class composition and scope for resistance expands on the scope of *Sabotage in the American workplace*¹³.

Sprouse's central argument is that sabotage is commonplace and widespread in the labour process and the social relations of the office, factory and other work places.¹⁴ Here, Fay's proposition to seek a new job, and if possible go freelance, profoundly affects workplace practices of "all [the] things one does at work and is not supposed to do", as Sprouse defined sabotage. It calls into question the processes of responsabilisation, self-management and discipline that take place when (creative and other) workers turn into the embodiment of capitalist and worker in one person as a freelancer or soletrader. The extent to which this is complicated is visible in a contemporary project about skiving, which invites people to submit accounts of their skiving practice, which seems to include a lot of shopping, reading *Hello* magazine, or indeed researching and learning for other and new jobs while at work.¹⁵



4. Labour process and wilfulness (ii)

The instruction to doodle in order to "evacuate stress" at the workplace constructs a particular kind of agency. It is one that is not dissimilar to some of the debates over resistance as has figured in cultural studies writing. The human geographer Tim Cresswell observed that "any act that is not clearly the result of dominant structures has been described as resistance. Simply choosing to do something is resistance." While this view does not construct people as passive consumers, it is in danger of placing them in a simplistic chain reaction, as "making choices, consuming, resisting. These will be seen as evidence for everyday heroism and the analysis will stop here."¹⁶ Cresswell provides an interesting and astute reason for this fashion. He argues that as a shift away from structuralist explanations occurs, many academics are keen to demonstrate their disapproval of structuralist explanations. Thus they focus in on agency and what is perceived to be its most pronounced form (as pitched against structure as domination), namely resistance. In so doing, resistance and agency become synonymous and any analytical value of either concept is lost. This argument is further developed in Cindi Katz's research on the everyday lives of children amidst global economic restructuring. She proposes to: "... delineate between the admittedly overlapping material social practices that are loosely considered 'resistance' to distinguish those whose primary effect is autonomous initiative, recuperation, or resilience; those that are attempts to rework oppressive and unequal circumstances; and those that are intended to resist, subvert, or disrupt these conditions of exploitation and oppression."¹⁷

Thereby, Katz's proposition provides a closely nuanced and strongly focused perspective of agency and actual social practices. Such actual praxis allows for those undetermined, creative moments of practical knowledge, while holding on

to some of the more reflexive capacities of agency. It is praxis (and agency) made and produced in particular social and historical processes. E P Thompson's *Making of the English Working-Class* investigated the making of class to be a complex process of subjectification. It is premised upon a thoroughly relational understanding of class not as a " 'structure', nor even as a 'category', but as something which in fact happens (and can be shown to have happened) in human relationships".¹⁸

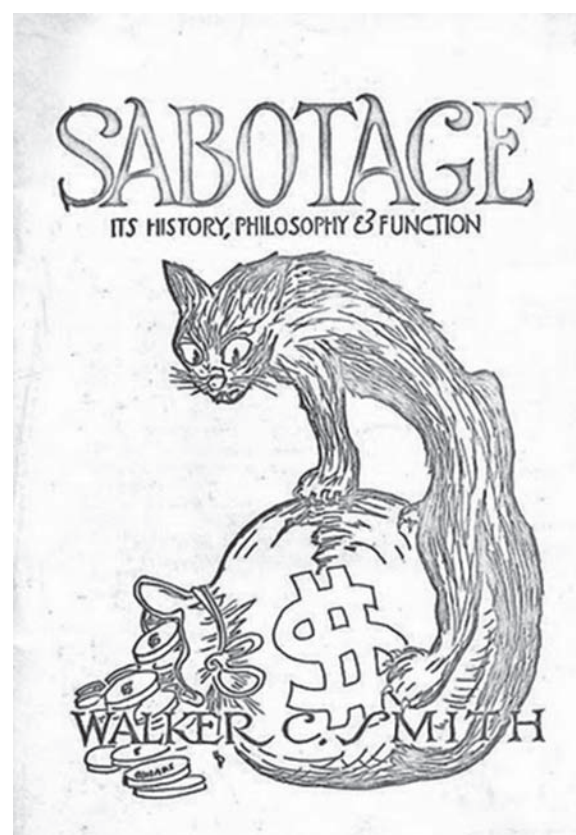
With Thompson's definition of class as the way how people live their own histories,¹⁹ particular experiences therein are "experiences that are singled out by attention"²⁰ and build up profiles of one's own needs and those of others. Raymond Williams²¹ structures of feeling pointed towards the specific modes of experiencing (and subject formation) as specific for groups sharing the attributes of gender or common workplace, household, or neighbourhood. Such shared experience:

"...was not only overt expressions which 'played upon' the forms of communication that were current (or at least intelligible) in the various reference groups. Even communicative silences and the often richly nuanced forms of complaisance, distancing and wilful *Eigen-Sinn* ... never reflected needs that were merely individual. It is always a question of the organization of social relations - a matter of politics."²²

Eigen-Sinn provides, too, such a nuanced and focused position of agency which is closely tied to the everyday and its routinised practices upon which agents only partially reflect. It is constituted through shared experiences and as such the result cannot be reduced to individualised activity – be it doodling, cross-dressing and repackaging Barbie dolls in a toy store or filling army generators with diesel instead of petrol. Such *Eigen-Sinn* reflects the historical materialist statement that "[c]onsciousness [*das Bewusstsein*] can never be anything else than conscious existence [*das bewusste Sein*], and the existence of men [sic] is their actual life-process."²³ With *consciousness* and *being* not relating to each but instead are each other, there is no such thing as unconscious being. This argument has two significant implications. Firstly, it radically closes down the possibility for a humanism that reifies character traits, needs and fixity as human nature; or indeed reinvents itself as barely masked moral authoritarianism that calls on common decency or aspiration.²⁴ Life and the life process do not call upon ontology but reside in social praxis, nowhere else.

"This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the production of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production."²⁵

Secondly, it is not only exchange value that is socially produced but so is use value and the form of its production socialised. Detlef Hartmann's *Leben als Sabotage [Life as Sabotage]*²⁶ develops these two arguments in tandem to prise open the extent to which the social factory not only appropriates our concrete labour but also life as



such. His arguments were developed in the context of 1980s West Germany but are worth revisiting in the light of doodling. His arguments, resonating with the Italian *Operaismo*, shed light on the extent to which labour divests and relinquishes itself [entaeussert] in the 'social', or indeed increasingly 'diffuse', factory. The 'social factory' was used in Italy in the 1960s to understand the extent to which workplace struggles extend into and in fact are constituted by the social relations in which they are produced. The 'diffuse factory' points beyond the factory-based struggles to signify labour that is premised increasingly, across skills and sectors, on immaterial labour. With precarity, flexibility and informality being one signifier of this immaterial labour, Maurizio Lazaratto²⁷ develops its significance in relation to sabotage. The call to 'become a subject' (at the workplace), as proclaimed by management in the wake of post-fordist restructuring, itself was highly authoritarian. It was less an offer but more a demand: to express oneself, to take responsibility and to be understood (by assuming a simplistic model of communication). New cycles of production premised on such subjectivity take place right across society, not being confined to the factory. They draw on a variety of work skills from manual skills to entrepreneurial ones to manage social relations and elicit co-operation. Often project-based, immaterial labour is marked by precarity and production of contemporary subjectivities where:

"[b]ehind the label of the independent 'self-employed' worker, what we actually find is an intellectual proletarian, but is recognized as such only by the employers who exploit him or her." (p. 137f)

Furthermore:

"It is worth mentioning that in this kind of working existence it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish leisure time from work time. In a sense, life becomes inseparable from work." (ibid)

Lazaratto's aesthetic model of the production of communication (by immaterial labour), which in itself presents valorization, is expressed in those constructions of self-achieved and aspired lives with Faÿ as successful author encourages through doodling. Yet, the opening for sabotage or radical change – for Lazaratto, similar to Hartmann – lies in the fact that in the context of immaterial labour the whole of the social relation is productive. This type of production changes the relationship between production and consumption but more importantly,

"it also poses a problem of legitimacy for the capitalist appropriation of this process. This co-operation [between capital and immaterial labour] can in no case be predetermined by economics, because it deals with the very life of society." (ibid, p. 145)

5. Openings

The divestment and in this process the realisation of (abstract) life as (abstract) labour in the diffuse factory continues to move on, as exemplified by Faÿ's 'creative' proposition of doodling yourself to a happier worklife. Her future is one not marked by boring offices that replaced boring factories (boring as fragmented, mind-numbing though often very stressful, demanding work routines to meet targets on the back of numbness) but by freelancing. The promotion of flexible work patterns and portfolio working among creative workers, crafty homeknitters and visionary artists has implications: the experiences made and shared as the workplace changes and power relations of boss and workers are simultaneously internalised (as soletrader I manage my own labour) and externalised in a working and funding environment that thrives on precariousness, disinvestment and privatisation. As Angela McRobbie argues:

"The promotion of creative work has ... become a depoliticising strategy, a way of removing politics from work and replacing it instead with notions of self-gratification, reward and self-expression."²⁸



The Doodle Notebook was published in Spring 2008. It would have not been published a year later, just as the unfolding of recession was gathering ever more speed, the news full of people being made redundant and people being grateful to have negotiated a 0% pay rise or a reduced working week for reduced pay. All the while they pay for a financial sector they do not want nor need; for services that need more investment while service providers (public and private) divest themselves of much of what is left in social-economic infrastructure. In all this, however, sabotage as life or on the quiet is as important as ever if not more so: the reasons for poorly paid, exploitative working conditions and one's ability to navigate these are not one's skills set, aspirations or creative self-management but the power relations that are made in social praxis. Contemporary subject formations too are the making of such social praxis. Discovering the basis for happiness and contentment among frugality is not an individual endeavour, even less so when it is part of the contemporary assault on concrete life. Sabotage for immaterial labour deserves careful attention.

Notes

1. 'Get doodling! How to waste time at work', *The Guardian*, 8 March 2008.
2. The concept of militant enquiry, and its particular focus on critique, enquiry and class composition is used in the German-speaking world by Wildcat <<http://www.wildcat-www.de>> and others to signify what Kolinko express as having: "decided to start working in call centres in order to meet people who work there and to understand what's going on. We wanted to combine our rage against the daily exploitation with the desire and search for the struggles that can overcome it. Therefore, we had to understand the class reality at this point, be part of the conflicts and intervene." Kolinko 2002 Hotline - Call centre inquiry communism, <http://libcom.org/library/hotlines-call-centre-inquiry-communism>, accessed 14 March 2010.
3. 'The Artist, The Recession, The Secret Shop & The Car Boot Sale!', press release 16 November 2009, <http://www.claregalloway.co.uk>, accessed 12 March 2010.
4. 'From Manure to Couture', *The Herald*, 14 November 2009.
5. Sandford, 'A The doodling philosophy', *The Guardian*, 8 March 2008, 'Get doodling', p2.
6. In doing so this review treads in close proximity, with various cross-overs, alongside Karen Elliott's call to 'Never Work' a couple of issues earlier; Elliott, K (2009) 'Never Work!' *Variant* 35, <http://www.variant.org.uk/35texts/NeverWork.html>, accessed 12 March 2010.
7. Lüdtkke, A (Ed.) (1995) *The history of everyday life. Reconstructing historical experience and ways of life*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
8. Lüdtkke, A 1995, op. cit, p 314.
9. Lüdtkke, A 1986, 'Cash, coffee-breaks, horseplay: Eigensinn and politics among factory workers in Germany circa 1900 in Hanagan', M & Stephenson, C eds *Confrontation, class consciousness, and the labour process*. Greenwood Press, Westport, pp65-95.
10. Thompson, E P 1967, *Time, work discipline and industrial capitalism. Past and Present*, p38, pp56-97.
11. Rather than studies that are strongly influenced by

Foucauldian governmentality, assuming panoptic views to produce disciplined bodies and selves, the everyday historians emphasise that the existence of numerous regulations, ordinances and rules point to the fact that these were contested, incomplete and, while clearly indicative of attempts to govern or rule, their imposition demonstrates failure to achieve such rule.

12. Göhre, P, 1891, *Drei Monate Fabrikarbeiter und Handwerksbursche*, F W Grunow, Leipzig, p 77, cited in Lüdtkke, A, 1993, *Eigen-Sinn. Fabrikalltag, Arbeitererfahrungen und Politik vom Kaiserreich bis in den Faschismus Ergebnisse*, Hamburg, p 137.
13. Kolinko 2002, op. cit.
14. Kolinko also found in their study that forms of refusal to work to order were evident in all the call centres in which they worked: "Many workers who are usually not very rebellious use them. Most of the time they happen on an individual basis. They make it easier to survive, but they don't shake the regime of exploitation. Rather, they are a part of the process of exploitation because they make sure we don't collapse under the workload." Kolinko, 2002, *Hotline - Call centre inquiry communism*, <http://libcom.org/library/5-everyday-working-life>, accessed 14 March 2010.
15. Schoneboom, *A Project Skive* <http://www.bonkworld.org/skive/>, accessed 12 March 2010.
16. Cresswell, T 1996 *In place, out of place. Geography, ideology, and transgression* University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, p 260.
17. Katz, C 2004, *Growing up global*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, p 242.
18. Thompson, E P, 1963, *The making of the English working class*, G. R. Elton, London [1991 edition], p 8.
19. *Ibid*, p 10.
20. Schütz, A & Luckmann, T, 1989, *The structures of the life-world*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, p 3f.
21. Williams, R, 1961, *The long revolution*. Chatto and Windus, London.
22. Lüdtkke, A 1995, op. cit, p 18f.
23. Marx, K & Engels, F, (1845), *The German Ideology*, Chapter 1a, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01a.htm>, accessed 12 March 2010.
24. Mooney, G 2007, 'Reframing the poverty debate' the New Labour way'. *Variant*, issue 29, pp11-13.
25. *ibid*.
26. Hartmann, D, 1988, *Leben als Sabotage. Zur Krise der technologischen Gewalt*, Rote Strasse/Kleine Freiheit/Schwarze Risse, Göttingen et al., 2nd edition.
27. Lazaratto, M, 1996, 'Immaterial labour in Virno', P & Hardt, M (eds) *Radical thought in Italy. A potential politics*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, pp. 132-146.
28. McRobbie, A, 2009, 'Reflections on precarious work in the cultural sector', in Lange, B et al. (Eds.) *Governance der Kreativwirtschaft: Diagnosen und Handlungsoptionen*, Transcript, Bielefeld, pp. 123-138, p 124.

Comment Owen Logan

ART
WORKERS
KISS
ASS

So says *Art Work*, a freesheet newspaper and accompanying website recently produced from the United States. Sadly, artists kiss ass incessantly and much more than the authors of the workers' slogan above might admit. Forget flattering portraits, forget too the wholesale renaissance of pictorial conceits in the era of Photoshop. From exhibiting urinals to canning shit for sale, from having bricks lugged around for loads of money to toying with sex and death as if each were a novelty and, by generally making a spectacle of themselves, artists are experts in kissing ass and making it look more like an insult. Why this should be so, in some people's eyes at least, lies in the old issue of who's paying the piper? Others will cry foul at such a vulgar materialist point. Well, there's nothing vulgar about it. The transformation of that supremely unethical thing – money – into a philosophical commodity – art – is nothing if not a sophisticated process of particular benefit to the various private and public buyers of cultural capital. At government level, for example, the establishment of the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) in the USA in 1965 was, according to one of its greatest supporters, all about “transforming the world's impression of the United States as a nation of money-grubbing materialists.” Even the puritan crusader Ronald Reagan and his conservative allies who had tried and failed to abolish the NEA ended up drawing it closer to government. But what about our brother and sister ‘art workers’ in the United States who have resolutely turned away from the rearview of the rich in favour of organising themselves and possibly reconfiguring the means of cultural production too? How have they risen to such an unusually upstanding position in an ass kissing system?

As a skeptical reader might expect, the artistic escape from ideological drudgery is more reminiscent of a word game than “A NATIONAL CONVERSATION ABOUT ART LABOUR AND ECONOMICS”, which is what *Art Work* ambitiously proposed. Sadly, this conversation has begun by ignoring the dire state of trade unionism or the problems of representing labour. *Art Work*'s general drift is towards the sort of self-help and networking between the like-minded affinity groups that make up today's ‘new social movements’.¹ Although the language of class is used in a publication like *Art Work*, its analysis has been so impoverished by social movement rhetoric that one might think that Karl Marx never managed to put pen to paper or got anyone to think about how power works and where actual strength might be found. The predictable result of such amnesia about political economy is that the forces of democracy have, quite literally, been flattened.

Today one could reasonably suppose that demonstrations were just as important as strikes and that strikes and industrial actions are a sort of cultural phenomena belonging to a decaying or marginalised social identity (i.e. the working class) and that all sorts of self-organised activity are equally relevant to a politics of resistance, and finally, perhaps, that legality is merely a bourgeois oddity rather than a point of struggle. It may be true that the worst conceptual flattening of the contours of resistance by the dogma of postmodern academics is now over. But it still seems delusional, patriarchal, workerist or perhaps just absurdly nostalgic to think about the shock troops of the working class when (to take an example from *Art Work*) an artist opens a café and ponders ‘Small Business as Artistic Medium’, and this sort of lifestyle report appears integral to some supposedly transformative politics. When Barbara Ehrenreich (author of *Smile or Die: How Positive Thinking Fooled America and the World*) called a few years ago for a more practically-minded left politics to meet everyday needs in the US, she must have had something more substantial in mind than this. One can't help suspecting that the most inflated postmodern trends in cultural studies have somehow turned into the mores of new social movements.

The abiding fascination in the UK with the National Union of Mineworkers defeat under Margaret Thatcher is suggestive of a different, albeit dormant, set of radical priorities. But it would appear that any residual hopes for some sort of strategic democratic agency have been ghosted away. Less by Thatcher's victory than by a combination of sharp-suited trade union bureaucrats and university-educated political entrepreneurs of social movements. Unless they are connected by some dwindling party affiliation these two types rarely meet, but between them they seem to have made strategy into the object of some sort of post-Stalinist nostalgia industry leaving a new generation to think about the interpretation of contemporary history much more than its making. Although acting independently, their impact in unions and movements is interconnected and broad; on the one hand the meaning of solidarity and equality (in trade unions) has narrowed while, on the other, it has been displaced by the language of identity and a politics of recognition (in social movements). It may be too early to say, but the overwhelmingly defensive response to market failure at the highest levels of capitalism is suggestive of the powerlessness both cadres have helped to inscribe in public consciousness.

These are surely the self-defeating circumstances in which Gordon Brown took up the idea of the Tobin Tax for a few weeks this year only to drop it as if it had no political constituency at all. This levy, intended to discourage predatory speculation in international financial transactions, has long been proposed by ATTAC and the global justice movement more broadly, yet there is still no grass roots constituency behind the idea, even at a time when cash-strapped local authorities are racing towards speculative borrowing as the solution to their woes.² In fact Brown's first supporter on this tax policy came in the unlikely form of French President Nicolas Sarkozy. Moreover, it was argued on BBC news that governments might be attracted to this international tax because it could be decided upon above the heads of national electorates. On this dismal account of democratic capacities we would seem to believe it when we're repeatedly told that taxing capitalism is counterproductive. Nevertheless, a global tax on speculation would be a step in the right direction though not a substitute for the sort of corporation taxes which are also required. Who knows what mauling the mechanics of the Tobin Tax would receive at the inter-governmental level or what comprehension it would receive at a national level; how many people know what it is, how it could work as well as how it could be used as a diversion from the underlying issue of progressive taxation?³ Unsurprisingly, the monopolists of the financial universe are against the Tobin tax its cause has been taken up by celebrities who, even when they are not political foils, make for a very poor opposition to the power elite. If the ruling class has its way with the Tobin Tax, now being dubbed the “Robin Hood Tax”, it will be because the cadres of the left have lost theirs to no small degree.

Servicing or Organising?

When artists league together as workers they usually conform to what in contemporary trade union parlance is a ‘servicing union’. Under neoliberalism the ethos of servicing has spread through unions that increasingly operate more like professional associations which management consults and negotiates with at a high level leaving the union officials the task of informing their members. Too often these unions offer members little more than fringe benefits rather like a company would offer perks and incentives to customers or employees. The harder path for all concerned is building an organising union which, ideally, listens to members and responds by asking questions intended to expand the terms of discussion, participation and action. Essentially,

the more militant ethos is all about winning against employers, not going into an opaque governing partnership with them. Needless to say winning has never been easy, but perhaps it is a little easier if we recognise that the earth is not flat and just as capital has its contours and niches so does labour.

Key victories or successful mobilisations might be compared to crater holes on a battlefield that get taken over by opposing forces. Nonetheless, they have lasting uses and help create relationships which appear to ripple along in the wake of an impact. For instance, the large 1995 transport workers' strike against social security reform in France fed into an apparently 'miraculous' wave of activism three years later when the unemployed, migrants, students and others took to occupying public buildings.⁴ Similarly the 1994 pro-democracy strike by oil workers in Nigeria is justifiably regarded by trade unionists there as the closest thing to armed struggle on a national level in a fatally divided nation. But against such expressions of workers' power, civil society almost everywhere is deeply permeated by neoliberal governmentality, articulated not only by servicing unions, but also through an extraordinary proliferation of NGOs, (Non-Governmental Organisations), GONGOs, (Government Organised Non-Governmental Organisations) and BONGOs, (World Bank Organised Non-Governmental Organisations) not to mention any number of foundations and think tanks. In general terms, all support the liberal right to have rights while often denying or discouraging substantive democratic rights like the right to strike. Consider the case of an Indian GONGO devoted to the cause of women's empowerment that sacks its women workers for unionising. George Orwell's predictions of a world of doublespeak have been fulfilled.

What comes next?

When labour politics are abstracted and disempowered by the dynamics of neoliberal governmentality and basic insincerity, one also has to wonder if the last great avant-garde idea of collapsing art into life is not a double-edged sword, curtailing strategy and tactical thinking while advancing a more pleasurable politics of expression. Another recent publication, *Understanding Social Welfare Movements*⁵, does not concern art *per se* but reading against the grain of some aspects of social movement discourse gives a good sense of a new Left-leaning social aesthetics that is gregarious but not necessarily collective in any substantial sense. Take the following passage:

"Many social movements when they first appear often have the character of surprise about them. In this sense, social movements are quite literally astonishing. Dull tedious reality is enlivened and energised by mobilisations and protest. Social movements stand out from the banal background of everyday life. The plain excitement of being with others in public displays of collective togetherness temporarily tears a hole in the fabric of the taken-for-granted, atomised nature of reality."

If this also looks very like the avant-garde's culture war continued by other means, the question which should be asked is why, if the avant-garde ethos failed to emancipate the arts in the 20th century, should it do any better in emancipating politics in the 21st? A realist perspective, recalling the historical paradoxes of the avant-garde and its tendencies towards false conceptual unities would point to it as part of the problem, not part of the solution to an atomised reality. Certainly, avant-gardism carried over to the wider political arena does not mean that its political crisis and failure is somehow dissolved. Indeed, it is much more likely to be reconstituted and resurrected. As the French authors of 'The New Spirit of Capitalism' argue "the artistic critique" of capitalism in their country became a key element in the renewal of what it opposed.⁶

The everyday experiences (and self-actualising expectations) of work were liberalised with the effect of strengthening capitalist power. Are we seeing this move being carried over in the diffusion and flattening out of anti-capitalist politics as (and perhaps *because*) hypermobile and largely fictive capital makes it all the harder to grasp the means of production?

The authors of *Understanding Social Welfare Movements* emphasize how mass events like those that occurred in Seattle in 1999 only seem "to defy the laws of gravity" and are in fact based in unspectacular and frustrating pre-histories of patient and routine activism. In this respect it's worth recalling that although artists may have adapted to servile forms of trade unionism and what's been called the "tyranny of structurelessness"⁷ in social movements, their search for a political home has not always been so defeating. And here credit must go to Nicolas Lampert, a contributor to the *Art Work* paper, for taking a long view and going back to the activities of artists during what economists, such as Paul Kruger, call "the great compression" of the 1930s when US society was largely equalised by

...one wonders if the last great avant-garde idea of collapsing art into life is not a double-edged sword, curtailing strategy and tactical thinking while advancing a more pleasurable politics of expression.

New Deal policies. This equalisation was greatly driven by a militant trade unionism which grew exponentially during the inter-war period in the US. Before they were once again reined in by corporatism during the Cold War, unions were very much at the heart of a broader social movement which lent support to the second phase of the New Deal from 1935 which favoured small farmers and organised labour. Mindful of the growth of Fascism and its defeat of organised labour in Europe, US 'New liberals' shared in the recognition that the strike weapon was vital and that trade unionism required practical support.⁸ Moreover, while top-down economic protectionism proved disastrous in the 1930s and led into the outbreak of war, bottom-up protectionism laid the conceptual basis for a genuinely social market, even more relevant in today's circumstances of 'social dumping' and international divisions of labor.

