EXPERIMENTAL POLITICS AND THE MAKING OF WORLDS

ASHGATE

ANJA KANNGIESER

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Re-materialising Cultural Geography

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Nearly 25 years have elapsed since Peter Jackson's seminal call to integrate cultural geography back into the heart of social geography. During this time, a wealth of research has been published which has improved our understanding of how culture both plays a part in, and in turn, is shaped by social relations based on class, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, disability, age, sexuality and so on. In spite of the achievements of this mountain of scholarship, the task of grounding culture in its proper social contexts remains in its infancy. This series therefore seeks to promote the continued significance of exploring the dialectical relations which exist between culture, social relations and space and place. Its overall aim is to make a contribution to the consolidation, development and promotion of the ongoing project of re-materialising cultural geography.

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Sanctuaries of the City

Experimental Politics and the Making of Worlds

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ASHGATE

For H.

Let a thousand flowers bloom on the terrains which attempt to undermine capitalist destruction. Let a thousand machines of life, art, solidarity, and action sweep away the stupid and sclerotic arrogance of the old organizations! What does it matter if the movement trips over its own immaturity, over its "spontaneism" – its power of expression will ultimately only be reinforced.

—Félix Guattari and Antonio Negri, *Communists Like Us*

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Some of the writing in this book has appeared elsewhere in various forms. The chapters 'Everything for everyone and for free!' and 'Toward

Prologue

> It is not enough merely to seek to link together all the activists in the world, neither is it enough to seek to transform more people into activists. Contrary to what some people think, we will not be any closer to a revolution if lots and lots of people become activists. Some people seem to have the strange idea that what is needed is for everyone to be somehow persuaded into becoming activists like us and then we'll have a revolution (Vaneigem 1967/1994: 165).

From the uprisings in the Middle East during the popularly-named Arab Spring, to Occupy, to the massive general assemblies in Spain and Greece, the visibility, speed and connectedness of social movements have reached new heights. Key to these developments has been a desire to move beyond the stale subcultures and discourses of radical activism. This is not a unique or particularly recent ambition. Indeed, well over a decade ago a call was made to finally 'give up activism'. It came after the 18 June 1999 global day of action in London. The call, which was quickly translated and disseminated across websites, mailing lists and in social centres, was met with ambivalence. What polarized response was a particular tendency identified in recent political organization, a tendency that sat far more comfortably within the bygone eras of vanguardism than in the nonhierarchical and nonsectarian global protest movements of the 'multitude'. This was a tendency to distinguish the activist from the nonactivist: a distinction based on an 'activist mentality' which designated the activist as 'a specialist or an expert in social change' (X 1999: 161).

For the author of the call, the activist mentality defined activism as something of a primary social function, like a job or career, creating a hierarchy of knowledge that elevated activists above nonactivist publics. This elevation derived from a division of labour, which reproduced delimitations of specialization and representation – a reproduction

fundamentally at odds with an emancipatory and a-centrist politics. Such reproduction, contended the author, reiterated capitalist economies through legitimating political work as something exceptional