Although *Art Work* does not cover this ground it does remind us how, in the New York of the 1930s, artists were strategically conscious and played an important part along with the National Maritime Union by aiding strikes in other sectors. Organised in militant fashion in their own sector, the Artists Union also won on issues such as censorship, funding and institutional autonomy from business and State, no doubt earning the respect of other workers. However, in recalling this period it is easy to romanticise reciprocal relationships between unions and other interlinked groups which were far from horizontal or tension free. An organisation like the New York Photo League originally set up as the Film and Photo League to aid workers' actions turned into an avenue of individual upward mobility to the point where politics could be seen by some members as something of a distraction from the somehow more serious business of photography and art. Given that the League's photography was at the same time becoming increasingly technocratic and institutionalised

one might well argue that they got their priorities wrong. Either way, the erosion of its original purposes served to dislocate photographers from broader realist debates, and the shift away from thinking about culture as a whole did not help the League when it was targeted as a communist front organization and forced to close in 1951.

In contrast to the warm spectacle of collectivism that "enlivens dull tedious reality" today there was, in the period of the New Deal – and surely there still needs to be – a meritocracy of militancy. It is the sibling rivalry between unions that earns them political capital and can contribute to the overall bargaining power held by a labour movement. In the context of the New Deal this political capital also belonged to a much wider social movement. Among its currents were a plethora of anti-capitalist groupings in support of progressive taxation. Although the link between trade union militancy and a broader public consciousness in favour of progressive taxation might appear an obvious one, it is often missed out in tireless rationalistic studies of inter-union rivalry or in those studies which assume that wages are the key measure despite the fact that only part of the work force is ever unionised. Not only should it be assumed that this will always be the case but it should be more obvious that trade unionism does not need to have great coverage to be the key countervailing force against capitalist oligarchy and a State locked into the logic of capital accumulation. France, with a relatively small trade union membership, is an example of the effectiveness of philosophically-loaded organising unions. As much as Nicolas Sarkozy may want to perform Thatcherism in France it is very doubtful he can achieve the scale of his ambitions, a problem perhaps signaled by his sudden support for the Tobin Tax.

Elsewhere, elephantine servicing unions, often brought about by merging unions with dwindling disillusioned memberships, have perpetuated corporatist social partnership policies. Although partnership approaches are now looking shaky, big unions continue to gain places at the negotiating table whether or not they have really earned those places politically. In this respect, they offer up perfect opportunities to employers and politicians to go through the polite rituals of fake consultation and bargaining with a toothless adversary. A 'fall back position' is a classic trade union contingency but the partnership ethos is instead sustained by ideological trade-offs that allow all sides to behave as if there were no opposing interests to be defined. This is rarely only a matter of employers versus employees, and in culture especially, the distinction of public and private interests, as well as the varying conditions of workers, freelancers and volunteers all point to fundamental faultlines. Surely the ideological trade-off in this context is to join in with neoliberal governmentality and carry on as if the administration of culture is a modern form of rainmaking. Sadly this myth has only been partly exploded.⁹

Such short sighted approaches are certainly not confined to big unions. In Scotland we have seen small servicing-style unions like the Scottish Artists Union or the Society of Authors (which conceives of itself as a union) engaged in the political process without possessing any real political capital – a problem which these unions need to face up to if more democratic codes of conduct can be agreed upon, as they should be. When weak unions or associations follow the logic of the lobbying and public relations industries the outcomes are predictable. As anyone might have guessed from the outset, politicians and businessmen have done just as they pleased in driving to commercialise culture in Scotland, suborning a UNESCO treaty in the process. The rationale for establishing Creative Scotland, "an entrepreneurial organisation" set to supersede the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen, has changed so many times that far from being an indictment, doublespeak was more like a badge of courage for Mike Russell

MSP, the last in a series of culture ministers to mangle the basic terms of reference beyond all meaning. Despite an empirical association with underdevelopment and poverty, and regardless of its suitability, entrepreneurialism is being pushed in everywhere.¹⁰ Mike Russell's successor Fiona Hyslop MSP comes fresh from doing the same confusionist job in education, to where, he has now gone.

At the eleventh hour there are still no guarantees of anything which artists, writers and other creative 'stake-holders' wanted to protect from the new regime. Used by politicians and bureaucrats in Scotland, the word 'culture' now seems to be nothing more than a signpost to voodoo economics.¹¹ The expectations built up for creative industries, transferable skills, national and municipal branding are considerable, but they have little foundation. All are potential avenues to the great goal of "international comparative advantage."¹² Beware anyone who takes universal principles seriously and thinks that cultural policy should have more to do with ways of life and freedom and equality in communication, and, worse still, might want to point out that culture is instead being used to dress up a shoddy economic policy based on a fundamentally misconceived goal that can only re-enforce dependency and international divisions of labour. All that said, the looming defeat of anyone entertaining such thoughts has been largely self-inflicted. It could not have occurred without servicing unions that failed to question the real meaning, and just as importantly, the process of cultural policy under neoliberalism. The small unions of artists and writers have been left in the lurch while the elephantine Unite union failed to defend the skill base of the Scottish Arts Council. How many of its jobs will be surplus to the requirements of a new 'entrepreneurial organisation' is still not clear, as with so much else about Creative Scotland.

Whatever the shortcomings of the Scottish Arts Council, and there are many, the organisation is a result of the arms length principle which – as the means to defend culture from government – has been a historic key to cultural policy. This principle ought to have been defended more vigorously by all concerned against an un-mandated attack by politicians and their cronies in business and consultancy. Had staff at the Scottish Arts Council acted with more courage in this respect they might be in a better position today and the public would not be faced with the prospect of paying for corporate friendly cultural nationalism, hardly a fair substitute for the broad public interest when it comes to cultural policy.

The Last Straw

"Transforming the world's impression of the United States as a nation of money-grubbing materialists", as Arthur Schlesinger Jr. put it, required an arms length organisation like the National Endowment for the Arts. In reality, the NEA, like the Arts Councils in the UK, has been held closer to the political establishment than the arms length doctrine suggests. But this is not a good reason for closing the political gap even more, or worse, closing one's eyes and ears and pretending it's not happening. It is happening. The consequences are already clear to Variant as witness to the rise of official culture in Glasgow and associated forms of censorship. It would seem that Scotland's fate is to have failing economic policies derived from the United States conducted by our own politicians who, ironically, can do nothing but reinforce the impression of Scotland as a nation of money-grubbers by falsely comparing the country to a corporate enterprise.¹³ Our politicians do this at every opportunity. Scots have long participated in imperialism whilst feigning disdain but once the signs of nationalism get pinned on lapels, draped across chests, showcased on billboards and spotlighted in museums and galleries, then, as often appears in various countries, the crudest policies that

imperialists shrink from are perpetrated in the political equivalent of broad daylight. Only this class-ridden paradox explains how Scotland's unpopular politicians cannot see the benefit of cultural democracy as a cornerstone of socio-economic development. Instead they have, lazily, fixed their minds on cultural branding and cultural products thus haplessly guiding us towards the next economic dead end.

Art Work

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Understanding Social Welfare Movements

Jason Annetts, Alex Law, Wallace McNeish and Gerry Mooney, Published by Policy Press, Bristol

We welcome your responses to articles and comment pieces that appear in Variant. We ask you to keep your comments brief (up to 750 words) and sharply focused. Send your responses to variantmag@btinternet.com. If you wish a longer reply, please contact the co-editors.

Notes

1. *Understanding Social Welfare Movements* associates this politics of recognition and identity with social movements. The fundamental clash between 'old' and 'new' Left politics, i.e. rigidly structured parties and unions versus more loosely structured movements and networks, that was predicted by some utopian thinkers more than a decade ago has not occurred, thankfully. But signs of sincere and sustainable collaborations are few and far between. Boris Frankel (1987) offers an interesting perspective on this in his critique of new social relations that were assumed to be emerging as a replacement for conventional social democracy and State capitalism. See *The Post Industrial Utopians*, Polity Press, London.
2. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) schemes, derived from the United States, involve local government in a speculative logic when money is borrowed on the basis of projections of future tax revenues generated by urban regeneration and infrastructure projects.
3. For two divergent views available online visit; <http://www.thenewamerican.com/index.php/usnews/politics/2901-qtobin-taxq-and-un-global-taxman-making-a-comeback> and <http://www.web.net/~wfcnat/tobin.html>. Thank you to Mike Danson for alerting me to the possibility of another policy subterfuge in the style of Make Poverty History this time on the issue of the Tobin Tax.
4. This is recounted in *Understanding social welfare movements*, Jason Annetts, Alex Law, Wallace McNeish, Gerry Mooney, Policy Press 2009.
5. Ibid.
6. *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, (2006) Verso, London
7. *The Tyranny of Structurelessness*, Jo Freeman, 1970, *Variant* issue 20, <http://www.variant.org.uk/20texts/structurelessness.html>
8. It would not be an exaggeration to say that after Allied victory was achieved in 1945, liberal 'New Dealers' reverted *en masse* to the corporatist, business-friendly orientation of the first phase of the New Deal (1933-1935) geared towards recovery rather than reform. Basil Rauch's *The History of the New Deal* (1944, Creative Age Press) gives a good, almost contemporaneous, overview of the different forces at play during both phases. *The New Dealers, Power Politics in the Age of Roosevelt*, Jordan A. Schwarz, (1994 Vintage Books) throws a more favorable light on the New Deal as a whole by concentrating on the legacy of an enlightened liberal technocracy which, Schwarz argues, advanced a generally beneficial State capitalist project up until the 1970s. For Schwarz, the Vietnam war and financial crisis appear to be the results of forgetfulness on the part of a post-war power elite rather than part of a social history that goes back to the problems of the New Deal itself.
9. Indeed the new variation of rainmaking has only been partly exposed for the myth that it is: 'Emerging Workers: a fair future for entering the creative industries', the Arts Group report, part-sponsored by the National Union of Students, is aimed at the taken-for-granted forms of exploitation and inequalities institutionalised within the creative industries. The sort of tedious exploitation that is so common in the sector is heavily glamourised in a Hollywood film like *The Devil Wears Prada* but ultimately the authors of a real life document find themselves in accord with the underlying ideological message of that movie, namely that the apparently trivial and overblown is not only underestimated but is in fact a serious industry in a globalised economy. This is a fraction of the really 'big idea' that post-industrial society is one which produces intangibles and intellectual properties in a global market. It's not so much that the National Union of

Students are shooting themselves in the foot by going along with these ideas, (articulated on p14 of the Arts Group report) they're shooting themselves in the head given that the knowledge economy ultimately spells the end of the rationale for public funding of higher education. See: <http://www.artsgroup.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/EmergingWorkersFinalWeb.pdf>

10. For more on this see 'The Progress of Creeping Fascism', *Variant*, Issue 35.
11. It was George Bush Snr. who originally used this term in 1980 to criticise Ronald Reagan's disastrous 'supply side' economic philosophy. In fact what became known as Reaganomics was little more than unbridled military Keynesianism, an industrial policy by the backdoor. Bush was left to deal with the consequences of massive public debt, disintegration and underdevelopment in 1988.
12. 'International comparative advantage' is a key term in government jargon. It is one of those utopian liberal concepts based on the ideal of free trade and it remains quite credible as long as one can believe, for example, that Sony is a truly international organisation, not a Japanese transnational, or that the United States does not engage in protectionism. For a liberal refutation of the same liberal idealism see 'No One Loves A Political Realist', by Robert G. Gilpin in *Realism: Restatements and Renewal*, Frankel, B. (ed.) 1996 published by Frank Cass, London. From a more radical perspective, however, the underlying economic issue of 'international comparative advantage' is that it breeds dependency on competitive interdependency and negates co-operation based on economic sovereignty and self-sufficiency.
13. This detracts from the dramatically different financial realities faced by nations and corporations, the most fundamental of all being that nations, unlike companies, cannot go bankrupt.

Precarious Labor: A Feminist Viewpoint

Silvia Federici

Precarious work is a central concept in movement discussions of the capitalist reorganization of work and class relations in today's global economy. Silvia Federici analyzes the potential and limits of this concept as an analytic and organizational tool. She claims reproductive labor is a hidden continent of work and struggle the movement must recognize in its political work, if it is to address the key questions we face in organizing for an alternative to capitalist society. How do we struggle over reproductive labor without destroying ourselves, and our communities? How do we create a self-reproducing movement? How do we overcome the sexual, racial, and generational hierarchies built upon the wage?

This lecture took place on October 28th 2006 at Bluestockings Radical Bookstore in New York City, 172 Allen Street, as part of the 'This is Forever: From Inquiry to Refusal Discussion Series'.

Tonight I will present a critique of the theory of precarious labor that has been developed by Italian autonomist Marxists, with particular reference to the work of Antonio Negri, Paolo Virno, and also Michael Hardt. I call it a theory because the views that Negri and others have articulated go beyond the description of changes in the organization of work that have taken place in the 1980s and 1990s in conjunction with the globalization process – such as the “precarization of work”, the fact that work relations are becoming more discontinuous, the introduction of “flexy time”, and the increasing fragmentation of the work experience. Their view on precarious labor present a whole perspective on what is capitalism and what is the nature of the struggle today. It is important to add that these are not simply the ideas of a few intellectuals, but theories that have circulated widely within the Italian movement for a number of years, and have recently become more influential also in the United States, and in this sense they have become more relevant to us.

History and Origin of Precarious Labor and Immaterial Labor Theory

My first premise is that definitely the question of precarious labor must be on our agenda. Not only has our relationship to waged work become more discontinuous, but a discussion of precarious labor is crucial for our understanding of how we can go beyond capitalism. The theories that I discuss capture important aspects of the developments that have taken place in the organization of work; but they also bring us back to a male-centric conception of work and social struggle. I will discuss now those elements in this theory that are most relevant to my critique.

An important premise in the Italian autonomists' theory of precarious labor is that the precarization of work, from the late 1970s to present, has been a capitalist response to the class struggle of the sixties, a struggle that was centered on the refusal of work, of as expressed in the slogan “more money less work”. It was a response to a cycle of struggle that challenged the capitalist command over labor, in a sense realizing the workers' refusal of the capitalist work discipline, the refusal of a life organized by the needs of capitalist production, a life spent in a factory or in office.

Another important theme is that the precarization of work relations is deeply rooted in another shift that has taken place with the restructuring of production in the 1980s. This is the shift from industrial labor to what Negri and Virno call “immaterial labor”. Negri and others have argued that the restructuring of production

that has taken place in the eighties and nineties in response to the struggles of the sixties has begun a process whereby industrial labor is to be replaced by a different type of work, in the same way as industrial labor replaced agricultural work. They call the new type of work “immaterial labor” because they claim that with the computer and information revolutions the dominant form of work has changed. As a tendency, the dominant form of work in today's capitalism is work that does not produce physical objects but information, ideas, states of being, relations.

capitalist development
is always at the same
time a process of
underdevelopment...

In other words, industrial work – which was hegemonic in the previous phase of capitalist development – is now becoming less important; it is no longer the engine of capitalist development. In its place we find “immaterial labor”, which is essentially cultural work, cognitive work, info work.

Italian autonomists believe that the precarization of work and the appearance of immaterial labor fulfills the prediction Marx made in the *Grundrisse*, in a famous section on machines. In this section Marx states that with the development of capitalism, less and less capitalist production relies on living labor and more and more on the integration of science, knowledge and technology in the production process as the engines of accumulation. Virno and Negri see the shift to precarious labor as fulfilling this prediction, about capitalism's historic trend. Thus, the importance of cognitive work and the development of computer work in our time lies in the fact that they are seen as part of a historic trend of capitalism towards the reduction of work.

The precarity of labor is rooted in the new forms of production. Presumably, the shift to immaterial labor generates a precarization of work relations

...precarious labor theory is
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bringing us together.

because the structure of cognitive work is different from that of industrial, physical work. Cognitive and info work rely less on the continuous physical presence of the worker in what was the traditional workplace. The rhythms of work are much more intermittent, fluid and discontinuous.

In sum, the development of precarious labor and shift to immaterial labor are not for Negri and other autonomist Marxists a completely negative phenomenon. On the contrary, they are seen as expressions of a trend towards the reduction of work and therefore the reduction of exploitation, resulting from capitalist development in response to the class struggle.

This means that the development of the productive forces today is already giving us a glimpse of a world in which work can be transcended; in which we will liberate ourselves

from the necessity to work and enter a new realm of freedom.

Autonomous Marxists believe this development is also creating a new kind of “common” originating from the fact that immaterial labor presumably represents a leap in the socialization and homogenization of work. The idea is that differences between types of work that once were all important (productive/reproductive work e.g. agricultural/industrial/“affective labor”) are erased, as all types of work (as a tendency) become assimilated, for all begin to incorporate cognitive work. Moreover, all activities are increasingly subsumed under capitalist development, they all serve to the accumulation process, as society becomes an immense factory. Thus (e.g.) the distinction between productive and unproductive labor also vanishes.

This means that capitalism is not only leading us beyond labor, but it is creating the conditions for the “commonization” of our work experience, where the divisions are beginning to crumble.

We can see why these theories have become popular. They have utopian elements especially attractive to cognitive workers – the “cognitariat” as Negri and some Italian activists call them. With the new theory, in fact, a new vocabulary has been invented. Instead of proletariat we have the “cognitariat”. Instead of working class, we have the “Multitude”, presumably because the concept of Multitude reveals the unity that is created by the new socialization of work; it expresses the communalization of the work process, the idea that within the work process workers are becoming more homogenized. For all forms of work incorporate elements of cognitive work, of computer work, communication work and so forth.

As I said this theory has gained much popularity, because there is a generation of young activists, with years of schooling and degrees who are now employed in precarious ways in different parts of the culture industry or the knowledge-production industry. Among them these theories are very popular because they tell them that, despite the misery and exploitation we are experiencing, we are nevertheless moving towards a higher level of production and social relations. This is a generation of workers who looks at the “Nine to Five” routine as a prison sentence. They see their precariousness as giving them new possibilities. And they have possibilities their parents did not have or dreamed of. The male youth of today (e.g.) is not as disciplined as their parents who could expect that their wife or partners would depend of them economically. Now they can count on social relationships involving much less financial dependence. Most women have autonomous access to the wage and often refuse to have children.

So this theory is appealing for the new generation of activists, who despite the difficulties of resulting from precarious labor, see within it certain possibilities. They want to start from there. They are not interested in a struggle for full employment. But there is also a difference here between Europe and the US. In Italy (e.g.) there is among the movement a demand for a guaranteed income. They call it “flex security”. They say, we are without a job, we are precarious because capitalism needs us to be, so they should pay for it. There have been various days of mobilization, especially on May 1st, centered on this demand for a guaranteed income. In Milano, on the May Day of this year [2006], movement people have paraded “San Precario”, the patron saint of the precarious worker. The ironic icon is featured in rallies and

demonstrations centered on this question of precarity.

Critique of Precarious Labor

I will now shift to my critique of these theories – a critique from a feminist viewpoint. In developing my critique, I don't want to minimize the importance of the theories I am discussing. They have been inspired by much political organizing and striving to make sense of the changes that have taken place in the organization of work, which has affected all our lives. In Italy, in recent years, precarious labor has been one of the main terrains of mobilization together with the struggle for immigrant rights.

I do not want to minimize the work that is taking place around issues of precarity. Clearly, what we have seen in the last decade is a new kind of struggle. A new kind of organizing is taking place, breaking away from the confines of the traditional workplace. Where the workplace was the factory or the office, we now see a kind of struggle that goes out from the factory to the "territory", connecting different places of work and building movements and organizations rooted in the territory. The theories of precarious labor are trying to account for the aspects of novelty in the organization of work and struggle; trying to understand the emergent forms of organization.

This is very important. At the same time, I think that what I called precarious labor theory has serious flaws that I already hinted at in my presentation. I will outline them and then discuss the question of alternatives.

My first criticism is that this theory is built on a faulty understanding of how capitalism works. It sees capitalist development as moving towards higher forms of production and labor. In *Multitude*, Negri and Hardt actually write that labor is becoming more "intelligent". The assumption is that the capitalist organization of work and capitalist development are already creating the conditions for the overcoming of exploitation. Presumably, at one point, capitalism, the shell that keeps society going will break up and the potentialities that have grown within it will be liberated. There is an assumption that that process is already at work in the present organization of production. In my view, this is a misunderstanding of the effects of the restructuring produced by capitalist globalization and the neo-liberal turn.

What Negri and Hardt do not see is that the tremendous leap in technology required by the computerization of work and the integration of information into the work process has been paid at the cost of a tremendous increase of exploitation at the other end of the process. There is a continuum between the computer worker and the worker in the Congo who digs coltan with his hands trying to seek out a living after being expropriated, pauperized, by repeated rounds of structural adjustment and repeated theft of his community's land and natural sources.

The fundamental principle is that capitalist development is always at the same time a process of underdevelopment. Maria Mies describes it eloquently in her work: "What appears as development in one part of the capitalist faction is underdevelopment in another part".

This connection is completely ignored in this theory; in fact and the whole theory is permeated by the illusion that the work process is bringing us together. When Negri and Hardt speak of the "becoming common" of work and use the concept of *Multitude* to indicate the new communism that is built through the development of the productive forces, I believe they are blind to much of what is happening with the world proletariat.

They are blind to not see the capitalist destruction of lives and the ecological environment. They don't see that the restructuring of production has aimed at restructuring and deepening the divisions within the working class, rather than erasing them. The idea that the development of the microchip is creating new

commons is misleading; communalism can only be a product of struggle, not of capitalist production.

One of my criticisms of Negri and Hardt is that they seem to believe that the capitalist organization of work is the expression of a higher rationality and that capitalist development is necessary to create the material conditions for communism. This belief is at the center of precarious labor theory. We could discuss here whether it represents Marx's thinking or not. Certainly the *Communist Manifesto* speaks of capitalism in these terms and the same is true of some sections of the *Grundrisse*. But it is not clear this was a dominant theme in Marx's work, not at least in *Capital*.

Precarious Labor and Reproductive Work

Another criticism I have against the precarious labor theory is that it presents itself as gender neutral. It assumes that the reorganization of production is doing away with the power relations and hierarchies that exist within the working class on the basis of race, gender and age, and therefore it is not concerned with addressing these power relations; it does not have the theoretical and political tools to think about how to tackle them. There is no discussion in Negri, Virno and Hardt of how the wage has been and continues to be used to organize these divisions and how therefore we must approach the wage struggle so that it does not become an instrument of further divisions, but instead can help us undermined them. To me this is one of the main issues we must address in the movement.

The concept of the "Multitude" suggests that all divisions within the working class are gone or are no longer politically relevant. But this is obviously an illusion. Some feminists have pointed out that precarious labor is not a new phenomenon. Women always had a precarious relation to waged labor. But this critique goes far enough.

My concern is that the Negrian theory of precarious labor ignores, bypasses, one of the most important contributions of feminist theory and struggle, which is the redefinition of work, and the recognition of women's unpaid reproductive labor as a key source of capitalist accumulation. In redefining housework as WORK, as not a personal service but the work that produces and reproduces labor power, feminists have uncovered a new crucial ground of exploitation that Marx and Marxist theory completely ignored. All of the important political insights contained in those analysis are now brushed aside as if they were of no relevance to an understanding of the present organization of production.

There is a faint echo of the feminist analysis – a lip service paid to it – in the inclusion of so called "affective labor" in the range of work activities qualifying as "immaterial labor". However, the best Negri and Hardt can come up with is the case of women who work as flight attendants or in the food service industry, whom they call "affective laborers", because they are expected to smile at their customers.

But what is "affective labor?" And why is it included in the theory of immaterial labor? I imagine it is included because – presumably – it does not produce tangible products but "states of being", that is, it produces feelings. Again, to put it crudely, I think this is a bone thrown to feminism, which now is a perspective that has some social backing and can no longer be ignored.

But the concept of "affective labor" strips the feminist analysis of housework of all its demystifying power. In fact, it brings reproductive work back into the world of mystification, suggesting that reproducing people is just a matter of making producing "emotions", "feelings", It used to be called a "labor of love;" Negri and Hardt instead have discovered "affection".

The feminist analysis of the function of the sexual division of labor, the function of gender hierarchies, the analysis of the way capitalism has

used the wage to mobilize women's work in the reproduction of the labor force – all of this is lost under the label of "affective labor".

That this feminist analysis is ignored in the work of Negri and Hardt confirms my suspicions that this theory expresses the interests of a select group of workers, even though it presumes to speak to all workers, all merged in the great caldron of the *Multitude*. In reality, the theory of precarious and immaterial labor speaks to the situation and interests of workers working at the highest level of capitalistic technology. Its disinterest in reproductive labor and its presumption that all labor forms a common hides the fact that it is concerned with the most privileged section of the working class. This means it is not a theory we can use to build a truly self-reproducing movement.

For this task the lesson of the feminist movement is still crucial today. Feminists in the seventies tried to understand the roots of women's oppression, of women's exploitation and gender hierarchies. They describe them as stemming from a unequal division of labor forcing women to work for the reproduction of the working class. This analysis was the basis of a radical social critique, the implications of which still have to be understood and developed to their full potential.

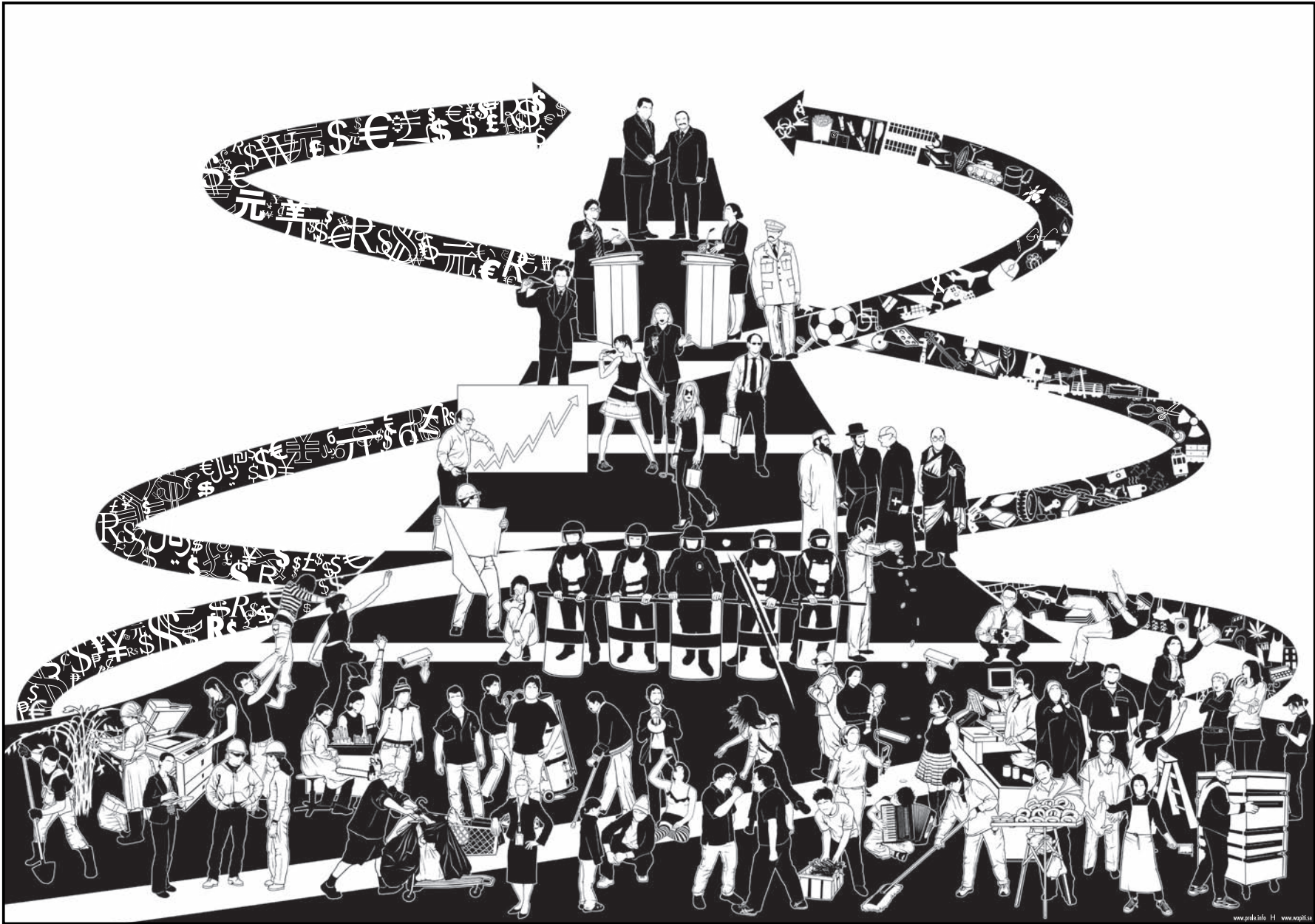
When we said that housework is actually work for capital, that although it is unpaid work it contributes to the accumulation of capital, we established something extremely important about the nature of capitalism as a system of production. We established that capitalism is built on an immense amount of unpaid labor, that it is not built exclusively or primarily on contractual relations; that the wage relation hides the unpaid, slave-like nature of so much of the work upon which capital accumulation is premised.

Also, when we said that housework is the work that reproduces not just "life", but "labor-power", we began to separate two different spheres of our lives and work that seemed inextricably connected. We became able to conceive of a fight against housework now understood as the reproduction of labor-power, the reproduction of the most important commodity capital has: the worker's "capacity to work", the worker's capacity to be exploited. In other words, by recognizing that what we call "reproductive labor" is a terrain of accumulation and therefore a terrain of exploitation, we were able to also see reproduction as a terrain of struggle, and, very importantly, conceive of an anti-capitalist struggle against reproductive labor that would not destroy ourselves or our communities.

How do you struggle over/against reproductive work? It is not the same as struggling in the traditional factory setting, against for instance the speed of an assembly line, because at the other end of your struggle there are people not things. Once we say that reproductive work is a terrain of struggle, we have to first immediately confront the question of how we struggle on this terrain without destroying the people you care for. This is a problem mothers as well as teachers and nurses, know very well.

This is why it is crucial to be able to make a separation between the creation of human beings and our reproduction of them as labor-power, as future workers, who therefore have to be trained, not necessarily according to their needs and desires, to be disciplined and regimented in a particular fashion.

It was important for feminists to see, for example, that much housework and child rearing is work of policing our children, so that they will conform to a particular work discipline. We thus began to see that by refusing broad areas of work, we not only could liberate ourselves but could also liberate our children. We saw that our struggle was not at the expense of the people we cared for, though we may skip preparing some meals or cleaning the floor. Actually our refusal opened the way for their refusal and the process of their liberation.



Once we saw that rather than reproducing life we were expanding capitalist accumulation and began to define reproductive labor as work for capital, we also opened the possibility of a process of re-composition among women.

Think for example of the prostitute movement, which we now call the “sex workers” movement. In Europe the origins of this movement must be traced back to 1975 when a number of sex workers in Paris occupied a church, in protest against a new zoning regulation which they saw as an attack on their safety. There was a clear connection between that struggle, which soon spread throughout Europe and the United States, and the feminist movement’s re-thinking and challenging of housework. The ability to say that sexuality for women has been work has led to a whole new way of thinking about sexual relationships, including gay relations. Because of the feminist movement and the gay movement we have begun to think about the ways in which capitalism has exploited our sexuality, and made it “productive”.

In conclusion, it was a major breakthrough that women would begin to understand unpaid labor and the production that goes on in the home as well as outside of the home as the reproduction of the work force. This has allowed a re-thinking of every aspect of everyday life – child-raising, relationships between men and women, homosexual relationships, sexuality in general – in relation to capitalist exploitation and accumulation.

Creating Self-Reproducing Movements

As every aspect of everyday life was re-understood in its potential for liberation and exploitation, we saw the many ways in which women and women’s struggles are connected. We realized the possibility of “alliances” we had not imagined and by the same token the possibility of bridging the divisions that have been created among women, also on the basis of age, race, sexual preference.

We can not build a movement that is sustainable without an understanding of these power relations. We also need to learn from the feminist analysis of reproductive work because no movement can survive unless it is concerned with

the reproduction of its members. This is one of the weaknesses of the social justice movement in the US.

We go to demonstrations, we build events, and this becomes the peak of our struggle. The analysis of how we reproduce these movements, how we reproduce ourselves is not at the center of movement organizing. It has to be. We need to go to back to the historical tradition of working class organizing “mutual aid” and rethink that experience, not necessarily because we want to reproduce it, but to draw inspiration from it for the present.

We need to build a movement that puts on its agenda its own reproduction. The anti-capitalist struggle has to create forms of support and has to have the ability to collectively build forms of reproduction.

We have to ensure that we do not only confront capital at the time of the demonstration, but that we confront it collectively at every moment of our lives. What is happening internationally proves that only when you have these forms of collective reproduction, when you have communities that reproduce themselves collectively, you have struggles that are moving in a very radical way against the established order, as for example the struggle of indigenous people in Bolivia against water privatization or in Ecuador against the oil companies’ destruction of indigenous land.

I want to close by saying if we look at the example of the struggles in Oaxaca, Bolivia, and Ecuador, we see that the most radical confrontations are not created by the intellectual or cognitive workers or by virtue of the internet’s common. What gave strength to the people of Oaxaca was the profound solidarity that tied them with each other – a solidarity for instance that made indigenous people from every part of the state to come to the support of the “maestros”, whom they saw as members of their communities. In Bolivia too, the people who reversed the privatization of water had a long tradition of communal struggle. Building this solidarity, understanding how we can overcome the divisions between us, is a task that must be placed on the agenda. In conclusion then, the main problem of precarious labor theory is that it does not give us the tools to overcome the way

we are being divided. But these divisions, which are continuously recreated, are our fundamental weakness with regard to our capacity to resist exploitation and create an equitable society. From: *In the Middle of the Whirlwind: 2008 Convention Protest, Movement & Movements*.

Publisher: *The Journal of Aesthetics and Protest*.

Links

<http://inthemiddleofthewhirlwind.wordpress.com>

<http://www.thisisforever.org>

<http://www.journalofaestheticsandprotest.org>

<http://bluestockings.com>

Overidentification and/or bust?

Stephen Shukaitis

In 1987, Laibach, the musical wing of the Slovenian art collective Neue Slowenische Kunst¹ (New Slovenian Art, or NSK), released a reworked version of the Queen song 'One Vision'. Whereas the original 1985 Queen song was inspired by the group's participation in Live Aid and espoused a seemingly somewhat vague leftist message of unity and world peace, it was vastly transformed in Laibach's reworking. While lyrics about there being one race, vision and solution might easily be passed over as innocuous or not even taken notice of in the context provided by a Queen performance, the lyrics' submerged obscene meaning becomes readily apparent as it is translated into German and played along in a droning, militaristic style. Laibach's version of the song, far from being a cover or simple copy, through its transformation draws out and amplifies the grotesque parallels between the pleasures of pop culture and fascist modulation of crowd emotion through propaganda and epic scale theatricality.² But why did Laibach do this; famous for always remaining in character, are they fascists or not? Laibach's performances (as well as the work of the rest of the projects within the NSK) are premised on undercutting

within cultural and social spheres? Or have the various phases of political and economic transition that have occurred since Laibach's founding in the context of the Slovenian/ex-Yugoslavian punk movement rendered such methods of subversion and deconstruction ineffective? Or is it perhaps possible to refound a critical politics and strategy of intervention drawn from the work of Laibach and the NSK, transforming their methods and ideas to the conditions of the present?

"The explanation is the whip and you bleed"

– 'Apologia Laibach' (1987)

Since its inception, the NSK expanded to include other activities including philosophy, planning, architecture, and many other aspects that are part of its now proclaimed status as a "global state in time". In addition to the collective development of shared themes, the various collectives composing NSK emphasise the collaborative nature of the project, not crediting individual members for aspects of the work and frequently changing the composition of the members involved in any given production. As a musical project, Laibach is mainly associated with forms of industrial music (as well as neoclassical and martial styles), evolving from a very harsh and abrasive sound during the early recordings through to one at times involving multiple layers of electronics, heavy metal, compositions arranged in the form of national anthems, and most recently interpreting a series of Bach's fugues. But Laibach, and the NSK more generally, have achieved prominence, notoriety, and infamy perhaps less so for their particular aesthetic as much as the historical meanings and recontextualisations of the various properties of state ideology used in their performances and productions. 'Laibach' itself, for instance, is the German name still associated as the one used during the fascist occupation of Ljubljana.

The work of Laibach and the NSK frequently draws upon the aesthetics of totalitarian and nationalist movements, forging a kind of *totalitarian kitsch*⁴ by fusing together elements from varying and completely incongruent political philosophies. For instance, the NSK logo is a combination of Laibach's cross logo (borrowed from Russian supremacist artist Kasimir Malevich and used as its primary public reference point during the years when using the name Laibach was banned in Yugoslavia), John Heartfield's anti-fascist axe swastika, an industrial cog, and a pair of antlers (with the base of the design featuring the names of the founding collectives). Even in this small example one can see an ambiguous and strange merging of elements; the way that the anti-fascist emblem becomes transformed within a composition where the relation of the elements to each other changes the meaning contained within each of them.

Laibach/NSK's usage of historical, political, and aesthetic *readymades* render audible their submerged and hidden codes and contexts that directed the modes of representation, or what Žižek refers to as the hidden underside of systems and regimes. This approach to the use of borrowed historical and political elements forms the basis of what Laibach/NSK refer to as *retroguardism*, or the formation of the monumental Retro-Avant-Garde.⁵ The basic idea of this being the non-repression of troubling or undesirable elements of historical and social regimes in their work. Rather than repressing them, they are highlighted, as they

argue that the traumas affecting the present and the future can only be addressed by tracing them back to and through their sources, working through and processing them. As Alexei Monroe argues in his excellent analysis of their work, it is not an approach based on constructing a new future by negating the past (which in general is the usual relation to time found within avant-garde artistic practice), but rather "retroguardism attempts to free the present and change the future via the reworking of past utopianisms and historical wounds".⁶ The impact and effect of Laibach/NSK's work is based on the effects produced by the disjunctive synthesis of troubling historical elements and the radical ambivalence contained within this.

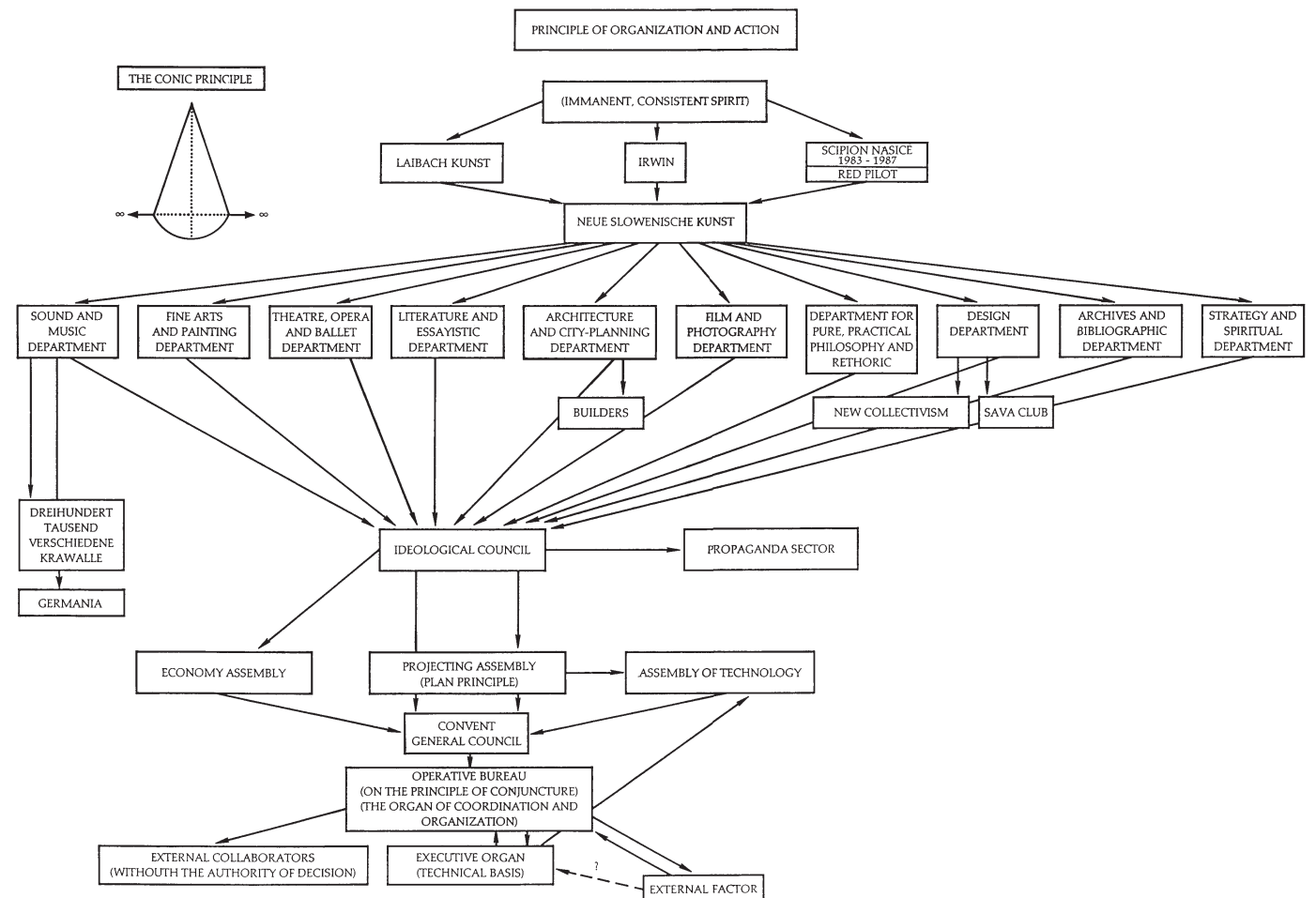
As has been argued by Žižek and others, socialist democracy was sustained by a set of implicit (obscene) injunctions and prohibitions and a process of socialising people into taking certain explicitly expressed norms. Tactics of overidentification, as employed by Laibach and the NSK – as well as more broadly within the Slovenia punk subculture of the 1980s that gave birth to the genre of "state rock", or punk music incorporating elements of the discourse of self-managed socialism as critique through overidentification – work precisely by taking the stated norms of a given system or arrangement of power more seriously than the system that proclaims them itself.⁷ This operation occurs not through addressing the law itself, *per se*, or by breaking prohibitions (a more straightforward form of transgression), but rather by teasing out the obscene subtext that underpins the operation of the law and supporting social norms. A strategy of overidentification in order to be effective needs to appear total, and through that it "transcends and reactivates the terror of the social field... the spectral menace of totality gives the phenomenon sufficient 'credibility' to sow doubt and disquiet".⁸ And this is precisely how Laibach/NSK's works function, through giving an impression of totality (by claiming the status of the nation, or the state, or of being a global state in itself) in a manner that lends a degree of credibility to the menacing and disconcerting nature of their aesthetic production.

As Susan Buck-Morris⁹ explores in her work on transitions within collective imaginaries, dreamworlds become dangerous when they are used instrumentally by structures of power, which is to say as legitimisation devices and discourses. Buck-Morris argues that socialism failed because it mimicked capitalism too faithfully. Laibach and the NSK operate by turning this process of mimicry against itself, disarticulating the potency of the dreamworld and utopian promise of Communism that had become embedded within a discourse of legitimisation, mixed with the lingering presence of totalitarian and authoritarian elements. Indeed, it is often that the constituted forms of power existing with state structures are based upon the ability to draw from the energies and constituent power of social movements, of utopian dreamworlds, and render them into zombified forms of state.¹⁰ NSK/Laibach's interventions were so powerful within the Yugoslav context precisely because of how they amplified and made visible this process of rendering dreamworlds into discourses of state legitimisation. The interventions' disconcerting effects provided ways of working through both the continued presence of authoritarianism and utopian energies, revealing how they are enmeshed in the workings of existing social imaginaries and political discourses.



straightforward distinctions through the use of totalitarian aesthetics and a bastardisation of nationalist themes. Laibach and the NSK operate by displaying the imagery, the codes of fascism and state power, pushing it to its limit, recombining it with other elements, other traditions, forging connections that "expose the 'hidden reverse' of a regime or ideology".³ Laibach are, and claim to be, fascists as much as Hitler was a painter.

This approach of adopting a set of ideas, images, or politics and attacking them, not by a direct, open or straightforward critique, but rather through a rabid and obscenely exaggerated adoption of them, can be referred to as *overidentification*. While the concept was developed within the theoretical armory of Structuralist (Lacanian) psychoanalysis (and later further developed by thinkers such as Slavoj Žižek and various cultural and political activists), it was the NSK Collective that, through their work, forged it into a tool of cultural subversion and sabotage to be deployed within the ideologically charged context of post-Tito Yugoslavia. In this article, we examine the formation of overidentification as a strategy of cultural-political intervention uniquely formed from this context. Is overidentification useful as a strategy of political intervention for an age marked by the presence of cynical distance



Laibach's work incorporates a good deal of official Yugoslav discourse on self-management and social democracy, using at times sections of Tito's speeches and audio recordings, as well as particularly resonant forms of Slovenian history (such as the images and phrases of the anti-fascist partisans, which were quite important for the role they played in state legitimation). It is this reworking of Slovenian and Yugoslav history that invested their early works with such potency, through the way these familiar ideas were made strange and even uncomfortable to audiences through their compounding and juxtaposition with other elements (for instance by fusing them together with ultra-*völkisch* imagery and Germanic phrasing, which was taken to be anathema to nationalist groups). Laibach's response to this, particularly in relation to the continued controversy over its use of a name which was said to dishonor the 'hero city' of Ljubljana, was to continue to adopt a stance of complete identification with Slovenia and Slovene identity, and thus to frame controversy and rejection of Laibach as the rejection of Slovenia itself. This created a form of ambivalent identification in which Laibach both bastardised (in their critics' views) Slovene identity while at the same time engaging in a quite militant assertion of that very Slovene identity (at points even declaring the German to be a subset of the Slovene). Through the politics and practices of overidentification, Laibach and the NSK hint towards the possibility of breaking the very process of identification,¹¹ and this is why they were so disconcerting for many political actors in Slovenia in the 1980s.

Laibach/NSK's politics and practices of overidentification are displayed in unique and quite fascinating ways in their organisational practices, or at least the claims they have made about them. This shows through in their alleged structure offered by the NSK *organigram* from 1986, which takes the logic of alternative forms of institutionalisation to an almost absurd extreme. In the organigram, at least ten different departments in addition to a number of assemblies, councils, and organs, are all paired with or ruled over by the statement of "immanent consistent spirit" that covers and directs all the activity of NSK. This claiming of and overidentification with overly complex, arcane, and nearly incomprehensible state-like structures was observed by the 'Rough Guide to Yugoslavia' to bear a striking resemblance to the diagrams used within school textbooks to explain the country's bafflingly complex political system and structures.¹² It is through this that the spectral menace of totality is activated, for in the case of the NSK it clearly is spectral because the NSK is composed of many more organisational components than it has ever possessed as members. This becomes more so in the case of projects such as the 'State in Time', in which the claiming of a state structure existing purely in time is enacted through overidentification with the organisational form and structure of states. In all of Laibach and NSK's work there is never a clear-cut statement on organisation but rather an exploration of its ambivalences and possibilities; this is an approach that "does not support a utopian or dystopian organisation, but the fantasies of audiences that need to imagine that such possibilities still exist".¹³

The first phase of Laibach's work is based around the usage and working through of elements and histories that are particularly resonant and provocative within a Yugoslav, and specifically

Slovenian context, but often have little to no meaning outside of it. This perhaps comes to its highest point of concentration in the 1986 NSK joint production *Krst pod Triglavorn* (Baptism Under Triglav), which was a monumental drama roughly based around the history of the forced Christianisation of the Slovenes, interspersed in NSK fashion within many other layers of history and processed through the imagery of the avant-garde (for instance the recreation of Vladimir Tatlin's proposed monument to the Third International as part of the set design). This production, which took place in a large state-sponsored theater, is interesting not just for the merits of its internal aesthetics, but also in how it illustrates the changing status of Laibach and the NSK within their social context (particularly given the greater importance of state-backing and commissions within socialist systems). That is to say that it marks the transition of Laibach/NSK's work from its emergence within alternative and subcultural milieus to an acceptance, even if tentative and grudging, by state authorities. It characterises what Monroe refers to as the "Laibachization of Ljubljana"¹⁴, or the process of confronting and reworking cultural boundaries and norms that occurred during the 1980s; from the point of the banning of Laibach appearing under its chosen name, to their international success with which Laibach's fanatical identification with Slovenia came to be realised in their being recognised as the most successful of Slovenia artists.

Laibach's rise to prominence in the international mass media occurred at a point in time where attempts were being made to shift the image of Yugoslavia closer to one of a western 'humanist' democracy. Laibach's presentation of itself in terms of a cold neo-totalitarian front (although admittedly one that had softened its self-presentation somewhat from its earliest works, adopting more of a playful approach in some ways) functioned both to invoke forms of authoritarian legacies and images that the Yugoslav government wanted to reject, while at the same time becoming the most prominent and aggressive assertion of Yugoslav (and particularly Slovene) culture on a global stage (although the fusion of Germanic elements within Laibach's aesthetic meant that they were often taken to be German by casual music fans, even more so during the 1990s with the rising popularity of German industrial bands). Laibach's success showed that it was "actively connected to the zeitgeist, but specifically to those subterranean, unforeseen elements repressed by mainstream consciousness",¹⁵ specifically the lingering presence of authoritarian, totalitarian, fascistic elements and militarism in the self-management system itself.

If the early phase of Laibach's work was oriented around interventions which drew heavily upon local histories and references that only resonated within that context, then it shifted to one much more oriented to broader audiences reaching beyond the local or regional context and operating within global cultural and imaginary flows. It is this logic that underlies Laibach's reinterpretation of the Queen song, as well as all the other covers and reinterpretations that Laibach have engaged in, such as their versions of the work of the Beatles (1989), Europe (1994), Opus (1987), and more recently Laibach, extending the 'global state in time' project, have taken to reinterpreting the form of the national anthem itself (2006). In their reinterpretation and reworking of 'One Vision', Laibach are not attributing any particular political agenda to Queen *per se*, but, rather, are engaged in a process of amplifying the ambivalences and tensions that are already contained within Queen's performance. It is not that Laibach brings a fascist aesthetic to bear on it, but that there is a similarity and underlying dynamic between totalitarian mass mobilisation and capitalist mass consumption. Laibach present this strangeness back to an audience as a reflection and fracturing of the structures and imaginaries through which that crowd has been constructed and constructs itself.

Laibach's reworking and transformation of other artists' materials render it into, seemingly, almost totally different compositions in terms of their feel and nature through relatively minor changes in tone, orchestration, and lyrics. This approach is somewhat along the lines of what Deleuze and Guattari discuss as the formation of a minor literature¹⁶, one based not on the development of a new representative form of language but, rather, working within the existing major languages and turning them against themselves to create strange new forms. Laibach and the NSK's artistic productions, as they take part and intervene in the Yugoslav and regional social political context (and beyond that), create the basis for the formation of what could be described as a minor politics¹⁷ and the minor composition of social movement¹⁸. Laibach's reworking and fusing together of widely differing pre-given aesthetic and ideological elements, sources they treat as readymades be to transformed through recombination, can be understood as a particular form of what the Situationist International referred to as *détournement*. *Détournement*, or, literally translated, "embezzling", involves the combination of pre-existing aesthetic elements and ideas. But while *détournement* has often been understood in a rather watered down way in terms of forms of culture jamming based on witty recombination and mixing of elements that work based on a



fairly easily recuperable form of critique (for instance *Adbusters*), the work of Laibach and the NSK is much harder to make palatable. Most détournement-based culture jamming relies upon maintaining a kind of critical distance from the elements used, while Laibach's work functions through a total and fanatical identification with obscene subtexts of the elements they employ. In this sense, Laibach return to a much deeper sense of détournement as the fundamental questioning of worth and communicability in any system of meaning, and the developing of tactics for monkeywrenching the fundamental structures of the production of meaning. Laibach's amalgamations of ideas, images, and politics does not simply recombine them, but acts to transform the potential of the elements used to create meaning in relation to each other, and through that acts as a form of semiotic sabotage in the public sphere, at times critically damaging the ability of these symbols to operate.

Strategies of Overidentification

"He who has material power, has spiritual power, and all art is subject to political manipulation, except that which speaks the language of this same manipulation."

– Laibach, 1982¹⁹

But let us consider the role and practice of overidentification in a broader scope. Overidentification as a practice of political intervention might indeed function as the unifying nodal point of a Lacanian left²⁰, if indeed such a thing actually existed.²¹ Since that period of Laibach's rise to international attention in the late 1980s, this approach to cultural intervention has been adopted more broadly within political organising, and can be identified in the activities of groups such as the Yes Men, Christoph Schlingensiefel, Reverend Billy, the Billionaires for Bush, and many others. The argument for such strategies is that in the current functioning of capitalism, the critical function of governance is to be more critical than the critics of governance itself. Functionaries in a system of power, by presenting themselves as their worst critic, thus deprive critique of its ammunition and substance, thereby turning the tables on it. This is to go beyond both the arguments put forward by Boltanski and Chiapello; that critique has been subsumed within capitalism²² and that, within autonomist politics, reactive forms of social resistance and insurgency still remain a driving motor of capitalist development. This hints at the possibility that strategies for the neutralisation of the energies of social insurgency are anticipated even before they emerge. It is in this context that a strategy of overidentification is argued to be of particular value, throwing a monkeywrench in the expected binaries of opposition and response.

The most worked-out conceptualisation of overidentification as a strategy of intervention has been articulated by BAVO, an independent research project focused on the political dimensions of art and architecture, primarily based on co-operation between Gideon Boie and Matthias Pauwels.²³ Although their take on these matters is far ranging (as can be seen by the varied contributions they gathered together for their edited collection *Cultural Activism Today*), there are a few key points that illustrate well their take on overidentification. First, that we live in post-political times where it is possible for artists and political actors to say anything, but what is said does not matter. Today, it is argued, artists are expected, and even demanded, to play something of a critical function, as long as one does not go too far in that function. In other words, so far as to question the fundamental ideological

co-ordinates underpinning social relations, as by doing so "one is immediately disqualified as a legitimate discussion partner, treated like an incompetent, ignorant imbecile who stepped out of line and should better stick to his own field of experience".²⁴ From this BAVO argue, following Karl Kraus, that when forced between two evils, one should take the worst option. That is, to abandon the role of pragmatic idealists and to work to force an arrangement of contradictions to their logical end. In their words:

"Instead of fleeing from the suffocating closure of the system, one is now incited to fully immerse oneself in it, even contributing to the closure. To choose the worst option, in other words, means no longer trying to make the best of the current order, but precisely to *make the worst of it*, to turn it into the worst possible version of itself. It would thus entail a refusal of the current blackmail in which artists are offered all kinds of opportunities to make a difference, on the condition that they give up on their desire for radical change."²⁵

BAVO adopts such an approach as they argue that other possible strategies, such as working on the grounds of marginal positions or creating forms of exodus, have already been anticipated and accommodated by systems of capitalist governance, and are therefore no longer useful as disruptive strategies.²⁶ It is within this context that the work of groups such as the Yes Men becomes more interesting, precisely because, rather than putting forth forms of critique that can easily be brushed aside, their tactics of fanatically identifying with the neoliberal agenda thus pushes them further along to obscene yet logical developments of such ideologies. This is the stance Laibach and the NSK employed, one based not on critical distance but erasure of such distance. And it is through this erasure of distance that the Yes Men's opponents are thrown off guard, precisely because, as BAVO describe it, this form of intervention forces such opponents to betray their articles of faith and passionate attachment to a neoliberal agenda just as its obscene subtext is made clear, and thus "makes it [in this case, the WTO] – rather than its critics – appear weak"²⁷.

BAVO summarise the most salient features of a strategy of overidentification as being based on these elements:

1. Owes its effectiveness to sabotaging dialectics of alarm and reassurance, drawing out the extreme and obscene subtext of a social system, eliminating the subject's reflex to make excuses for the current order to inventing new ways to manage it better.
2. Quickly shifts between different positions, overstating, mocking critique, and producing internal contradictions and points of tension that cannot hold together.
3. Sabotages easy interpretations of unproblematic identification either with or against the intervention, making it difficult to be recuperated in any direction.
4. Aimed precisely against the reflex to do the right thing.
5. Creates a suffocating closure within a system of meaning or relations, preventing escapes from the immanent laws and relations of that system.²⁸

A strategy of overidentification thus provides one possible antidote to what Peter Sloterdijk refers to as "cynical reason"²⁹, or a condition where people know that there is something fundamentally wrong but continue to act as if this is not the case. It is this cynical distance that Jeffrey Goldfarb diagnosed as so prevalent in the US, creating a sort of "legitimation through disbelief,"³⁰ although one could easily argue that this is much more widespread and just the condition that a strategy of overidentification aims to address and intervene within. One can certainly contest the desirability and effectiveness of such an approach, and such strategies have

and continue to create a great deal of debate within political, artistic, and academic circles. Nevertheless, even if the conclusion is eventually reached that such is not an acceptable choice of interventionist strategy in most cases, it nonetheless seems valuable to learn from, especially in making a transition out of a time frame or frame of mind that is paralysed to find any method of intervention because all strategies are already caught in varying webs of power and therefore argued to be compromised. A strategy of overidentification operates precisely by turning this already-caughtness into an advantage by deploying and redirecting energies of capture and constituted power against themselves.

Žižek, in an essay on Laibach and the NSK³¹, comments that the reactions of the left to them has first been to take their work as an ironic satire of totalitarian rituals, followed by an uneasy feeling based on not knowing whether they really mean it or not. This is usually followed by varying iterations along these lines, wondering if they really do mean it, or whether they overestimate the public's ability to interpret their multiple layers of allusion and reference and thus end up reinforcing totalitarian currents. For Žižek these are the wrong questions to ask and angle to take. Instead, it is a question of how Laibach and the NSK, as well a strategy of overidentification, more broadly intervene in a social context marked by cynical distance. From this perspective Žižek asks: "What if this distance, far from posing any threat to the system, designates the supreme form of conformism, since the normal function of the system requires cynical distance? In this sense the strategy of Laibach appears in a new light: it 'frustrates' the system (the ruling ideology) precisely insofar as it is not its ironic imitation, but overidentification with it – by bringing to light the obscene superego underside of the system, overidentification suspends its efficiency."³²

But the question remains to what degree a strategy of overidentification is marked by the conditions that led to its emergence? If overidentification was effective in its ability to disrupt circuits of meaning and the social imaginary within a particular social and historical context, it does not necessarily follow that it will operate similarly in other, possibly significantly different situations. Might then a transition within the imaginary of a politics formed around aesthetic interventions premised upon overidentification be necessary? This is perhaps what one sees in the development of Laibach's work, which moves from operating as a disruptive mechanism in and against the Yugoslavian national imaginary during the 1980s, but then changes direction following the disintegration of the country. For instance, during the 1990s the NSK launched its 'State in Time' project, where it claims to have created a global state and system of governance that is not based in physical space but only in time. This is at one and the same time a movement away from a strategy of disruption of one imaginary, towards a new form of imaginary disarticulation, and can in some ways be seen more to be based on a nostalgic identification with the state form that has been torn apart than an act of overidentification. In other words, it had become possible for Laibach and the NSK to mutate away from disarticulating the Yugoslav imaginary through overidentification and to begin a more positive assessment of the state dynamics it had fused itself too. This is perhaps not so surprising when one takes into account Sharon Zukin's argument that it is only really possible to fully aestheticise a system or relations of production once it has passed its moment as the hegemonic form of production.³³

The question of transition and intervention

within the social imaginary is transformed if one engages an argument such as the one made by Guy Debord³⁴, that rather than there existing a sharp and total distinction between Western capitalism and Communism in Eastern Europe, it was, instead, a question of the difference between the workings of a diffuse and a concentrated spectacle. In other words, not of totally different forms but rather of particular compositions of a similar underlying dynamic of power and exploitation. The question then becomes of how a strategy of overidentification either creates or restrains the possibility of intervening within the creation of collective imaginaries within the present. One can perhaps stumble towards the position that overidentification provides another tool in the conceptual toolbox for refounding and reformulating critique. It provides a possible answer to the dynamics analysed by Peter Starr in his exploration of the failed revolt in post-'68 political thought.³⁵ Starr argues that modern revolutionary thought is premised upon radical breaks and departures from the past, one that suppresses previous notions of return and reappearance of social forms. And it is this dynamic of reappearance that gives way to fanatical obsessions with a dynamics of recuperation, as they run counter to the narrative structure of revolutionary politics. Starr argues that the ultimate direction laid out in post-'68 thought moves toward a notion of, impossible, total revolution, and thus, failing there, moves towards forms of cultural politics based on subtle subversion. A strategy of overidentification, as well as of the Retro-Avant-Garde, working through the remaining utopian energies and the traumas of the past rather than repressing them, opens up other avenues for reformulating critique and intervention. A strategy of overidentification enacts a transition away from considering the dynamics of recuperation as problems to be avoided, to considering them as possibilities to be exploited and worked through, in, and against; but only *against* by working in them rather than seeking escape by recourse to an unproblematic outside. It is at this juncture where the question of transition is transformed into one of composition and recomposition, working from within the disarticulation and re-articulation of collective imaginaries.

Notes

1. Laibach is a Slovenian avant-garde musical performance group that was founded in 1980. They were one of the founding members of Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK) in 1984, along with IRWIN (painting) and Scipion Nasice Sisters Theater (subsequently changed their name to Noordung). Although this article focuses primarily on Laibach's work, motifs, ideas, and images are frequently shared, developed, and elaborated by the various branches of the NSK, whether independently or as part of joint ventures.
2. For a good analysis of fascist aesthetics in relation to the



avant-garde, see: Hewitt, A. (1993) *Fascist Modernism: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Avant-Garde*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

3. The NSK TIMES. The blog of NSKSTATE.COM
4. Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, (1984). Kundera wrote, "Whenever a single political movement corners power we find ourselves in the realm of totalitarian kitsch." For Kundera, "Kitsch causes two tears to flow in quick succession. The first tear says: *How nice to see children running on the grass!* The second tear says: *How nice to be moved, together with all mankind, by children running on the grass!* It is the second tear that makes kitsch kitsch."
5. For more on Laibach and NSK's work in relation to this history and development of the avant-garde, see: Djuric, D. and M. Suvakovic, Eds. (2003) *Impossible Histories: Historical Avant-gardes, Neo-avant-gardes, and Post-avant-gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918-1991*. Cambridge: MIT University Press; IRWIN, Eds. (2006) *East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe*. Cambridge: MIT University Press.; Badovinac, Zdenka, Ed. (1999) *Body and the East: From the 1960s to Present*. Cambridge: MIT University Press.
6. Monroe, A. (2005) *Interrogation Machine: Laibach and the NSK*. Cambridge: MIT Press. (p.120).
7. One can see a parallel between the development of state rock in Yugoslavia (bands such as O! Kult and Panktri) and developments in the British post-punk scene, such as Public Image Limited claiming to be a communications and production company, or artists moving towards an adoption and overidentification with yuppie aspirations as technique of critiquing them. A number of artists, particularly Joy Division, Human League, and Magazine, drew from state socialist and totalitarian imagery their work, employing a tactic creating ambivalent effects, although perhaps nowhere nearly as disconcerting at Laibach and the NSK's work. Reynolds, S. (2005) *Rip It Up and Start Again*. Post-punk 1978-1984. London: Faber and Faber.
8. Monroe, A. (2005) *Interrogation Machine: Laibach and the NSK*. Cambridge: MIT Press. (p.79).
9. *Dreamworld and Catastrophe* (MIT, 2000), Susan Buck-Morris
10. Shukaitis, S. (2007) "Plan 9 from the Capitalist Workplace: Insurgency, Originary Accumulation, Rupture" (2007) *Situations: A Project of the Radical Imagination* Volume 2 Number 2: 95-116.
11. There is a wide-ranging field of literature on politics and practices of identification, identity, and the politics of organisation. For a good overview see Pullen, A. and S. Linstead, Eds. (2005) *Organisation and Identity*. London: Routledge. For an exploration of the politics of disidentities, see Harney, S. and N.Q. Nyathi (2007) "Disidentity," *Exploring Identity: Concepts and Methods*. Ed. Alison Pullen, Nic Beach, and David Sims. London: Palgrave: 185-197.
12. Dunford, M., et al, Eds. (1990) *Yugoslavia: The Rough Guide*. London: Harrap Columbus. (p244)
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16. Deleuze, G. and F. Guattari (1986) *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
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27. Ibid. (p30)
28. Ibid. (pp32-37)
29. Sloterdijk, P. (1998) *Critique of Cynical Reason*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
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Learning to Breathe Protest



The beginning of the protests, the University of Vienna (Universität Wien).



An introduction and personal account of the protests at the art academies in Vienna and Munich, in the context of the wave of struggles and occupations that occurred across the educational sector in Europe, USA, South East Asia and South America in late 2009, written by people involved with *salong* (Munich), *interflugs* (Berlin), *academy of refusal* (Vienna), *10th floor* (London), March 2010.

Some Background

The processes that characterise what many now refer to as the neoliberalisation of education have various starting points and significant dates but GATS (General Agreement on Trades and Services) is worth citing. The global drive towards the privatisation of public goods and services (including the education system) can be understood as an ongoing process, certainly since GATS was first laid out during the constitution of the WTO in 1994. Along with other public services, the educational sector becomes subject to this agreement the moment an individual member state expands the 'liberalising' function of GATS into its university system. The agreement serves to monitor and restrict government measures that might have a negative effect on the trade in services – GATS grant commercial and foreign competitors equal rights to state financed institutions. In theory, the WTO member states are free to maintain individual control over their educational systems. In practice, this nominal control is virtually impossible to maintain.

The Bologna Process

The official starting point of the European Bologna Process is the Bologna declaration of 1999, signed by representatives from 29 countries. With the stated aim of creating a European Higher Education Area it sets out to "make European Higher Education more compatible and comparable, more competitive and more attractive for Europeans and for students and scholars from other continents".² The use of the term "competitive" and emphasis on international overseas students is markedly different from an earlier agreement drawn up in Bologna in 1988 (signed by 660 universities from 78 countries), the *Magna Charta Universitatum*.³ In this document it's made clear that the university as such, be regarded as an 'autonomous' institution and that furthermore "...to meet the needs of the world around it, its research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and intellectually independent of all political authority and economic power."

Within a decade, the humanist model of the 'autonomous institution' as laid out in 1988 had been degraded substantially and the recomposition of education in line with the broader global economy was well underway. But how did this shift occur, what were the operative terms? For this we might turn to an intermediate preparatory paper, the Sorbonne declaration, signed by the four Ministers in charge for France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom, at the University Paris-Sorbonne, May 25 1998. Here we find reference to the knowledge economy and the claim that Europe should not be solely regarded in terms of "the Euro, of the banks and the economy: it must be a Europe of knowledge as well".⁴ A "Europe of knowledge" requires an educational system acting as a bridge between the production and maintenance of knowledge and the interests of capital. It also requires a university-educated European citizen.

In tandem with this process, by 1997 the Schengen Agreement had been incorporated into mainstream European Union law as the Amsterdam Treaty. The European stronghold had been enhanced by aggressively enforcing external frontiers, whilst within the European Union border-controls were being loosened. The ensuing strict immigration-regulations for non-EU students in European countries as well as extortionate tuition fees (UK: three times the amount of

EU-students' fees) show the economic selection process at play⁵ (e.g. the growing importance of education as a tradable export factor). While the inner-European education systems are being restructured to fulfil the needs for measurable and exchangeable knowledge transfer, the legal standards for free and unrestricted trade with this newly standardised commodity are regulated through the GATS.

To date, 46 states have signed up to the Bologna process (28 to the Schengen Agreement) and what has been presented as inevitable across European member states has the legal status of a recommendation only. Simply put, it's far less clear, less inevitable, less legally binding than government ministers would have us believe. The introduction of the BA/MA system for example, which in mainstream media (as well as current student protests) has been the most discussed symptom of the educational reforms, refers only to a 'recommendation' to introduce a two-step-system. Neither BA/MA nor restrictions on international overseas student applications are mentioned, nor any recommendations on the actual structure of the studies made.⁶ Those who promote the reforms have claimed that students' mobility and exchange would be made possible through modularisation and the common European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). In fact, student mobility, as such, has in most cases been made more difficult due to restrictions in what are now firmly structured undergraduate programmes and universities' predictably rigid administrative bureaucracy. Geographical and social 'mobility' only occur between BA and MA studies and only for those who can afford another higher degree.

In Germany the implications of the two-step system and modularisation led to the refusal of German Art Academies to participate in the Bologna process (2004). By 2010, most German fine art departments had maintained this refusal against pressure from local ministerial departments, holding on to the 'classic' German masterclass-system. In the case of the Berlin University of Art (Universität der Künste Berlin – UdK) for example, this has led to a marked difference in degree structure between fine art students ('free, genius artists') and fellow students ('technocrat, cultural labourers') in the design, architecture, music and theatre faculties (now studying under the restructured system). The effects of this split within the UdK are only now becoming visible, and might serve as an explanation for the general lack of student networking (between the faculties), solidarity, criticality and visibility in the recent wave of student protest. Activities and discussions were sporadic and mainly focussed on the individual problems within tightened study programmes, etc. The students of the UdK did not participate in the protests centred around the two main universities of Berlin, and the few attempts to formulate criticism towards educational and institutional politics remained with some individuals.

Almost a decade after the first Bologna meeting in 1999, Europe has just witnessed the first phase of widespread protests against various attempts by the state to implement the 'Process' and the commodification and enclosure of education. It's perhaps unsurprising then that the initial explosion of this recent wave of student dissent and protest occurred in the "best practice" centre of the Bologna Process, Austria in late 2009.

As an 'exemplary' model of educational neoliberalisation Austria moved to introduce the BA/MA and re-introduce tuition fees (there hadn't been any since 1972) with the 2002 university law which came to effect under a coalition of the conservatives and the far right. The Austrian state has continued to break down democratic university structures by weakening the voice of students and mid-level faculty within the various committees while strengthening and expanding the decision-making powers of the rectorate (The Head of School). It also introduced a business-like structure for handling budgets and the 'aims' of

the university: an advisory university board was deployed consisting 50% of members elected by the government (mostly ex-politicians and/or businessmen) and 50% elected by the university. The board has the final say on possible motions of no-confidence towards the Rector, and most importantly the final say on the Service Level Agreement (SLA) that was also introduced in 2002 and is negotiated between the government and the rectorate. In line with this, the budget from the ministry for the higher education sector is no longer based on fixed amounts divided between institutions but on a 'performance' related system. The accepted parameters of which are based on statistics covering so called 'study-activity', the amount of exams students take and the speed at which students complete studies, etc. The SLA also includes the number of women employed by respective educational institutions but due to the manner of calculation, institutions that have significantly increased representation can still receive less than those where the situation remains unchanged.

Vienna 2009

In summer 2009 a new amendment to the university law was put forward. Many regarded this as a further assault on the democratic process that underpins the educational system and in particular the 'legitimacy' of university structures. A number of mainstream political parties and institutional representatives had made their objections known at the time but were totally ignored by the National government. In June 2009, shortly before the summer break, a meeting was called to organise protest against the amendment and to connect the various struggles against the 'de-democratisation' and neoliberalisation of education – the Network for Emancipatory Education was founded. This proved to be an important turning point as most groups had up until this point, been working independently, dealing with issues and concerns specifically linked to the institutions and social contexts in which they studied, lived and worked. These included a number of self-organised reading groups and workshops from students at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna dealing with emancipatory pedagogy, the history of neoliberalisation of education, critique of the study plans, critical discourse about the interconnections of economy and art, creative industries, the cognitariat, etc. At the main university there had been protests at the Departments for International Development and



Political Science. Also, students from different departments had been setting up a social space, called Widerstandscafé (Resistance café), and protest forms like 'action-days' on campus. In addition, there had also been a major protest and demonstration led by school-kids and teachers and a group called Kindergarten Insurrection was formed by people working in childcare; developments that fuelled the situation in autumn.

In its relatively short existence the Network for Emancipatory Education set out to highlight the links between the university and the rest of society. This was achieved (at least initially), e.g. by showing the student as worker both in precarious job situations in and outside the university and directly linked to the broader economy.⁷ That said, the uptake in the mainstream press and the manner in which the media factored in the broader critique of neoliberalisation took everyone by surprise. But since the core of the protest was relatively small there was uncertainty as to whether resistance could be continued into the autumn term – as the protest to avoid the passing of the initial law proved to be unsuccessful and was passed in summer. In October 2009, a new SLA was due to be signed between the ministry and the rectorate at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. A major point of dispute was the possible extension of the BA/MA system across all parts of the curriculum. Against this backdrop a group of

students and teachers started working together to distribute information on the Bologna Process and the implications of the introduction of BA/MA. Further meetings with every class of the Academy were scheduled: a glossary on the Bologna Process, a short history of BA/MA at the institution, were handed out and the hierarchical structures of the institution and their connection to the university law were comprehensively discussed.

There was a general concern that the Rector would (again) act against the will of those working and studying at the Academy it was decided to apply public pressure before his meeting with the ministry. With support of the senate, students and teaching staff held a press conference two days before the scheduled meeting and a press release was issued. This made clear that the majority of students/workers at the institution were not only against the extension of the BA/MA system but opposed the broader process of neoliberalisation ushered in by the university law and Bologna Process, a point not fully covered in the mainstream media.

From the mainstream media news, *vienna.at* October 21st 2009:

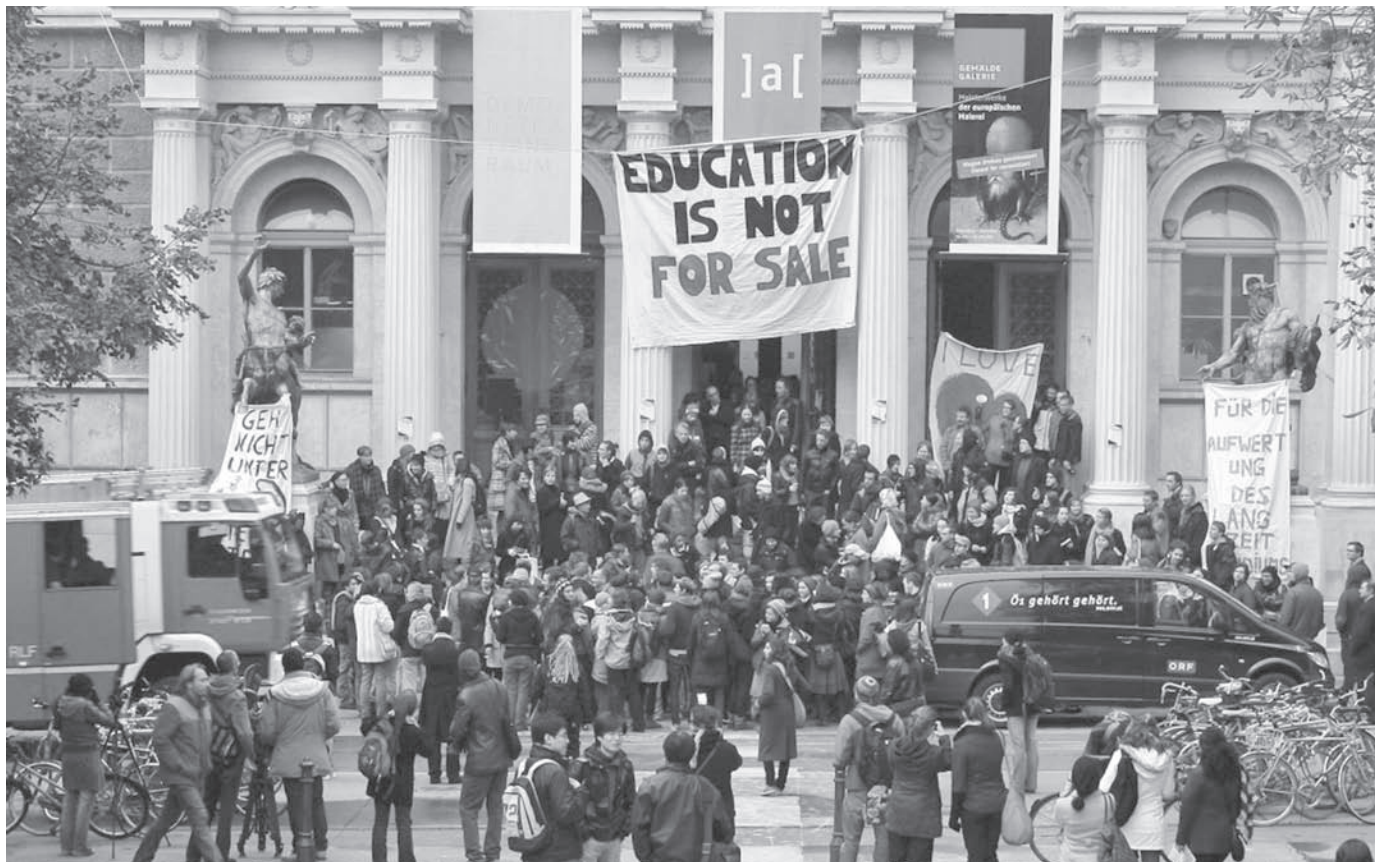
"Concrete demands from students and teaching staff directed towards the vice principal, Schmidt-Wulffen, are to represent 'the position of the academy instead of his private agenda', during the upcoming negotiations with the ministry for science and education. Another demand is to maintain the current diploma degree. A petition calls for the full abolition of tuition fees, knowledge-asset-systems and output-agreements and against the 'degradation of universities and schools towards jobmarket-oriented training posts'.⁸

Two days after the press release was issued and the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna was occupied, another demonstration was called. This time the main lecture hall of the Vienna University was also occupied. The following weekend occupations occurred in Graz, the Technical University of Vienna – with further occupations then taking place in Munich, Berlin – initiating a wave of university protests and occupations throughout Europe.⁹

Writing this, we are aware, that none of these processes seemed and were as linear as they might look like in this account. Looking back, we would like to present a few threads and identify what for us were important first steps. All in all, the university occupations of autumn 2009 would not have been possible without the input of many people in, around and also from outside the affected institutions. Certainly not without those who've worked tirelessly on pinpointing not only the grievances in the educational system but across the social field in general – organising protests, articulating and living alternatives.

Left: The occupied Academy of Fine Arts Vienna (Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien).





Accounts of Occupation¹⁰

Occupation¹¹

This performative act does not create something new out of an ominous nothingness. Instead, the space itself becomes visible and utilizable in a different dimension. In contrast to taking possession of it, occupying a space means to liberate it from its ostensible possessors. Occupation means a maximal densification of energy, work and discussion with a simultaneous deceleration and disruption of social speed.

THE TIME IS NEVER RIPE AND HAS THEREFORE ALWAYS ALREADY COME.¹²

“We have to go in now”, declares an uncertain voice over the megaphone – suddenly a space opens up.

V: There had been many attempts to organise protests, but the moment the first occupation was proclaimed, everything changed. Students, non-students, teaching staff all came together in the warmth of the occupied space, appropriating the previously stiff, cold, neo-classical assembly hall and turning it into a site of negotiation. Here, sharing knowledge and experience, working and functioning collectively cut through established power-structures.

Solidarity and collective euphoria created enough energy for unforeseen workloads of organising, discussing, writing, preparing demonstrations, giving interviews, daily plenary meetings. Collectively, the head of the institution was challenged, the hierarchical structures put to disposition.

A position of power was taken – without being able to actually grasp what this meant, in a tempo that was breath-taking, with the attention of mainstream-media and international observers that could not be overseen, making it necessary, making it unavoidable to just go from moment to moment, situation to situation, being fully within it.

Improvisation: Elusive and Unstable

“In speaking of improvisation we not only discuss the production of particular sounds or events but the production of social spaces as well. ... Where applied, improvisation brings about glimpses of instability. If it is working, its elusive qualities evades solidification and commodification – at least in the moment.”¹³

M: In Munich someone placed a banner, a simple gesture of solidarity with the occupations in Vienna. Parallel to this, someone had printed a flyer announcing the academy was “to be occupied”. The rumour quickly made the rounds. People met the next day, speeches were held, a few flags waved, then the assembly hall of the academy was effectively occupied. A week later the occupation moved into the main lecture hall of the main university. From the idea to its implementation, it was a way of surprising ease.

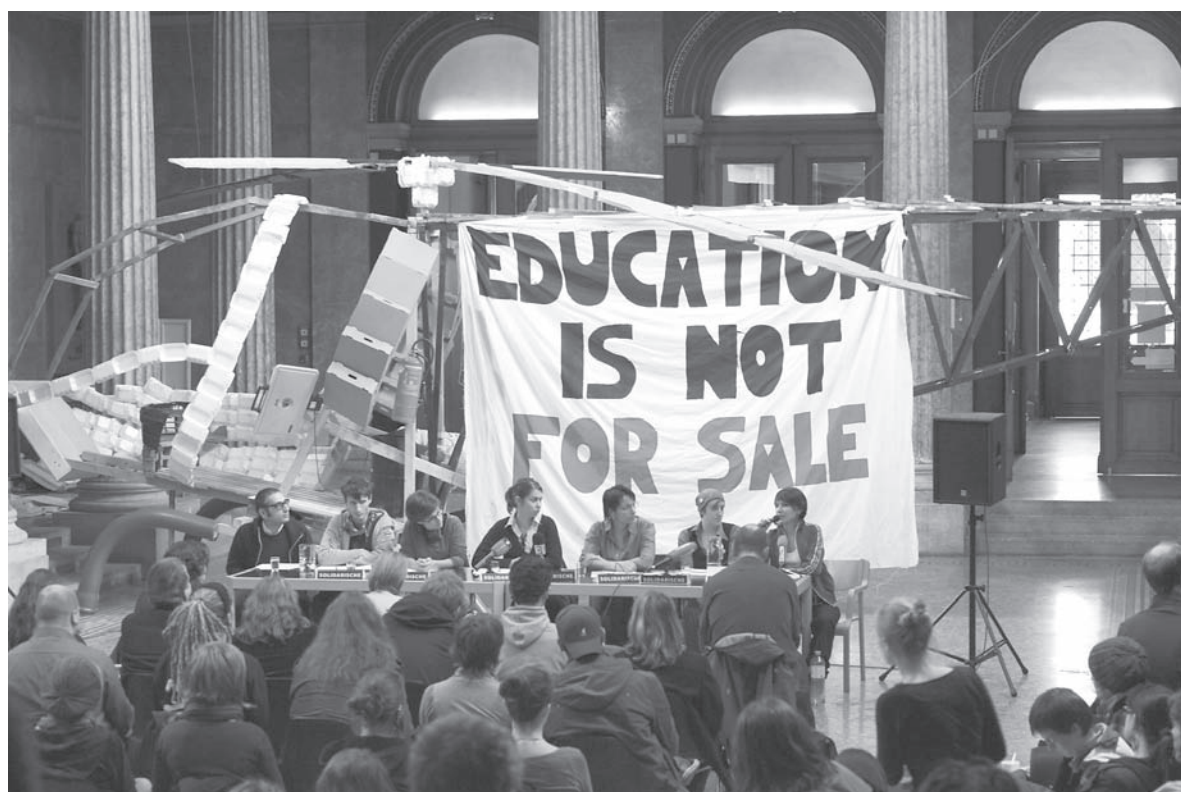
V: Working groups were set up to give inputs to the daily plenary. The plenary itself had to be

prepared every day, people bringing in the news, setting up the situation (chairs, microphone), writing protocols. Signs were used for improving communication, methods had to be developed for how to make proposals for decisions. Aim of it all was to create a situation with no leaders, where everyone had a say, without “majority-votes” where everything would be discussed until a consensus was worked out, where everyone was given an equal opportunity to speak, and women being favoured in this respect. It was claimed to be a grassroots democracy, an anti-sexist, feminist space.

The meetings took hours. But they were supposed to take hours. They were supposed to go on forever. They created a different structure of relevance, a different universe, one in which time was set out of order.

X: It seemed as if different circles of speed and information were forming. The ones spending almost all of their time with protest-organising, working group co-ordination, reading, communicating, were diving into a nucleus, dissolving into a different rhythm, time, structure. Others had to go to work, had other responsibilities they could not or did not want to give up, became ill, needed more regular working times, were torn between the different structures, trying to find compromises, ways of maintaining the life that was expected from them in the established order and engage in the protest, others had never given up their structures, were giving inputs and/or demanding digestible outputs from the ones more involved.

The question of legitimation arose. Signatures



First press conference at the then-occupied Academy of Fine Arts Vienna (Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien).

like “the occupiers”, “the protesters” were used while the plenary was made up of an ever-changing group of people. It became clear that “grassroots-democracy” actually meant “democracy of those who are present”.

It had been agreed, that there should never be anything like “the” movement. There should not be a committee of leaders deciding where to go. No dogmatic political direction should be imposed on everyone, it should be a space where people of different political and social background would have the freedom to cooperate.

Y: The non-representational form, the attempt to simply DO what was demanded is a central characteristic of the protest. Nevertheless, we felt and feel the need to explain and communicate what happened, making these processes transparent to others in order to participate and rethink. What we experienced was a breakout of the various dissatisfactions with the political as well as economic situation (not only) in the academic institution. It brought to light the size of the network of critically thinking people: politically or socially engaged working groups, collectives, institutionalised spaces which normally didn’t get as much attention and other non-organised individuals in different occupations, before invisible as potential supporters, who have now raised their voices in more or less open support.

D: The occupations were once called “university in the best sense”. I totally agree! However, one must distinguish between self-organisation and self-help. It would be self-help to mend the holes in the Bologna process with one’s own initiative. Self-organisation wants more, namely a change of society against the spirit that stands behind Bologna, which hovers over everything anyway. Specifically, it could seem as if self-initiated student projects are very welcome to those failed institutions due to the Bologna Process.

M: Of course, there is always the danger of mending holes, but there is a way to avoid this. As there was nothing we really AIMED for. It was demonstrated that this unrest would not possibly be stopped by fulfilling reformist demands but that instead what was done and lived was the demand, that it was rejected to acknowledge any other authority than the one of the people being in the protests themselves to have the power to fulfil any demands – whereas then they were not called “demands” any more, then they were “practice”.

From mainstream media news, standard.at November 3rd 2009:

“Network-protest leaves politicians helpless The University protests don’t have leaders, that makes them

Right: The second press-conference in the occupied hall of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna (Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien).

strong – Austria’s political parties haven’t learned to organise themselves in the net yet. “The politicians are therefore confronted with a heterogeneous mass of students that cannot easily be put into an ideological box. ... The mediation of the protests [e.g. a livestream was installed in the main occupied lecture hall] has various advantages: “Most important is the transparency. Especially after the parties and the alleged damages of the first days, people could see for themselves that there was also constructive work done. That way we were not dependent on traditional media any more.” ... Politics are clueless, such a form of protest is unknown to political parties ... and politicians wanting a controllable communication process. ... The occupants refused to nominate a representative as was requested by Hahn [minister for science and research].”¹⁴

R: A key task has to be to introduce the market ‘failure’ of a capitalist economy into the comfortable discussions on how universities might best suit the interests of the labour market; or how everyone might best become a member of the creative middle class. The aim cannot simply be the defence of a supposedly innocent humanist model of the university – what needs to be challenged is the university’s role in reproducing capitalism, not only ideologically, but also as a site of direct accumulation and exploitation

Postscript

B: An immense interest from (leftist) academics in these protests made me think about the hopes and of the social potential of this lived “counter-reality”. And of the status that a visible student protest like this still holds for many. The projections and encouragement from certain parts of academia might seem overwhelming, contrasting with the lack of consequences on the political surface level. The rejection of pragmatism and effectiveness amongst some protesting groups are for sure in themselves legitimate. But can this resistance be reapplied in a way that even those outside of the occupations can gain from their experiences?

V: As was shown in the organisation of the protests against the 10-Year-Anniversary of the Bologna Process, a network has been built up during the protests, that – although it might be a very small percentage of the people temporarily engaged in the occupations – has been broadened and made more effective. This does not only affect people at the different institutions, or at least is further interwoven with other structures – be it because of work and/or politically working contexts. But the lack of an occupied space, together with the necessary state of exception for the participants, is clearly noticeable as lack of collectivity. An important question is how to maintain a level of collectivity once it’s reached and how to work with the creation and dissolution of disruptive energies – where to withdraw to? How to withdraw and restart together? How to build a support context for everyone who suddenly has to stand alone again?

B: I find important for example, how we are working together on this text, bringing in different viewpoints from art academies in Germany and Austria – generally the communication between active groups seems to take on a different quality.

Maybe the collective memory of a protest can initiate a state of collectivity, a certain activist knowledge on how to better exist and work together, that can be carried further, towards other locations of struggle and movement? How can we effectively organise to infiltrate the educational institutions and initiate the production of independent and emancipatory structures?

I understand that you have been struggling inside the occupied spaces to come close to self-defined models of communication, of social interaction, of communisation, that correlate with your demands towards the educational system. That you have tried to enact criticism by turning the occupation into a kind of lived social utopia. One where academicised feminist studies would



Demonstration on March 12th 2010 at the Parliament Building, Vienna.

This is in such huge contrast to the urge for linear development and progress, the need for predictable, monogamous security. The disillusion from something that for the glimpse of a second seemed to be the glorified solution to everything is necessary.

Some links

unsereuni.at
bolognaburns.org
uniriot.org
edu-factory.org
edumeltdown.blogspot.de
wirbelwind.noblogs.org
theimaginarycommittee.wordpress.com
occupyca.wordpress.com
emancipating-education-for-all.org
emanzipatorischebildung.blogspot.at

Some further reading

The Economy Has Left The Building, ed. Rosa Kerosene, 2008
Toward A Global Autonomous University, the edu-factory collective, 2009

Notes

1. For further contextualisation of the neoliberalisation of education see for example Silvia Federici’s *Education and the Enclosure of Knowledge in the Global University* (2008), on the commercialisation and corporatisation of academic life, George Caffentzis’ *Throwing Away The Ladder: The Universities In The Crisis* (1975), on the turn in educational politics in the USA in the mid ’70s – a turn that might be read as exemplary for further developments in other parts of the world – and *CAFA and the Struggle Against Structurally Adjusted Education in Africa* by Ousseina Alidou, Caffentzis and Federici for an analysis of the World Bank’s role in educational politics in Africa.
2. http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/doc1290_en.htm
3. www.magna-charta.org/pdf/mc_pdf/mc_english.pdf
4. http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/Sorbonne_declaration.pdf
5. In Austria, for example, students from outside the EU are not allowed to earn more than 340 Euros a month (in case they achieve to get permission to work) but have to have proof of 7,000 Euros (increasing yearly) in their account once a year, and have to pay tuition fees.
6. <http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna.pdf>
7. For a discussion of the challenges and potential of the ‘edu-supermarket’ see for example Marc Bousquet and Tiziana Terranova ‘Recomposing The University’ (2004) <http://www.metamute.org/en/Recomposing-the-University>
8. Translated from: <http://www.vienna.at/news/wien/artikel/generalstreik--akademie-der-bildenden-kuenste-besetzt/cn/news-20091021-05051855>
9. See a map of the occupied spaces at: <http://tinyurl.com/yacpkb>
10. The following statements are personal accounts from the inside of the occupied art academies in Vienna and Munich as well as comments from outside, compiled in order to give a picture of the personal, the group-psychological, and micro-political structures that evolved during the protests.
11. For the discussion of the implications an occupation of a university can have, the New School occupation and the pamphlet *Perspectives on the takeover of a building* was very important and inspiring <<http://www.scribd.com/doc/11562065/The-New-School-Occupation-Perspectives-on-the-Takeover-of-a-Building>> As well as the later *Pre-occupied, The Logic of Occupation* <<http://jdeanicite.typepad.com/files/preoccupied-reading.pdf>>
12. From a flyer made during the occupations in Vienna.
13. Mattin, ‘Against Representation’: http://www.mattin.org/essays/Against_Representation.html
14. Translated from: <http://derstandard.at/1256743667434/Netzwerk-Protest-macht-Politiker-ratlos>

be re-applied and utilised in a radical disclosure of still dominating sexist behaviour, for example. Or by allowing the occupied spaces to be open for homeless people, while being aware of the public controversy this might entail.

V: Actually, the structures and problems varied very much in the different occupied spaces and the question of social utopia needs to be handled with care ... the “heart” of what was called “a movement” was the Audimax, the biggest lecture room of the main university. Here, a laboratory of a social movement seemed to be condensed, since (in contrast to the art academy for example) people from a broad spectrum of social backgrounds came together.

The space itself (its interior being built in a typical lecture-room structure) made it difficult to set up anti-hierarchical meetings. Sitting in rows directed towards where the front-lecture would usually take place, the setting was easy to use as a (male) profiling platform.

Although the politics of representation were decentralised, meaning that the typical narrowing to only a few leading figures was avoided and the people speaking to the public were mainly female, the Audimax occupation as the centre of the protests faced heavy problems with achieving the grassroots feminist claims in practice.

It was shocking too see how deeply an anti-feminist attitude was and is embedded within large parts of society, manifesting in discriminating reactions towards the feminist demands of the protesters and developments like the F.L.I.T. space (WomenLesbianIntersexTrans-space) at the occupied university.

Still, the very fact that problems like these occurred proves that with all the difficulties, the standard conditions of society were made visible, were challenged and disposed for deconstruction.

B: The described difficulty in communicating practical demands out of this “deconstructed” situation, might have to do with the potentially radical quality of this chosen form of resistance. If education was to take on forms as those claimed by the protesters, if it was to be a real-democratic, emancipating power, it would mean to exclude its reproductive functions as producer of human capital.

Anyway, maybe we have to stop looking for answers in all these accounts, accepting the occurrence of ever more questions once you start to produce “answers”. To keep digging and to never stop questioning ... maybe we will get closer to the core of what is called education, or knowledge.

PPS

What is needed is a permanent improvisation, a permanent self-criticism, the possibility to take and give up responsibilities, the forming and dissolving of practices, theories, lives.

'We have decided not to die.'

On taking and leaving the University

Marina Vishmidt

The struggles metastasizing across the public university system in California have been extremely visible in recent months, starting with the September 24, 2009 rallies and walkouts, continuing with the November occupations at UC Berkeley, UC Davis and UC Santa Cruz, mass protests on other campuses, and most recently in the March 4th Day of Action statewide that included the UC Davis highway blockade. The predominantly student movement (though many students subsidize their studies through low-paid, unstable adjunct teaching contracts) has deployed tactics such as occupations, sit-ins, walk-outs, rallies, roadblocks, mass marches and dance parties, to which university management has responded almost uniformly in classic zero-tolerance style (an approach echoed in the UK when the University of Sussex registrar pretended that a small student occupation had taken building staff hostage and called in the riot police, and this was also the means by which a fraudulent High Court injunction was obtained that outlawed all student protests on campus)¹. The trajectory of these struggles has shown features that make for a provocative comparison with the recent student occupation movement in Vienna and condign occupations and strikes elsewhere in Europe, such as the 'Anomalous Wave' in Italy, as well as the current anti-cuts campaign surging forth in the UK higher and further education sector. At the most basic level of analysis, the crisis of state education in California is like a *wunderkammer* version of the crisis of the American state; a scale model which makes legible the effects of financialization on the public sector over the past three or so decades, and how its 'bankruptcy' can become a point of contestation of the whole economy as serviced and modelled by state-funded higher education, as well as a point of secession and re-composition. But further, the spectacular unravelling of the debt-fuelled model of accumulation in the CA university system can be extrapolated to its unravelling system-wide, with the predictably grotesque social consequences (booming tent cities, 20% unemployment, crypto-fascist tenor of mainstream media², 'Tea Parties') of the lack of systemic (or oppositional) capacity to practically question the extant undead model of capitalist relations, kept vertical by the ongoing bailouts as it staggers off a cliff. What has been discussed in various communist quarters as the 'non-reproduction' attendant on the spread of 'fictitious capital'³ plays out almost schematically in the education sphere, long a nominal refuge from and now a test-bed for the ruling-class asset-stripping accelerated by the economic downturn. It is especially dramatic in the case of the UC system, where it has been shown by Bob Meister, among others⁴, that it is students' very inability to afford escalating tuition fees that is shaping profit strategies for universities, which are being structured more and more like hedge funds – tuition fees as CDOs (Collateralized Debt Obligations) for the university's 'capital projects' (showcase facilities that Hoover up what were once teaching posts and courses) and the bucketloads of managerial staff to push them through. But the re-structuring of the state university system has had a consistent alibi: the remorseless slashing of their budgets by the state government, owing to 30 years of 'starve the beast' low-tax policies attendant on the passing of Proposition 13. And the university CEOs could haul out their most cherished our-hands-are-tied valedictions at a time when the state really did seem to be down to its last quarter. The substantive near-bankruptcy of the state of California itself, often cited as

'the eighth largest economy in the world', and not so long ago paying its civil servants and its welfare bills in IOUs, fairly quickly catapulted the turmoil in the universities into the public eye, expanding the struggle to the rest of the social terrain almost by default, when it did not succeed in doing so deliberately. If anything, the behemoth stature of the CA state education system on that social terrain – as employer, health care facilities provider, real-estate developer, etc – poised the student movement, which initially sought simply to counter the 30% tuition fee hike, directly on the terrain of social reproduction, dramatizing that the 'crisis' was to be fought there if it was going to be fought at all.

Meanwhile in Europe, the student mobilizations signal a resistance to the so-called 'Bologna Process' which aims to 'harmonize' education systems in EU-member countries along curricular and managerial lines dictated by quasi-market bureaucratic stasis, where the UK has sat for some time. As always, the UK is squarely in the middle rung of the death spiral of the neoliberal state, neither as far gone as the US nor as wedded to an actual or phantasmic benevolent state as other parts of Europe. UK student activists too are not able to draw on the recent memory of a nurturing welfare state in order to go beyond it unlike the militant students in Austria and Germany can, nor on the resources of social combativeness evident in Greece or Italy. The UK occupations and strikes so far – most visibly at Sussex, King's College, Tower Hamlets College in further education and ESOL, and Leeds – have been very encouraging but, in light of the other places mentioned so far, and perhaps inevitably at this stage, limited. The discourse of the movement seems, understandably, perplexed at a situation where the universities are being hounded into being run more like businesses and face serious funding cuts, yet exhibit no discernible economic rationality in their predicament, unless crafting a spurious corporate culture is the economic rationality of our day – sacking staff left and right, eliminating departments in order to fund top managers' salaries and a US-cum-Abu Dhabi menu of 'capital projects' (strike-hit King's College London just bought Somerset House, the Inland Revenue's former neo-classical residence on The Strand...). The production of subjectivity in California, in Europe and in the UK in the student movement seems particularly at issue with regard to the potential political outcomes of this manifestation of unrest, seeing as its symptoms are both shared and not shared along the 'crisis' as such. Published analysis discloses a gamut ranging from social democratic outrage and a 'take it back' attitude, to the heady prose of the communiqués issuing forth from the 'insurrectionist' or 'communisation' wings of the California movement⁵; as well as, more interestingly, the continuum and alternations between these polarities. There is a recognition that the university as currently constituted is not the desired goal, that the economic and social bankruptcy of its standard operating procedure is both specific and general, that students both are and are not workers and what implications this could have. Although literature around the 'corporatisation of the university' has been steadily proliferating in recent years – with Marc Bousquet's book *How The University Works* and blog⁶ among the most salient, and *edu-factory* making serious inroads into the activist/autonomist side of things – it seems as if the understanding hard-won from the analysis and the constant brutal experience of the university as an institution

whose 'core business' is not the production of autonomous thinking subjects (a pernicious myth enough in its day, and positively radioactive now) but the maximisation of speculative claims on value and the production of scarcity and fear under conditions of diminishing possibility for everyone, has generated a marked dis-identification with certain antinomies of liberalism (US-style) for many of the student activists and the adoption of a materialist standpoint that fully embraces, and even paradoxically 'leverages', the waste product status that the current subjects of hedge-fund higher education have been assigned. The link between the 'fictitious capital' that sustains the state university model in CA and the fictitious employment prospects students graduate with in the present conjuncture may have a lot more to it than mere analogy.

The following interview was conducted over a process of several weeks with a professor and a graduate student/instructor who have been observing and involved in the UC movement (in Berkeley and Santa Cruz). Indicators rather than fully-formed questions were given – short points on 'financialization', 'composition', and 'what next' – as it was these vectors that seemed to be urgent, not only for the praxis of the nascent student and union campaigns in the UK, but for getting an assessment of the larger revolutionary potential of the (relatively) mass struggles in California state education.

Marina Vishmidt: What is the role of financialization, both in the transformation of the CA state university system, and in the political agenda of resistance to it? How broad is the linking of the struggles around tuition hikes to the 'crisis' more generally, whether at state, national or systemic level? How do these links register, or not register, in the organisation and rhetoric of movements? For example, what has a higher profile in the demands, that the state raise levels of funding or that the university revise its financial operating model (e.g. Bob Meister's 'They Pledged Your Tuition' and other analyses of CA state universities operating 'like hedge funds' with students/staff/teachers congregating near the bottom of the priority list for spending, in large part because their debt needs to grow in order to be collateralised for the University's prime spending commitments, i.e. capital projects, property development, or even Board of Regents members' business interests in student-loan banking...)?

Iain Boal: Nothing of what has happened can be understood unless you go back to the Orange County homeowners' revolt in the 1970s led by Howard Jarvis. The result was Proposition 13 which stopped the property tax revenue stream in its tracks. It also blew a big hole in the idea of universality of provision. It prefigured a withdrawal to a gated privatized world ready for neoliberalism. It set the scene for the current spectacle of 'gotcha capitalism' – the chase for fees, fines and penalties on the fiscal side of things. Of course, ideologically Reagan launched his attack on Berkeley and public higher education in his bid for governor as far back as 1966. He said notoriously that if the blood had to run on Telegraph Ave. so be it.

You really must mention the slide from number 1 in the nation to number 49 or thereabouts in terms of public provision for education. It's been a long slow throttling process – a frog boiler really – noticed first in the lower echelons of public education and now hitting the tertiary level. But the choking of money post-Proposition 13 was

very visible to us parents in the halls and toilets and playing fields of the public schools, and the gutting of programs started many years ago. The Californian political class had mostly withdrawn to private schools at the primary and secondary level (except in wealthy suburbs) and did not resist, indeed were responsible for allowing, the defunding. They continued to fund UC as long as it was a white affair for their own children – right up to the '70s really. In the same way, in Britain in the '60s only circa 7% of each annual cohort went on to university – free but for the few.

Now the resistance is surely bound to pick up dramatically from the parents' perspective because of the massive fee hikes *and* into the bargain no classes available so their kids taking longer and longer to graduate. Not to mention no jobs, but see Doug Henwood [sent separately]. Very helpful charts. Bob Meister's analysis of the Regents' moves at UC is being circulated widely hereabouts – beyond the bay? Dunno. I'm sure the lesson applies elsewhere. The new pieces in the *Anderson Valley Advertiser* are essential reading on the nexus of looting here in California *vis a vis* UC. But it's only symptomatic.⁷ Also, for the first time there will be a serious audit at Berkeley. Demanded by a legislator. This should be interesting.

Evan Calder Williams: Across the full range of those involved in actions here, the emphasis on such a linkage varies widely: to be sure, there are many vocal opponents of the recent hikes and cuts who see such a state of affairs as one that is an internal problem of bad administration, as well as the culmination of a crisis in how public education is 'valued' (as a *social* institution under attack via the tendency toward privatization and the further dismantling of what's left of a welfare state). But insofar as we're talking of the more directly anti-capitalist current of these struggles (the current taken to be ultra-left, communist, anarchist, and various other designations along those lines), such a linkage can't be underestimated. While those involved have rejected the false logic of a budgetary 'state of emergency' (given that this won't just be 'a couple bad years' and that the emergency measures taken in fact perpetuate the tendencies largely responsible for this supposed shortfall), it isn't in favor of a flat understanding of bureaucratic or corporate greed. Rather, there's been an insistence that the 'crisis of the university' can't be separated from the broader crisis of capitalist profitability, because the public university is an institution that a) plays a crucial role in the reproduction of capitalist social relations (granting of degrees, training of future workers, etc.), b) participates in the circulation and accumulation of capital (the enormous flows of money involved, not to mention those employed by the UC system), and c) is necessarily affected by broader shifts in the organization of the economy, especially in terms of its ongoing slowdown (involving here the turn toward increased financial leveraging of student tuition and restructuring of university 'priorities'). All this is to say: we're also concerned with the crisis in the 'value' of the university, but we insist that such a crisis in 'social' value needs to be understood in terms of a larger scale crisis of how capitalism reproduces surplus-value. Not because such a social lens is unimportant, but because it is incoherent without another narrative of what's been happening – i.e. slowdown of manufacturing profitability, supplemented by speculative bubbles – for at least the past 30 years.

Obviously this is an oversimplified account: there's been a lot of work done in trying to provide



fully fleshed-out models of how these flows of capital, finance, debt, and construction work. And more importantly, to grasp what's at stake, both for the continued function of the university and for the prospect of elaborating modes of resistance, disruption, and mutual aid not centered around the university as such but rather the lived catastrophe of contemporary capitalism. That's to say, we're interested in the value of education but in a different way.

The specificity of the more 'anti-capitalist' current hasn't just been a greater emphasis on this analysis linking the wider crisis to the particular issues faced in the struggle around public education. It's also been an attempt to explicitly make that linkage part of the rhetoric: not just in communiqués, statements, and banners, but also in the kind of conversations we've had, particularly with those who haven't been involved as activists. I think we've seen that what have perhaps in the past seemed like topics to avoid (i.e. Marxists talking about 'Marxist things' such as long-term economic trends) have become some of the most crucial points around which to organize. That's to say that while we still need to insist against falling into older notions of 'consciousness raising' (or a fantasy that learning about how things will continue to go badly for global capitalism automatically radicalizes people), the immediate landscape we face is one in which what these questions of finance and profitability, job loss and default are not abstract questions. They're the ones with which Californians are preoccupied, about which they're worried, and which are part of the basic experience of the present now: the anxiety, anger, and uncertainty.

MV: Could you discuss the composition of the student movements? I'm interested in how the movements relate to the situations or the demands of on-campus service workers (it seems to be a big issue at the University of Washington, for example, but hard to tell in the CA case)? How do students perceive their own current status as part- or full-time wage-workers in relation to their organizing as students? Is there a connection between the 'students as immaterial workers/edu-factory' perspective and that of students as actual wage workers? Does it change depending on the status of the employment, whether it's on or off-campus, teaching or service, or both (people with multiple jobs, etc.)? What is the role of the unions? What other political or para-political groups are influential? What's the role of faculty, administrators, other workers? What kinds of strategies are being proposed around these questions of composition?

ECW: As becomes clear in the range of positions articulated in various writings and in the physical presence of those who have occupied buildings, blocked campuses and highways, met and argued

endlessly, and pushed ahead without a clear sense of what sort of 'we' they are, a brief description of the 'composition' of student movements will end up flattening the quite heterogeneous scope. Furthermore, any talk of how the movements articulate the situations of students as workers and relate to the situations of on-campus workers has to be case-by-case. But I'll offer a few rather general observations and one particular example. It's a real fact that increasing number of students are having to work more hours to pay for school, particularly when facing these severe tuition hikes. As such, fewer students have access to the experience of college as a time of 'work-free' experimentation, an experience which has long been a fantasy for the majority of students. (Nevertheless, we are seeing further pressure put onto the cultural figure of college as that time of experimentation and ivory tower good years before going into the 'real world': especially as the 'real world' has distinctly fewer 'real jobs' for graduates now.) In addition, whether or not we consider the number of students working more hours to pay for more expensive education, there is a different emerging sense of students as immaterial workers: not because they participate in the infamous knowledge economy, or because they spend more or less time on social networking sites, but because their tuition, often borrowed at high interest rates, is 'put to work' through complex financial instruments that allow for the institution to borrow at a lower rate. Immaterial work, indeed, but predicated upon a more and more precarious future proposition: once you enter the real world, you'll pay back what you borrowed...

As for how students relate to the concerns of 'workers' (i.e. who are not students), concerns ranging from lay-offs and furloughs to unsafe job conditions and increased work loads, I think it's crucial to reject any idea of a flat egalitarianism, any notion that we're in it together in the same way, that we have the same stake in struggles, that there is automatically a consonance between situations, even when they are affected by the same larger structures. Something interesting happened here in Santa Cruz on March 4th 2010, the day of the statewide strike. Unionized workers were unable to strike, given that their contracts essentially limit strikes to times of contract negotiations, and workers would be at a great risk for censure or firing for supporting the strike. What happened? Students blocked not only the main roads to campus, but the other access points as well. They made it 'unsafe' for workers to enter, to cross a line of bodies, in order for the workers to strike with them. It's a rather funny moment: solidarity means getting in the way of those with whom you're in solidarity. Or to follow an older anarchist slogan that's been circulating once more, 'solidarity means attack'. That's to say, there is no general principle of equivalency and

solidarity beyond the particularity of actions, and actions that do not wait for conditions to be right. Solidarity is nothing if not a process and an act, and the difficult attempts to fight back here have meant not leveling to what is 'common' but recognizing the distinct, and at times irreconcilable, positions we're in, and moving from there, not to stand for a together we already represent but to build collectives out of those uncommon acts of standing together, however uncertainly.

What we've learned – and are continuing to learn – is that nearly all of our inherited ideas about who our allies and enemies are have become, if not irrelevant, then certainly scrambled. Each action that happens redraws the map, and our ideas about the kind of 'radicals' we are (and the kind of actions we do, or with whom we collaborate) keep getting undercut. Do we work with unions? Unionized workers but not through the official channels of the union? Non-students? What about faculty? The case keeps shifting, and we're at times surprised by those sudden moments not of collaboration but mutual action. At other times, we're disappointed to find that certain assumed barriers between 'sectors' persist and foreclose the possibility of those rare moments – such as the strike – when collectives emerge. I think this kind of 'not knowing' is ultimately productive, insofar as it means that you don't rest on stale notions about the kind of things you do, but it requires an enormous amount of thinking and, above all, a commitment to not hold to set axioms or frozen principles.

MV: Is there a perspective beyond 'saving public education'? How strong/diverse is it? Is there a coherent alternative being voiced to the bottom-line 'reformist' agenda, or is the 'reformist' agenda viewed as a pragmatic and flexible one to be articulated with more 'political' ones? Is the current education model being practically questioned on anything but economic/social democratic grounds, outside of the 'communiques'?

IB: I don't see much evidence of a wider critique outside certain small circles, even here in the Bay Area, let alone in Orange County. But really I don't know – I don't read blogs or the *New York Times* or ever watch television. Of course, the survivalists in the backcountry are home schoolers and the religious among them hate secular humanist education anyway.

ECW: Is there a perspective beyond the 'reformist' agenda of 'saving public education'? Definitely. Is it coherent? No. Is the 'saving public education' agenda coherent? No. Without giving a bad caricature of an agenda focused on asking for more money or restructuring the bureaucratic and financial order of the university, I think it's important to stress – practically, in terms of planning how to act and in talking with those who perhaps don't share that same perspective – a gap between means of action and the imagined consequences of those actions. There's been an assumed opposition between more disruptive actions (occupations, blockades, etc.) and some of those goals concerned with 'saving' public education. Two things about this should be untangled, based at least on what I've seen over the past six months. First, even if one's primary emphasis is on the budget, I think it's naive to imagine that enough pressure could be put on those making executive decisions without disruptive action that far exceeds what we've seen so far. If one of the shared points of understanding across the movement has been that responsible decision making has fallen victim to calculations of how to keep business as usual, then it follows pretty obviously that what will impel a re-evaluation of that would be the increasing impossibility of doing business as usual. Second, while there's of course a breakdown between the 'agendas' involved in common actions, I think that many of the 'reforms' called for would obviously be definite improvements. To speak of 'demanding nothing' isn't to say that there isn't anything

worth getting along the way. Where I think the 'save public education' agenda is often incoherent – and where I think the biggest difference has shown itself to be – is where it sees the possibility of these reforms as decoupled from massive structural changes, in economic order and social relations, far beyond the university. As such, should those of us with quite different agendas work 'together'? Of course, but only if we recognize – not in conversation but in how we act, write, talk, and organize – that even small changes will require a push toward horizons that aren't limited in perspective from the start to such small changes.

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Notes

- 1 See the Defend Sussex blog at <http://defendsussex.wordpress.com/2010/03/15/high-court-injunction-leaked/>
- 2 This tendency is not confined to Fox News or monopolized by talk radio; racist incidents – lynching nooses in the library, mock-ghetto parties, casual abuse – have been proliferating lately on University of California campuses like San Diego and elsewhere. See http://www.democracynow.org/2010/3/1/following_string_of_racist_incidents_uc
- 3 The inability of capital to capture value in sufficient quantities to make good the claims rendered on it, leads to a running-down of productive resources – plant, people, infrastructure, state services, 'nature' – in a desperate grab for existing wealth when none is being produced, in a vicious, counter-metabolic cycle or 'cannibal orgy'. The strategy of exploitation that rests on capitalizing on impoverishment created through earlier and ongoing financialization – that is, the farming of debt – is contrasted with models of exploitation created through the capture of surplus-value from labour in production, and, as such, moves immediately to the terrain of 'reproduction' – education, welfare, health, housing – since these pre-conditions to the performance of capitalist work become a running performance of indebtedness where financialized capital extracts most of its profit, such as it is.
- 4 See the open letter from Bob Meister, the President of the UC Council of Faculty Associations, to the students of UC, 'They Pledged Your Tuition to Wall Street', at <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2009/meister211109.html> as well as Bob Samuels, 'Student Loans: The New Big Bubble' at his blog Changing Universities and at The Huffington Post, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bob-samuels/student-loans-the-new-big_b_475125.html
- 5 For instance: <http://libcom.org/library/communique-absent-future>
- 6 <http://howtheuniversityworks.com/wordpress>
- 7 Iain is referring to the 'Disaster Capitalist University' series of articles by Will Parrish and Darwin Bond-Graham, available in five parts at <http://theava.com/archives/3874>, <http://theava.com/archives/4337>, <http://theava.com/archives/4678>, <http://theava.com/archives/5104>, and <http://theava.com/archives/5298>

The Tyranny of Rent

Neil Gray

A recent Shelter advert¹ lucidly exposed the obscene rise in house prices by comparing how much domestic household commodity goods would now cost if matched to house price rises. A joint of meat would cost £95.62; a chicken, £47.51; a box of washing powder, £28.53; a jar of coffee, £20.22; a dozen eggs, £9.30, and a bunch of bananas, £7.86. As Shelter argue: we wouldn't accept these price rises with anything else, so why accept them in housing? Eliot M. Tretter's article 'The Cultures of Capitalism: Glasgow and the Monopoly of Culture' (Antipode: 2009) goes some way to answering how we got to this abject position. Tretter's work can be seen as a continuation of the critical vein of *historical geographical materialism*, which has developed since the 1970s. Deeply influenced by the research of urban theorist David Harvey (in turn influenced by the critical writings of Marx, Benjamin, and Lefebvre), this school of critical geography has produced a corpus of materially grounded analyses of the ways in which capital, culture and social relations are both constituted in, and constitute the urban realm. Tretter's article takes as its starting point Harvey's analysis of *monopoly* – relating to rents, competition and fixed capital – in order to draw out the links between culture, gentrification, and economic valorisation in 1980s Glasgow. While Glasgow is routinely held up as a salutary success story in the boosterist literature of 'post-industrial', culture-led urban renewal², Tretter argues that this narrative masks an insidious and destructive raid on the commons: "Glasgow is a primary example of an industrial city that has re-invented itself through the exploitation of its cultural infrastructure" (p.113).

Following Harvey, Tretter contends that a precondition for looting the cultural infrastructure of a city is the transformation of elements of cultural distinctiveness into 'fixed capital' (physical infrastructure such as land, machinery, transport etc, which is not immediately spent in the process of producing products or commodities) via outright, or *de facto*, forms of privatisation. Following a time-line that begins in the early '80s and concludes around the period of the European City of Culture Festival in 1990 – an event intensely contested by the oppositional *Workers City* group – Tretter's analysis provides a useful heuristic with which to understand contemporary raids on the commons in Glasgow. While acknowledging the value in Tretter's account, the full magnitude of this ongoing dispossession remains untouched by his curious decision to end his enquiry at a historical juncture lying nearly 20 years in the past. Moreover, his narrow emphasis on the monopoly aspects of *culture* and representational issues omits other forms of monopoly and underplays the still central question of *labour* in the valorisation of capital³. However, his re-appraisal of the *Workers City* group, and his appeal for their enduring relevance, provides a platform from which to analyse a continuum of dispossession that has never stopped and to bring important lessons from the contested past into a productive and critical relationship with this present era of recession and financial crisis.

Extracting Value From The City: Basic Banalities

"There is a politics of space, because space is political."

Henri Lefebvre⁴

"With the disappearance of local manufacturing industries and periodic crises in government and finance, culture is more and more the business of cities – the basis of their tourist attractions and their unique, competitive edge".

Sharon Zukin⁵, 1995

Despite all the evidence to the contrary⁶, culture is *still* presumed to play a positive economic role in the fortune of cities globally. A common

assumption is that each city contains a stock of physical, social and cultural assets that are economically exploitable. The widespread erosion of the economic and fiscal base of many large cities in the advanced capitalist world since the 1970s has seen a re-orientation of governance from a managerial to an *entrepreneurial mode*⁷ with an emphasis on exploiting a city's cultural infrastructure concomitant with the turn from manufacturing, and waning central budgets. As Tretter argues, the revaluation of culture is directly contemporaneous with the broader entrepreneurial turn in governance: the appraisal of culture as an economic asset, and the increasing exchange value of culture, has led governments and private capital to undertake a series of programmes and strategies to realise and validate these resources. While many city governments of a Keynesian persuasion were once engaged in managing the urban economy with at least a nominal agenda of alleviating inequality through planning and administration of services, urban governments now attempt to follow an explicit growth agenda in partnership with private agencies and non-governmental organisations. Such market-oriented, *market-dependent*, 'growth coalitions' reflect elite interests and typically "show a significant deficit with respect to accountability, representation, and the presence of formal rules of inclusion or participation"⁸.

A major characteristic of this 'entrepreneurial turn' is geographically uneven development and inter-city competition. Local growth coalitions routinely stress a fierce struggle with other cities to compete for investment capital. Thus increasingly opaque constellations of power have justified strategies to stimulate economic growth – by providing subsidies, tax breaks, and other economic incentives – as a means to lure and leverage capital. In the race to enhance the competitive position of the city in relation to other competing cities, the use of localizing strategies (the exploitation of a city's peculiar 'marks of distinction') is now ubiquitous. Cities have sought, with highly uneven results, to increase their marketability and brand identity through the promotion of the city and its assets as commodities to investors and private capital (including its labour force, infrastructure and cultural amenities). As part of this generalised process, Tretter emphasises the exploitation of the shared cultural assets of a city ('the commons') as a means to promote the revaluation of prime urban land, and transform culture into an economic resource. In order to unpack this proposition in historically and geographically concrete terms, he assesses the "primary example" of Glasgow through the prism of Harvey's theoretical insights on the political economy of monopoly rent.

Monopoly Rent

"...capitalism cannot do without monopolies and craves the means to assemble them. So the question upon the agenda is how to assemble monopoly powers in a situation where the protections afforded by so-called 'natural monopolies' of space and location, and the political protections of national boundaries and tariffs, have been seriously diminished if not eliminated".

David Harvey¹⁰

Harvey begins to answer this question by noting that all forms of landownership that are the basis for the wealth and power of landowners exist as monopolies: they involve exclusive claims to definite portions of the surface of the earth that are not reproducible. However, transformations in time-space compression ("the annihilation of space through time"¹¹) have accelerated since the shift from 'fordist' to 'post-fordist'¹² modes of accumulation via advanced telecommunications and transportation innovations. These innovations have destroyed previously existing spatial

BEYOND THE CULTURE CITY RIP OFF

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barriers and loosened the individual landowners' monopoly power by putting them in competition with increasingly mobile global competitors. For Harvey, the drive to obtain profit from the cultural capital of cities can be seen as an attempt by landowners and their political allies to re-assert and reclaim monopoly powers in a context of accelerated globalisation.

While the source of land rent is derived from a monopoly on land, *monopoly rent* is distinguished by the ability of a landowner to earn a higher than average rent because of another pre-existing monopoly that exists independently of their monopoly on the land. Harvey specifies *location* and *scarcity* as the two chief sources of monopoly rent.

- **Location:** The locational source is related to the centrality of the land to a highly concentrated activity of economic capture such as a transport or communication network, or a financial center or shopping precinct. This is an indirect form of monopoly rent. A premium for the land will be paid in this case for its accessibility and for the commodities and services produced therefrom.

- **Scarcity:** In the case of scarcity the inimitable qualities of a resource are directly traded upon (for instance a vineyard, prime real-estate location or work of art). Here the uniqueness and specificity of the asset forms the basis for monopoly prices. Investing in a city's cultural infrastructure is so desirable, Harvey argues, because culture distinctiveness is always embedded in a place and therefore provides the potential for landowners to garner extra rental income on top of an average differential rent. A distinct cultural infrastructure is thus the source of additional monopoly rents if imaginatively marketed in the commodity realm.

Moreover, in Harvey's schema, *free* amenities held in common come to be valued for their ability to fetch monopoly rents. While many of the assets that he discusses fetch a monopoly price; many, such as parks, museums, monuments and scenic areas do not. Yet these ostensibly 'free' resources still provide a potential source of monopoly rent for adjacent land and property owners

due to co-determinant factors such as prestige and status linked to special, localised 'marks of distinction' (e.g. a block of apartments overlooking a municipal park, or a shopping centre close to a museum, monument or gallery).

As Tretter notes, the cultural resources and institutions of a city almost always function at the local level as monopolies (each city can host only so many concert halls, museums, theatres, etc), and the monopolistic potential of a city's cultural assets are routinely traded upon to boost a city's competitive edge: "Cities trade on their cultural resources in attempts to attract investment, and corporations profit by effectively siphoning off revenue from the exploitation of the popularity of the city's infrastructure or the uniqueness of a particular cultural tradition" (p.116). But it is not just cultural institutions that have monopolistic potential; the culture of any city is perceived as a monopoly asset because it is not easily exchangeable with the culture of another city. In this vastly reductive sense, any city can be said to have a monopoly over its "cultural heritage" or "way of life" because they are specific to one location (p.116). City culture itself, as abstract and unstable as this concept may be¹³, is open to monopolization because of its unique and non-exchangeable properties; city branding, endemic to the neoliberal city (e.g. 'Glasgow: Scotland With Style'), is perhaps the most blatant example of the city reduced to the status of a product under the market calculus.

Smiles Better?

Glasgow, as Tretter notes, is a "primary example" of monopolistic subsumption. In the early 1980s, Glasgow's elite started to rid the city of images of its industrial past, and began in earnest the plunder of its cultural infrastructure in the pursuit of urban revalorisation. The 'Smiles Better' campaign launched in 1983¹⁴ and the Garden Festival of 1988 were initial attempts in this direction, followed by Glasgow's nomination to host the European City of Culture festival in 1990. A key advocate for Glasgow's nomination bid was 'Glasgow Action' – the "first clearly defined public-private partnership in Scotland"¹⁵. Formed in 1985 by the Scottish Development Agency (SDA), Glasgow Action formed a strategic partnership with Glasgow District Council (GDC) to ensure that public funds were mobilised on behalf of private partners. Typical of later entrepreneurial private/public growth coalitions, Glasgow Action was almost exclusively composed of local business personalities¹⁶ with direct ties to local banks and other property related institutions¹⁷. Their agenda unsurprisingly reflected the bias of that constituency. The purpose of Glasgow Action was "to be a vehicle to inject private sector leadership into the growth process" (p.120), stated Chief Executive, David Macdonald. The agency was



designed to "recreate Glasgow's entrepreneurial spirit" and to co-ordinate and link Glasgow's urban renewal efforts with a series of private partners. Private sponsorship was supposed to support community development, but as Robin Boyle noted at the time, this soon turned into a narrow focus on property development: "Profit becomes the goal; the original, much wider, objectives covering the economic and social condition of the city begin to fade"¹⁸.

In the lead up to the City of Culture festival Glasgow saw a major subsidy-driven property bubble: conservation and refurbishment work in the newly-branded 'Merchant City' accompanied new office buildings and refurbishments in other city centre locations such as the Broomielaw (now home to the International Financial Services District, IFSD), the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, and the site of the 1988 National Garden Festival, "all developments heavily underwritten by the SDA and other government agencies"¹⁹. The flipside of the 'boom' in construction and renovation came in the form of a sharp increase in rents, with city centre rents nearly doubling between 1987 and 1989 alone (p.120). This highly uneven and ambivalent 'success story' was attributed to the entrepreneurial vision of the Glasgow City councillors and business leaders whose place-marketing techniques (rather than public subsidy) were said to have provided the necessary stimulus for economic growth. In particular, according to Tretter, the marketing of Glasgow's Victorian architectural grid, helped landowners and property developers trade on Glasgow's unique and distinctive cultural qualities and its "new image as a cultural centre" (cited, p.121). Private investment, Tretter argues, was thus primarily stimulated on the back of the pre-existing monopoly arising from the special qualities and 'marks of distinction' associated with locational factors (place) – a monopoly held over and above individual monopolies in property and infrastructure.

Tretter maintains that the drive towards monopoly rents in Glasgow was built on the valorization of Glasgow's unique and distinctive cultural assets as "a tool to promote economic growth" (p.122). He cites a key report by the Museum and Galleries Commission in 1986, which assessed Glasgow's cultural infrastructure as one of the largest in the UK (p.122). When Scottish local government reorganisation in 1973 made art infrastructure the exclusive domain of district councils – including all capital and revenue expenditures related to the "fine and performing arts" – the GDC were legally sanctioned to exploit Glasgow's cultural infrastructure for economic growth (p.122). In the run up to the City of Culture year, GDC routinely emphasised the comparative advantage these assets afforded the city in terms of promoting such a goal.

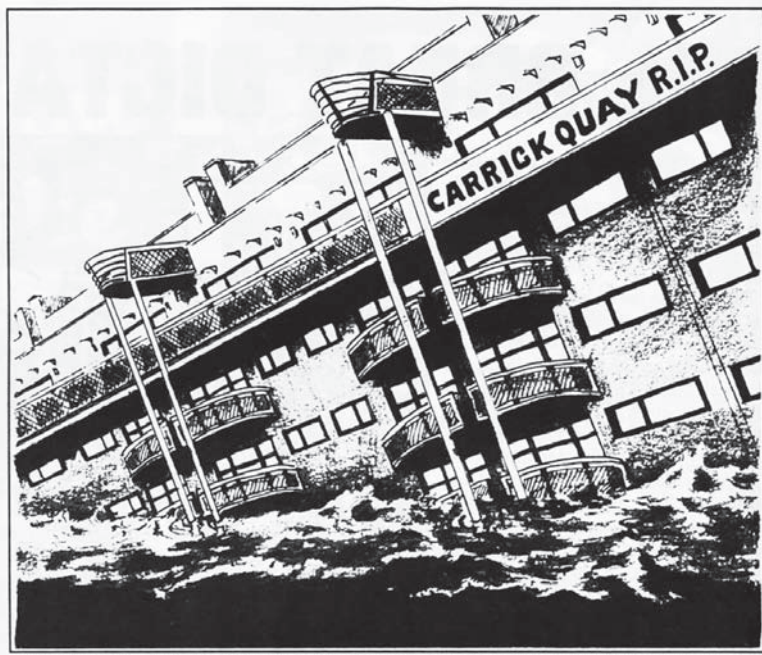
In order to 'release the value' of the local authority's heritable arts and cultural assets, and transform the cultural commons into fixed capital, the GDC introduced privatisation measures in at

least two ways in the lead up to and during the City of Culture festival. First, the GDC (hiring Thatcher's favourite PR company, Saatchi and Saatchi) began to "package and sell the culture of the city as a brand and source of revenue to private investors" (p.123). The City Council gave its private sponsors exclusive usufruct on the European City of Culture brand, featuring them in all brochures and advertising materials. This acceptance of private sponsorship of the arts marked a decisive shift in Council policy to what is now a banality despite its relatively recent and highly contested provenance in the UK. Second, Glasgow's long tradition of not charging people for admission to museums and galleries ended when two museums specifically designed for the City of Culture festival introduced admission fees. The Mclellan Art Galleries (now closed as galleries), entirely funded from the public funds, started charging a fee at the door in 1990. More pertinently for Tretter's discussion, 'Glasgow's Glasgow', presented by the City Council as the 'leading exhibition' of the Year of Culture festival charged a standard admission fee of £3.40. But this was later reduced to £1 when projected attendances fell to less than half the numbers expected. 'Glasgow's Glasgow' ended as a "critical and financial disaster"²⁰, with the City Council eventually losing £4.5 million on the hugely unpopular exhibition (p.124).

The 'Glasgow's Glasgow' exhibition was roundly slated by curators and activists for its efforts to transfer art already on display for free in Glasgow museums to a private 'for-profit' corporation. Elspeth King, then the curator of the People's Palace museum, was an especially vocal critic. For King, the privileging of the exhibition ignored the already established worth of the People's Palace and its resonant location on Glasgow Green (an area historically associated with working-class gatherings). She also criticized the exhibition for receiving – unlike the People's Palace – a seemingly endless supply of public funding; failing to represent the full diversity of Glasgow's history; and omitting a well-detailed plan for the handling of the objects collected for the exhibition (p.124/125). When King was passed over for 'promotion' to the post of 'Keeper of the City's Social History' (a newly invented post which stood above curator in museum hierarchy, thus by default demoting King²¹) intense local reaction, galvanised by the Workers City group, soon developed the Elspeth King matter into a national issue; part of a wider critique of the Year of Culture per se. For Tretter, 'Glasgow's Glasgow' and the 'Elspeth King Affair' symbolize key moments in the battle over the representation of Glasgow during the Year of Culture.

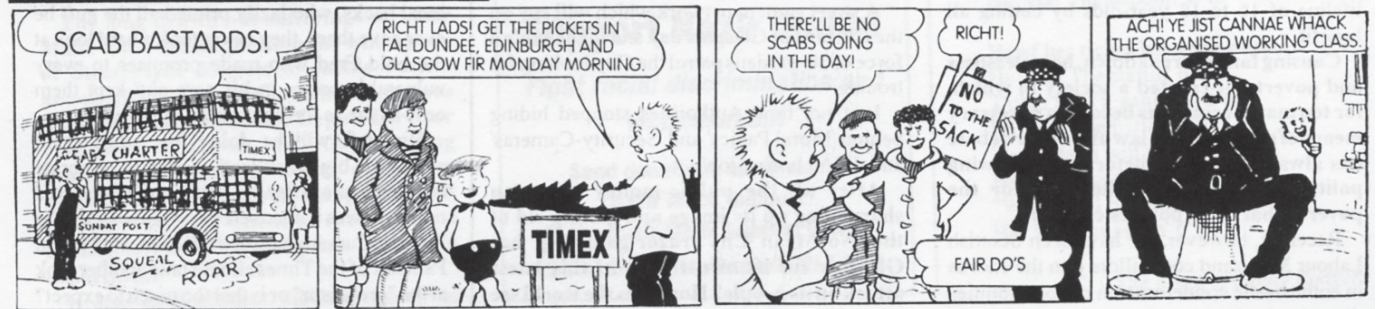
Oppositional Spaces? 'Merchant City', or, Workers City

For Tretter, the ability of city governments and private partners to capture monopoly rents is predicated on the fact that "the images and symbols associated with a city, and particularly its cultural infrastructure, have a clearly defined and stable meaning" (p.118). By creating a market brand, city governments hope to harness the collective symbolic capital of the city in order to compete with other global cities for inward investment. Thus, he argues, by mobilising around the 'Elspeth King Affair' the Workers City group challenged the stability of this meaning and offered "an alternative narrative about the proper use of Glasgow's history and culture that was important to questioning who owned the cultural heritage and legacy of the city" (p.128). But this summary of events, while sustaining a useful corrective to city boosterism, conforms to a somewhat rigid adherence to Harvey's hypothesis. For Tretter, the monopolization of Glasgow's culture in 1990 increased the "sentimental investment" that people made in their locale, enhancing "people's conscious attachment to Glasgow, their sense of belonging, and their



● Yuppie Nightmare: Commercial property prices in Glasgow have sunk from £13 to £6 per square foot.

Meanwhile, back at Dundee...



awareness of their place in a longer historical continuum" (p.127). But this apparently sudden transformation of consciousness would surely come as a surprise to the *Workers City* group, many of whom had been engaged in political struggle in Glasgow for decades. By concentrating specifically on the *cultural* and representational issues thrown up by the Year of Culture, and by neglecting the wider social and economic contradictions in Glasgow that had long motivated *Workers City* activity, he leaves their arguments adrift on an a-historical, symbolic plane, rather than embedding their *activity* within a continuum of resistance which carries important precedents for the present. The *Workers City* campaign was less about "belonging" and more about becoming; *change* through collective praxis.

The campaign to safeguard the jobs of Elspeth King and Michael Donnelly (her colleague at People's Palace) was initiated by the *Workers City* group primarily through the commitment of Hugh Savage. Savage had for some time been a member of 'Friends of the Peoples Palace', a group dedicated to supporting and fundraising activities for the Palace, and a group supremely aware of their "place in a longer historical continuum", long before the City of Culture year. According to *Workers City*, it was precisely King's efforts in resuscitating Glasgow's radical, working-class history that had seen her passed over for the post of Keeper of the Museum. This despite the fact that King was more qualified than Mark O'Neil (who was eventually appointed), and despite the fact that she had transformed a "semi-derelict building into one of the finest social history museums in Europe", winning the European Museum of the year award (1981) and the British Museum of the year award (1983) in the process²².

That Savage was interested in King's archival and historical work should come as no surprise. A personal friend of legendary Clydeside radical Harry Mcshane²³; veteran of the Apprentices Strike in 1941; shop steward in John Brown's shipyard (blacklisted for union activity); and long time community activist in the permanently deprived east of Glasgow, Savage, along with other *Workers City* members Leslie Forster and Ned Donaldson, were part of the Glasgow Labour History Workshop research group. They published books in their own right such as *All for the Cause: Willie Nairn, 1856-1902*, *Stonebreaker, Philosopher, Marxist*, and *Sell and Be Damned, The Glasgow Merrylee Housing Scandal of 1951* (Forster and Donaldson). They also contributed to several critical books on Glasgow's radical history, including *The Singer Strike Clydebank, 1911*; *Militant Workers: Labour and Class Conflict on the Clyde 1900-1950*, and *Roots of Red Clydeside 1910-1914*. James Kelman recently paid tribute to their research work in an introduction to Savage's autobiography: "Reclaiming history, exhibiting the radical tradition; the work they accomplished is inspirational, packed full of information: to read them is to come into contact with a roll-call of outstanding men and women"²⁴. As William Clark, another member of *Workers City*, recently said of the group: "Within *Workers City* we could see that the city officials thought of culture as something to be brought into the city. They could not countenance the fact that culture *already* existed, was indeed indigenous"²⁵. An idea of this 'indigenous' culture can be found in James. D Young's account of the progressive impact of socialist ideas from the refugees of the Paris Commune – who gained political asylum from the working-class communities of Glasgow – or the links of solidarity between the Glaswegian and Dublin working-class²⁶.

While the Year of Culture may have instigated a response from the *Workers City* group, it was far from "sentimental", and far from pivotal in shaping the consciousness of the group. Indeed, historical consciousness was what prompted the *Workers City* name, specifically chosen to challenge the newly invented 'Merchant City' branding²⁷ that had been applied to the gentrifying area in the east of the city centre as part of the attempt to "recreate Glasgow's entrepreneurial spirit". The group pointed out that the branding of the 'Merchant City' was a craven attempt to link modern entrepreneurs with those of Glasgow's past – thereby *honouring* the role of the 'tobacco lords' (who once lived in the area), despite their "deep involvement" in a colonial economy "which could not have functioned without an entrenched and expanding system of slave labour"²⁸. As James Kelman noted at the time, Glasgow's tobacco traders trafficked in degradation, and generated wealth "by the simple expedience of not paying the price of labour"²⁹. This critical historical approach (for which they were lambasted³⁰) can now be seen as a central legacy, though not the sole merit, of the *Workers City* group. While city elites have continually attempted to erase Glasgow's history – radical and otherwise – the *Workers City* group, at the minimum, created "a record of opposition, some other history"³¹.

Tretter is right to emphasize this critique, but it was more than just "vocal opposition" or "analysis" (p.128). He suggests that "the more profound" contradiction between the Council's attempts to monopolise the Year of Culture and the "perceived injustice" of this endeavour led to *Workers City* opposition. But cultural 'regeneration' is typically only a small, if important, mainly symbolic part of wider strategies of dispossession³² and the *Workers City* group were well aware of that. A central campaign that the group initiated (which Tretter barely acknowledges) was the battle to save Glasgow Green from privatisation and 'development'. The Green has long been associated with radical working-class gatherings³³, and remains to this day a part of the city's 'common good' assets. The group's victory against the Green's privatisation (alongside numerous supporters and collaborators) can be seen as one of its central achievements. The group also practically supported campaigns against pollution in Carmyle and Rutherglen and Action on Asbestos, crucial solidarity work in a city riddled with industrial pollution. Moreover, looking through back issues of *The Keelie*, "a scandal mongering organ"³⁴ distributed freely and anonymously by the *Workers City* group, the range of critical work draws attention to anti-poll tax campaigns, anti-militarism, housing campaigns, gentrification ("yuppification"), council corruption, the routing of the steel and oil industries, privatization of common good assets, governance, and the deplorable health and wealth disparities of a city notorious for them to this day.³⁵

Tretter's aporias obscure the fact that the *Workers City* analysis was rooted in the social and economic contradictions of Glasgow in a city-wide context *during* the Year of Culture, but by no means confined to it: "The money had to come from somewhere. Major cuts have already taken place in the areas precisely concerned with art and culture. The public funding of

libraries, art galleries and museums; swimming baths, public parks and public halls; all are being cut drastically...Prime assets not to mention services to the community are being closed down and sold off altogether, to private developers, to big business. What has been celebrated as art in all its diversity is there to behold, a quite ruthless assault on the culture of the city"³⁶ The struggle was neither merely event-based, nor limited to the symbolic plane, but contested over a series of class-based economic processes and their underlying contradictions; and this struggle was worked out at the level of *praxis* as well as in the field of representation as the Glasgow Green campaign clearly shows.

The Rent Devours All...

A major flaw in Tretter's argument is the chronic lack of evidence he uses to support his otherwise helpful critique of monopoly rent seeking. By curtailing his examples up to the year 1990 (though his article was published in 2009), and by restricting his outlook to the role of culture in monopoly, he fails to update the wider processes of monopoly that have made the city such a paragon of neoliberal urbanism. Even a brief summary suggests the scale of the city's capitulation to market forces. Most pertinent to Tretter's position is the transfer of the management of Glasgow's *entire* cultural and leisure services to Culture and Sport Glasgow (CSG), an arm's length body composed of two companies; one limited by guarantee with charitable status, and a 'trading arm' to carry out functions not deemed charitable. For Rebecca Gordon Nesbitt this transfer represents "the wholesale takeover of culture by business interests"³⁷. The total list of assets transferred, including all community and leisure services in public ownership, encompasses a remarkable diversity of services lost from the public sector³⁸. Controversial proposals to allow private companies to develop businesses in the Botanic Gardens and Pollok Park – successfully resisted³⁹ – suggest the direction ahead; as does a projected wave of industrial action in the face of closures and pay cuts⁴⁰. Further, CSG's recent Venues Review further proposes to close over a dozen community facilities, including a library and a swimming pool, and to reduce opening hours for museums and sports facilities. Among other deeply controversial arms length external organisations (ALEO's) that Glasgow City Council has calved out of former city departments are City Building⁴¹, offering building services (2,200 staff transferred), and Cordia⁴² which operates out-sourced services contracts for IT, catering and cleaning (8,792 staff transferred).

Glasgow's common good⁴³ assets, held in the common good fund, have long come under threat from 'mismanagement' and lack of accountability due to a lack of a comprehensive register of assets – others might say the looting of the common good fund is far from accidental. The latest threat to the fund comes from a new ALEO – City Property (Glasgow) LLP – a subsidiary to which the council will be transferring the rights to 1,400 income-generating commercial properties in exchange for a loan of £120m from Barclays Bank, ostensibly in order to fill a funding black hole⁴⁴. Taking the role of property services, which was formerly part of the City Council's development and regeneration services, City Property (Glasgow) LLP will work at 'arms length' from the City Council in order to "deliver to the market" a wide range of properties⁴⁵. The ALEO will now be responsible for the management and sale of all Glasgow City Council's 'non-operational' property assets and the management of the Council's major ground leases.



The loan will have to be paid back at an expected average rate of £10m a year for 20 years, costing the City Council £80 million (which represents a 66% interest rate over the period). As the interest rates will be reset five years into the deal, there is a considerable risk that the final deal might cost “significantly more than expected”; if so, the risk is part guaranteed by the council and the costs will be borne by further sales of city council properties to the private sector or an extension of the loan⁴⁶. But it’s not only the ALEO’s who profit: a recent scathing report reveals an “elaborate system of political patronage” at work in the ALEO’s, with councillors sharing ‘top-up’ payments of £400,000 – over and above their public salaries – for landing a role on the board on these ever proliferating quangos⁴⁷.

Tretter can be forgiven for missing these recent developments, but not for failing to adequately account for previous acts of enclosure in Glasgow. Thatcher’s UK-wide ‘right to buy’ policy in the Housing Act of 1980 encouraged council housing tenants to buy their homes with enormous discounts, effectively *subsidising* the mass sell-off of social assets way below their market value and instigating a wave of speculation, rent seeking, and the debt-financed housing bubble in the process. By 2003, after the most desirable properties had been bought up, Glasgow transferred its *entire* remaining public sector housing supply (81,000 council homes, the second largest stock in Britain) to a ‘registered social landlord’, Glasgow Housing Association (GHA). GHA have since been “crisis-hit” by a slew of management resignations and controversies over proposed ‘second-stage’ transfers to Local Housing Organisations (LHO’s) which have failed to materialise on anything like the scale promised⁴⁸. Moreover, a spate of demolitions has seen the total amount of social housing reduced from 81,000 to under 62,000 by 2009⁴⁹, with creeping marketisation through ‘mixed-housing’ tenure providing a neoliberal alibi for further privatisation of the city’s ‘social’ (no longer *public*) housing. This in a context where the number of Council and Housing Association homes is now at its lowest for fifty years in Scotland⁵⁰.

In education, a £1.2 billion contract for new build construction and the management of the city’s *entire* secondary school system over 30 years was given to 3ED consortium in 2002 as part of a PFI scheme with *£451 million public subsidy* from the Scottish Government (raiding public budgets from other local authorities), and with *all the risk underwritten by the City Council*⁵¹. According to Unison, the bill for the Council will be £36.4m more than if the schools were funded by conventional finance, and they estimate that Glasgow lost seven school swimming pools, along with staff common rooms and classroom reductions, in the deal⁵². Moreover, 25 primary schools and nurseries have recently been subject to closure in the city, despite furious resistance – including school occupations⁵³ – from parents, and local community groups in the affected areas. Meanwhile, in transport, after the UK-wide deregulation and privatisation of state-run Passenger Transport Executives (PTE’s) in 1986, Strathclyde Transport became Strathclyde Buses, an “arms length” bus company, and by 1993 was sold to its employees. Competition, and the inevitable process of monopolisation which accompanies it, ensured that by 1996 Strathclyde Buses was sold off to First Bus, (now First Group), who now monopolise most of the bus routes in Glasgow in an inadequate and increasingly expensive service⁵⁴. While the subway, currently run by scandal-riven⁵⁵ Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT), has been starved of investment and now requires a £400 million modernisation plan – with “closure an option” if finance is not forthcoming according to a recent *Herald* report⁵⁶. Those with eyes to see will note that disinvestment is often a *deliberate strategy* to lower asset values, making it more profitable for asset-stripping private investors. Privatisation, or a public private partnership, is sure to be on the agenda sooner or

THERE'S
A LOT
GLASGOWING
ON IN 1990.
CULTURAL CAPITAL
OF EUROPE.

THERE'S
A LOT OF
CON GOWING
ON IN
1990.

later⁵⁷, and we might expect that this will be a new battleground for basic services in the near future.

Subsidy Junkies and Flexible Friends...

The Merchant City – the so-called ‘style mile’ – is the most heavily promoted example of Glasgow’s alleged urban renaissance. The ‘Arts Led Property Strategy’⁵⁸ the City Council are pursuing in the area has roots in the early ‘80s when public subsidies were directed into the area to re-brand the city centre and pump-prime private property development. In the ‘60s, the area was home to warehouse storage, clothing manufacture, and the regional fruit and vegetable market. These uses were threatened by the proposed southwards expansion of The University of Strathclyde, and, as part of Glasgow’s comprehensive urban renewal policies, the east flank of a proposed inner ring road. The relocation of the fruit and vegetable market to Blochairn in 1968 precipitated a “crisis” that caused “a ripple or domino effect on a range of related uses and caused up to 80 businesses to cease trading in the area”⁵⁹. Moreover, the University plans failed to materialise, and the ring road plan was abandoned in that form. The planning uncertainties led to blight and eventually demolition orders, and the Merchant City went into further decline over the following decade.⁶⁰

By 1980, a third of the property was in Glasgow District Council (GDC) ownership and a third of property was vacant (with the majority of this vacant property owned by GDC). Overall, the physical fabric was neglected, and the area was designated a ‘Special Project Area’ where “active participation by the public sector was considered a necessary factor towards attracting a renewed market interest”⁶¹. Realising its property interests in the area, GDC began to offer subsidy packages to stimulate market interest – including conversion grants, ‘positive’ planning controls, and the release of buildings to developers. A more promotional and entrepreneurial approach was being signalled; and, as Jones and Patrick have noted, for hesitant investors, “public subsidy would bridge the gap between a desirable objective and a profitable opportunity”⁶². From 1982 – with

Albion Building, Merchant Court and Blackfriars Court – conversions, rehabilitations and new-build gradually began to take shape in the area. These developments were assisted with new planning criteria whose “underlying principle was that of flexibility”⁶³. In 1984, with major GDC and Scottish Development Agency (SDA) assistance, the Ingram Square project constructed 239 housing units as part of its comprehensive street block renewal scheme.

Gradually the demography of the area began to shift as buildings were converted to apartments and cultural amenities via public subsidy. Fashion and retail outlets emerged: The exclusive Italian Centre, incorporating shops, flats, offices, restaurant, and café bar, was opened around a courtyard and a ‘fashion theme’. By 1991, flats with gymnasiums, pool and porterage services were being marketed from £120,000 and above. The area now fostered forms of shopping with specialist and leisure themes in order to attract tourist revenue to the city centre, and by the early ‘90s the city centre ‘lifestyle’ opportunities afforded by the Merchant City were attracting “the relatively modest numbers of people who seek the lifestyle that such an arrangement offers”⁶⁴. Glasgow District Council figures show, for instance, that purchases of houses in Ingram Square in the Merchant City were overwhelmingly by professionals and managers, with other non-manual workers taking much of the rest – as Jones and Patrick comment: “the overriding impression these surveys imbue is that the demand predominantly stems from young professionals on relatively high incomes”⁶⁵. These affluent young professionals were of course often termed ‘yuppies’: a term that was correctly associated with gentrification and loaded with negative connotations.⁶⁶

By 1991, £12 million of public money had been invested in the Merchant City. The logic of this financial assistance was partly that of ‘pump priming’ a market from which the public-sector would eventually be withdrawn, but, unsurprisingly, the private sector developed a taste for such public largesse: “the availability of public finance has perhaps inevitably influenced land values. Potential assistance has been built into many site valuations with the result that the land values have been bid up”⁶⁷. Jones and Patrick, summarising their analysis of the Merchant City redevelopment in 1992, stated that the Merchant City – despite such sustained public support – was, “still dependent on public funds and therefore its future relies on these monies continuing”; moreover: “It would be very difficult for the public sector to withdraw its support without the painful acceptance that the current momentum would fall by the wayside. The conundrum of rising land values and the ongoing need for public assistance is therefore likely to continue”⁶⁸. And indeed it has. Property owners in the Merchant City area continue to see their rents protected and enhanced by public subsidy. Glasgow City Council have made improvements to ‘urban realm’ works worth £10 million⁶⁹ – including the laying of Italian porphyry stone “which sparkles when wet and comes in a variety of colour variations [sic]”, at a cost of £500,000 in John Street⁷⁰. The Merchant City Townscape Heritage Initiative, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Glasgow City Council and Scottish Enterprise has contributed another £4.5 million between 2000 and the present; while the Merchant City Tourism and Marketing Co-operative Limited (MCTMC) receives public funding from Scottish Enterprise and Visit Scotland to carry on a campaign of unadulterated propaganda for businesses in the area. MCTMC, via public agencies, also supports the ‘Merchants Market’, a market for expensive high-quality produce which opened three months after the brutal closure of working-class Paddy’s Market nearby, despite a sustained campaign⁷¹. In a typical act of historical erasure the new ‘merchants’ market stands over the site of the former fruit and vegetable market relocated to Blochairn.

Rent neither grows from the soil nor emanates from brickwork. The enclosures of public housing, and the gentrification of the Merchant City, depended, and still depend, on new legal and policy frameworks, and new forms of economic and social relations (not to discount corruption and cronyism). Despite the mythology of risk-taking market-led and entrepreneurial activity, neoliberal urban development is almost without exception state-led and heavily state-financed. This fact is now a banality. In an exemplary account, Swyngedouw *et al*'s comprehensive survey of large-scale neoliberal urbanization in North America and Western Europe notes: "Traditional and well-documented processes of socialization of cost and risk and privatization of the possible benefits are central characteristics of most UDPs"⁷². In 2008, at the State of the City Economy conference, disgraced former City Council leader Steven Purcell⁷³ only reiterated neoliberal convention when he promised that "Team Glasgow"⁷⁴ (an unelected cabal of business leaders purporting to represent the wider interests of 'Glasgow') would do everything they could to help businesses 'cope with the downturn': "The first thing that all public bodies, including my own Council, must do, is to examine where we can help business by being more flexible and willing to do things differently. This is no time for unnecessary rules and processes; this is a time to do everything we can to help"⁷⁵. The "relaxation" of development rules; "flexible loans" for business; payment deferrals on development sites; more "flexibility" on "land disposal"; a £36 million 'Better Glasgow' fund to support developers; "flexible" grants for social housing providers, and a "build now, pay later" policy that amounts to free land deals for developers with no clear and transparent plan on future payment details⁷⁶ – no wonder Purcell was so lionised by the business community for his 'vision'!

In case there was any doubt over his, and the City Council's, affiliations, Purcell told the Conference's assembled business leaders: "We are on your side; we want to work with you to ensure that businesses and jobs stay in Glasgow. And we will do everything within our powers to ensure that happens"⁷⁷. Tretter is right to say that monopoly rents can be derived from pre-existing monopolies arising from special qualities and 'marks of distinction' relating to place: the Merchant City is a prime example of an area whose *image* has been *constructed* in order to attract tourist revenue and investment in property portfolios. But by concentrating on the economic aspects of the monopoly of culture, he makes the mistake of political economy by assuming the eternity of pre-existing sets of economic relations. He thus fails to adequately account for the economic and political processes by which an area like the Merchant City can be turned from a working-class warehousing and market district into a 'cultural quarter' with a "cohesive Victorian architectural grid". Rent does not grow from the soil, and private property development and the rentier economy in Glasgow, as elsewhere, have been dependent on a interdictory forms of security and surveillance⁷⁸, and a form of looting and enclosure indelibly marked by a socialisation of risk and privatisation of profit.

History Against the Grain

"The Workers City group points towards the future. It is of groups like ours the future shall be made. We have nothing to apologise for".

Farquhar McLay, 1990⁷⁹.

Tretter is right to validate the *Workers City* group's ability to offer "an alternative narrative" and disclose a "different version" about the proper use and representation of Glasgow's cultural and historical legacy (p.128). But his somewhat bloodless account rests too heavily on *representational* questions – however valid those may be – and fails to excavate the *Workers City*



group's deeper questioning of the roots of labour in the extraction of value from the city. The group correctly claimed that Glasgow's 'cultural regeneration' was based almost entirely upon low paid service sector jobs. Even Richard Florida, the chief purveyor of the 'creative class' thesis, acknowledges that, "There is a strong correlation between inequality and creativity: the more creative a region is, the more inequality you will find there"⁸⁰. As Gerry Mooney, a persistent critic of Glasgow's social and economic policies, has later reiterated, with the support from numerous studies: "the arguments that cultural regeneration would do little if anything for the vast majority of Glaswegians is surely borne out by even a brief discussion of the social and economic problems that have faced the City in the period since 1990"⁸¹. The low-wage, insecure service economy is ultimately the "support infrastructure" of the so-called 'creative age', and the growth of this burgeoning and increasingly precarious service class must be understood *alongside* the deeply uneven development of the "creative economy"⁸². Over 40% of households in Glasgow live below the poverty line, and as a recent academic report states, even beyond endemic unemployment, "the norm" is "becoming a low-wage and casualised work environment, or an unregulated and degrading training system"⁸³.

The *Workers City* group, while raising similar issues around 1990, were criticized by the right for daring to use the term 'working-class'; and later by the left for adopting an allegedly 'workerist' position⁸⁴. 'Workerism' in the UK left has been associated negatively with a privileging of industrial and manufacturing workers at the expense of other social and labour sectors. Thus, as James Kelman relates, the *Workers City* group was caricatured as "the ghost of Stalinist past and workerist future" by the municipal authorities⁸⁵. More productive for this discussion is criticism from within the left: while broadly supportive of the group, some suggested that behind the *Workers City* critique of service sector jobs there was "implicitly" almost an unreflexive nostalgia for *real* working-class jobs (in shipbuilding, in engineering and in factory work, etc). For critics, the allegedly workerist position neglected the fact that service sector work has always been a part of Glasgow's economy, at the same time as it reified a masculine subject position by privileging certain forms of labour. While this type of critique has played a necessary and constructive part in developing new forms of organisation appropriate to temporal shifts in class composition⁸⁶, the criticism seems misplaced, or at least over-emphasised, in the case of *Workers City*. The group's conception of 'work' was much more complex than that of workerism as outlined above.

The traditional conception of 'workerism' should be distinguished first of all from the workerism ('Operaismo') of the Italian autonomist Marxist movement that emerged in Italy during the '60s and '70s⁸⁷. Defining itself as 'autonomous' from the dominant Italian Communist Party (PCI), the movement was distinguished by its ambivalence to PCI's 'productivism' and *Party ideology*, as well as its tendency to seek out radical potentialities in new forms of *class composition* in the wider 'social factory'. This latter included

production and *reproduction* within and outside the workplace, and comprised, as well as 'workers' in the wage-labour relation, the unemployed and those deemed outside the waged work doing housework, caring, family maintenance, etc: the 'hidden work' that supports the wage labour relation and capital. While it would be wrong to attribute an autonomist perspective retrospectively to the *Workers City* group, Farquhar McLay's preface to *The Reckoning* – a collection of *Workers City* writing from 1990 – presents a far from traditional workerist homage to the nobility of manufacturing workers and the unions:

"The old jobs are vanishing. Nostalgia for these outmoded forms of production – now a marketable commodity in art and theatre – is surely misplaced. It was hard, miserable toil in deplorable conditions"⁸⁸.

McLay understood that we are *all* alienated under capitalism and the wage labour relation: "Work has been degraded to the point where it is totally devoid of any meaning outside the consumer values of capitalism"⁸⁹. His anti-productivist critique of "trade union betrayal" and the "pursuit of delusory wage claims" reflects many of the same concerns found in autonomous Marxism: "Was it right that people's labour should be just another commodity to be bought and sold in the market place? That a person's chances in life should be determined by the market value of his labour? That certain people's labour should have a higher value than that of others? That some people's labour should have no entitlement whatever...While the wages system remains intact all the authoritarian relationships proceeding therefrom will continue to thrive throughout the whole of society, in every job and profession..."⁹⁰. McLay edited *The Reckoning*, and wrote both the introduction and the preface; we can surely deduce that his views were shared to some extent by the rest of the group. The same ambivalence to wage-labour, for instance, is frequently reflected in James Kelman's fiction; the striking *instability* of his working class subjects. Few have full-time work, and when they do, it tends to be low-paid and insecure. Frequently, his chosen subjects are unemployed. Far from reifying a *fixed* proletarian embedded in the wage-labour relation, his fiction – *A Disaffection*, *The Busconductor Hines*, *How Late it Was, How Late*, for instance – instead explores, among other things, the tension between the uncertain coming into being of social and imaginative lines of flight, and the alienating social and economic relations that tend to repress them. These tensions are explored throughout the 'social factory' – in work, in benefit offices, in parkland, in pubs and bookies and in the home. Social identity is never restricted to the workplace.

Henri Lefebvre's influential insight in *The Production of Space* (1974) was that the "survival of capitalism" no longer depended on production that merely appears in space, but instead on the production of space itself, in and through the process of capitalist development. Spatial production is a political instrument that determines the *reproduction of social relations of production* through the control and hierarchisation of public spaces. There is then, a politics of space, because *space is political*. With the financialisation of the economy over the past few decades, the link between finance and an urban *rentier economy* has become more explicit. David Harvey has shown how large-scale urban infrastructural processes (Haussman's Paris, Robert Moses's post-war US suburbanisation, modern China, etc) provide a potent "spatial fix" for the dumping of capital's surplus profit, especially in times of over-accumulation and recession⁹¹. Meanwhile Michael Hudson has shown that most wealth in the US economy is generated by rent-yielding property: "real estate remains the economy's largest asset, and further analysis makes it clear that land accounts for most of the gains in real estate valuation"⁹². Stock-market speculation is largely a rent-seeking activity as companies are raided for their land or other property income. The

speculation process inflates prices for these assets, making property and financial speculation more attractive than new forms of productive capital formation: "The bulk of this *rentier* income is not being spent on expanding the means of production or raising living standards. It is plowed back into the purchase of property and financial securities already in place – legal rights and claims for payment *extracted* from the economy at large"⁹³. The property bubble, and the financial crisis it precipitated, is largely a financial phenomenon borne from this form of social looting. Rental incomes are an unproductive "free lunch" gouged from the economy at large, forcing an ever-higher proportion of wages to be spent on rent and basic social subsistence, and denying it for more socially useful means.

As Harvey argues, since the urban process is a major channel of surplus use, then struggles over the "Right to The City"⁹⁴ can no longer be dismissed as 'secondary' in relation to traditional manufacturing struggles. When McLay suggested, in 1990, that groups like *Workers City* pointed towards the future, he talked of the traditional image of the worker *as producer of wealth* becoming more problematic every day. Indeed, the manufacturing sector now accounts for only 6% of the Glasgow labour market, while low-paid services work now accounts for 88% of the workforce⁹⁵. As Harvey and Hudson have shown, wealth is more than ever non-reproductive and non-wealth generating for the vast majority of people. It is perhaps ironic then that the *Workers City* group could provide a model for a form of politics that isn't *confined to the workplace*, fighting for limited gains at work that are stolen away by inflationary price rises at the level of social reproduction. Urban struggles over *social reproduction*, social space and everyday life, as Lefebvre and theorists from the autonomist Marxist tradition understood, must come to the fore if social gains in the workplace are to be protected at the level of social totality. The *Workers City* group, while by no means a perfect model⁹⁶, overcame narrow specialisations – 'the artist', 'the academic', 'the worker', 'the activist', 'the unemployed' – to form a non-party political, horizontal, place-based movement 'from below' whose arguments resonate more than ever today – despite all the booster talk of urban renaissance in Glasgow. Herein lies their importance for understanding the struggles of today. James D. Young cited Walter Benjamin when he talked in *The Reckoning* of a low level of historical consciousness being an indispensable part of ruling class control over working people. Remembering *Workers City* means brushing history against the grain, and bringing the fractious constellations of the past into a critical and productive relationship with the present; *Workers City* are an image of the future, not of the past.

Notes

1. <http://england.shelter.org.uk/home>
2. For instances of, and a critique of this position, see, Mooney, G, *Cultural Policy as Urban Transformation? Critical Reflections on Glasgow, European City of Culture 1990*, *Local Economy*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 327-340, November 2004.
3. It is less Glasgow's cultural infrastructure, and more its surplus labour pool and low-wage economy that attracts capital investment to Glasgow. Moreover, as Richard Florida, chief proponent of the 'creative class' thesis admits, the cultural pilots of regeneration are entirely dependent on a "supporting infrastructure" of low-wage service workers to satisfy their consumption demands.
4. Henri Lefebvre, 'Reflections on the Politics of Space', in, *State, Space, World: Selected Essays* (eds Brenner and Elden), Minnesota Press, 2009.
5. Zukin, S, *The Cultures of Cities*, Blackwell Publishers, 2000, p.2.
6. In *The Rise of the Creative Classes*, for instance, Richard Florida acknowledges that behind the hyperbole of his creative class theory lies inequality. In fact: "There is a strong correlation between inequality and creativity: the more creative a region is, the more inequality you will find there".
7. For a seminal account of this process see, Harvey,



- D, 'From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism', *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Humkan Geography*, Vol.71, No.1, *The Roots of Geographical Change: 1973 to the Present*. (1989), pp.3-17.
8. For an authoritative account of the changing scales of governance in large-scale urban developments projects, see, Swyngedou et al, 'Neoliberal Urbanization in Europe: Large-scale Urban Development Projects and the New Urban Policy', in *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Western Europe*, Blackwell Publishers, 2002, p.209.
 9. The 'commons' refers to resources that are collectively owned. This can include everything from land to software. The process by which the commons are transformed into private property is often termed enclosure. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_commons
 10. Harvey, D, 'The Art of Rent: Globalisation, Monopoly and the Commodification of Culture', *Socialist Register*, 2002.
 11. Ibid.
 12. Caution is required here: not everywhere is 'post-fordist'. China and India, for instance, ensure that production continues at the expense of a massive (and massively exploited) workforce.
 13. Gerry Mooney correctly notes that cities such as Glasgow are all too frequently reified and presented as "homogeneous locales of common interests" in city branding exercises, yet: "'Glasgow' does not 'do' things, it is not an agent and it is not 'Glasgow' that 'wins' or 'loses', or that is undergoing a 'renewal', but particular (and if recent evidence is anything to go by, fewer) groups of its citizens living in particular parts of the City". Mooney, G, 'Cultural Policy as Urban Transformation? Critical Reflections on Glasgow, European City of Culture 1990', *Local Economy*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 327-340, November 2004.
 14. The campaign was replete with a Mr.Men style 'Mr. Happy', and the advertising concentrated on, "the ABC1 market - namely those people who make or influence decisions, particularly of a commercial nature". <http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/en/YourCouncil/PublicRelations/Campaigns/glasgowsmilesbetter.htm>
 15. For a clear account of the changing UK and Scottish policy context at this time, see, Boyle, R (1989) 'Partnership in practice: An assessment of public-private collaboration in urban regeneration – a case study of Glasgow Action', *Local Government Studies*, 15:2, p.17-28
 16. "It is noticeable, however, that all were well-connected in the Glasgow and Scottish business community, having numerous inter-locking directorships (particularly in Scottish financial institutions), membership of the local Chamber of Commerce, and the CBI [...] leadership, control and direction was to be firmly located in the private sector". Boyle, Ibid. p.21.
 17. Sir. Norman Macfarlane, for instance, was director of Clydesdale Bank; Director of Edinburgh Fund Managers and Chair UK Distillers, among numerous other roles, while he was Chair of Glasgow Action.
 18. Boyle, R (1989) 'Partnership in practice: An assessment of public-private collaboration in urban regeneration – a case study of Glasgow Action', *Local Government Studies*
 19. Ibid.
 20. Kelman, J, 'Storm in the Palace', in, Mclay, F (ed), *The Reckoning*. Clydeside Press, 1990, p.52.
 21. Ibid.
 22. Ibid. (p.50)
 23. See, McShane, H and Smith, J, *No Mean Fighter*, Pluto Press, 1975.
 24. Savage, H, *Born Up a Close: Memoirs of a Brighton boy*, Argyll Publishing, 2006, p.16.
 25. Clark, W, in, Savage, H, *Born Up a Close: Memoirs of a Brighton boy*, Argyll Publishing, 2006, p.258.
 26. James D Young, 'The May Day Celebrations in Scotland', in, *The Reckoning*, Clydeside Press, 1990, p.141-3.
 27. Sean Damer noted, in 1990, that the 'Merchant City' moniker was, "...a complete invention of environmental consultants. Nobody in Glasgow had heard this term

- ten years ago". Damer, Sean, *Glasgow: Going for a Song*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1990.
28. For a widely accepted mainstream historical summary, see for instance, Devine, T, M, *Scotland's Empire: 1600-1815*, Penguin, p.73-74. See also, Stephen Mullen, 'Ae Fond Kiss, and Then We Sever', *Variant*, Issue 35: <http://www.variant.org.uk/35texts/AeFondKiss.html>
29. Kelman, J, *Some Recent Attacks: Essays Cultural & Political*, AK Press, 1992, p.2.
30. "The authorities rejected criticism and condemned the critics, especially those who used the phrase 'working-class'. They described them as philistines and kill-joys. It was an odd line of attack since a few of the critics were well-known writers, artists and musicians". James Kelman, in, Savage, H, *Born Up a Close: Memoirs of a Brighton boy*, Argyll Publishing, 2006, p.10.
31. Brendan McLaughlin, group member, cited by William Clark. Savage, H, *Born Up a Close: Memoirs of a Brighton boy*, Argyll Publishing, 2006, p.260.
32. Take a walk around Dublin's 'Temple Bar Area', then walk down to the Docklands to see how cultural regeneration fosters an image of the city that masks land-grabbing and rent-seeking property development on an enormous scale. Glasgow's 'Merchant City' has a similar function in relation to wider development strategies along the Clyde river corridor and the 'regeneration' of the East end.
33. <http://libcom.org/history/battle-green-john-taylor-caldwell>
34. "For decades in Scotland, the name 'keelie' has been applied pejoratively to Glaswegians, denoting 'low-class vulgar beings'. Absolutely appropriate for the Workers City group". James Kelman, Introduction, Savage, H, *Born Up a Close: Memoirs of a Brighton boy*, Argyll Publishing, 2006, p.13
35. A recent WHO health report noted that "inequalities are killing people on a grand scale". A boy growing up in Calton for instance can expect to live 28 years less than in wealthy Lenzie. Cited from a WHO report on health and well-being, in, Collins, C, *To Banker, From Bankies. Incapacity Benefit: Myths and Realities: Perspectives on Welfare Reform from the Clydebank Independent Resource Centre*. CIRC. Funded by Oxfam GB, April 2009.
36. Kelman, J, 'Art and Subsidy, and the Continuing Politics of Culture City', *Some Recent Attacks: Essays Cultural & Political*, AK Press, 1992, p.32.
37. Gordon-Nesbitt, Rebecca, 'The New Bohemia', *Variant*, Issue 32. <http://www.variant.org.uk/32texts/CSG.html>
38. See page. 71 for full list of transferred assets: <http://www.scottishcommons.org/docs/BusinessCase.pdf>
39. 'Go Ape cancels Pollock Park Development': <http://www.indymediascotland.org/node/15857>
'Botanics Nightclub plans scrapped': http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/glasgow_and_west/7352237.stm
40. <http://www.heraldsotland.com/news/politics/storm-looms-as-private-revolution-in-scotland-s-councils-gathers-pace-1.1013063>
41. <http://www.heraldsotland.com/news/politics/purcell-saga-continues-as-further-contracts-to-labour-donors-emerge-1.1016526>
42. <http://www.heraldsotland.com/news/politics/revealed-how-purcell-used-council-spin-off-company-to-wine-and-dine-labour-colleagues-1.1014929>
43. For a good summary of common good issues, see: <http://www.scottishcommons.org/commongood.htm>
44. <http://www.heraldsotland.com/business/corporate-sme/mortgaging-property-will-cost-80m-but-glasgow-insists-it-s-a-good-deal-1.1004279>
45. <http://www.citypropertyglasgow.co.uk/>
46. <http://www.heraldsotland.com/business/corporate-sme/mortgaging-property-will-cost-80m-but-glasgow-insists-it-s-a-good-deal-1.1004279>
47. <http://www.heraldsotland.com/revealed-cronyism-at-heart-of-purcell-s-council-1.1017770>
48. <http://www.heraldsotland.com/news/politics/troubleshooters-called-in-at-crisis-hit-gha-1.821496>
49. See, page.53: <http://www.gha.org.uk/content/mediaassets/doc/AnnualReport2009.pdf>
50. <http://scottishtenant.wordpress.com/2009/07/19/syndicated-from-bbc-shelter-report-confirms-housing-squeeze/>
51. http://www.cipfa.org.uk/thejournal/download/jour_vol1_no1_d.pdf
52. <http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/comms/pfi.html#pfireasons>
53. For news and links, see: <http://sosglasgow.wordpress.com/> and, <http://libcom.org/news/glasgow-threatened-schools-occupied-parents-03042009#comment-form>
54. http://www.eveningtimes.co.uk/news/editor-s-picks-ignore/kids-clubbers-hit-by-bus-fares-hike-1.1015641?pollId=poll_1_1015643&questionId=0&forward=http://www.eveningtimes.co.uk:80/news/editor-s-picks-ignore/kids-clubbers-hit-by-bus-fares-hike-1.1015641&answerId=1&cookieSet=true
55. <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/scotland/article7035061.ece>
56. <http://www.heraldsotland.com/news/transport-environment/closure-an-option-for-glasgow-s-outdated-underground-1.1015598>
57. See <http://www.subway2020.com/Glasgow%20Subway%202020.doc> especially, p.17.
58. See <http://www.variant.org.uk/34texts/mechantcity34.html>
59. Jones, C and Patrick, J, 'The Merchant City As an Example of Housing-Led Regeneration', in, Healy, P et al (eds), *Rebuilding The City: Property-Led Urban Regeneration*, E & FN Spon, 1992, p.129.
60. Given that disinvestment is often a motor of urban redevelopment – a strictly logical outcome of market rationality – one wonders if this process wasn't at least partially engineered via an incremental process of 'creative destruction'? Much more work would need to be done to 'prove' such a thesis, but the question should, at the very least, be asked.
61. Jones, C and Patrick, J, 'The Merchant City As an Example of Housing-Led Regeneration', in, Healy, P et al (eds), *Rebuilding The City: Property-Led Urban Regeneration*, E & FN Spon, 1992, p.129.
62. Ibid, p.132.
63. Ibid, p.136.
64. Ibid, p.138.
65. Ibid, p.139.
66. For an amusing and prescient take on 'yuppification' in Glasgow see *Down Among the Big Boys* (1993), Directed by Charles Gormley, and written by Scotland's Jim Allen - Peter McDougall.
67. Ibid, p.143, 144.
68. Ibid, p.144.
69. See 19, <http://www.glasgowmerchantcity.net/downloads/devmap0609.pdf>
70. <http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/en/News/Archives/2006/July/JohnStBrunswickStpublicrealm.htm>
71. See, <http://www.squidoo.com/paddysmarket>. For a critical overview, see section 'Governing Through Crime: Managing the Dark Side' in: <http://www.variant.org.uk/34texts/mechantcity34.html>
72. See Swyngedou et al, 'Neoliberal Urbanization in Europe: Large-Scale Urban Development Projects and the New Urban Policy', in, *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Western Europe*, Blackwell Publishing, 2002, p.201-209.
73. And here we are not in the least bit concerned with Steven Purcell's private or personal life, but rather his role in facilitating the looting of public assets in Glasgow on an unprecedented scale. <http://www.heraldsotland.com/revealed-cronyism-at-heart-of-purcell-s-council-1.1017770>
74. Including, Sir Tom Hunter, Willie Haughey, Jim McColl, Akmal Khushi and Dr Lesley Sawyers. Interestingly, Willie Haughey - the Labour Party's biggest Scottish donor - recently received £700,000 from Clyde Gateway Developments, a quango run by Iain Manson, a former advisor to Steven Purcell: <http://www.heraldsotland.com/news/politics/company-linked-to-purcell-in-700-000-land-deal-with-labour-donor-1.1014924>
75. <http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/en/News/Archives/2008/November/stateofthecityeconomy2008.htm>
76. <http://news.scotsman.com/latestnews/SNP--casts-doubt-over-4706969.jp>
77. <http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/en/News/Archives/2008/November/stateofthecityeconomy2008.htm>
78. MacLeod, G, 'From Urban Entrepreneurialism to a Revanchist City? On the Spatial Injustices of Glasgow's Renaissance', in, *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Western Europe*, Blackwell Publishing, 2002, p.254-276..
79. Mclay, F (ed), *The Reckoning*. Clydeside Press, 1990, p.12.
80. See, Gray, Neil, 'Glasgow's Merchant City: An Artist-led Property Strategy', *Variant*, Issue 34, Spring 2009.
81. See, Mooney, G, 'Cultural Policy as Urban Transformation? Critical Reflections on Glasgow, European City of Culture 1990', *Local Economy*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 327-340, November 2004.
82. Peck, Jamie, 'The Creativity Fix', *Variant*, Issue 34: <http://www.variant.org.uk/34texts/creativityfix.html>
83. <http://www.variant.org.uk/events/Doc7Poverty/BeyondAspiration.pdf>
84. See, Mooney, G, 'Cultural Policy as Urban Transformation? Critical Reflections on Glasgow, European City of Culture 1990', *Local Economy*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 327-340, November 2004.
85. Kelman, J, Foreword, *Some Recent Attacks: Essays Cultural & Political*, AK Press, 1992, p.1.
86. As a starting point, see these seminal accounts from a feminist perspective, which retain an analysis of class and capital: <http://libcom.org/library/power-women-subversion-community-della-costa-selma-james>. And, <http://libcom.org/library/sex-race-class-james-selma>
87. For an excellent summary of autonomist Marxism, see, Wright, Steve, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism*, Pluto Press, 2002, p.3. For an influential account of operismo within - and against - the currents of Marxism, see, Cleaver, H, *Reading Capital Politically*, Harvester Press, 1979. Especially, p.51-66.
88. Mclay, F (ed), *The Reckoning*. Clydeside Press, 1990, p.10.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid (p.9)
91. <http://www.newleftreview.org/?view=2740>
92. http://www.cooperativeindividualism.org/hudson-michael_the-rentier-economy.html
93. Ibid.
94. The phrase comes from a Henri Lefebvre essay in 1968, and despite its connotations of bourgeois liberal democracy and "equal rights", it usefully focuses attention on, and provides a rallying point for, the control and management of urban processes.
95. <http://www.variant.org.uk/events/Doc7Poverty/BeyondAspiration.pdf>
96. William Clark, a younger group member at the time, has alluded to his "difficulty" with some generational attitudes towards the sexes in the group. *Born Up a Close: Memoirs of a Brighton boy*, Argyll Publishing, 2006, p.259.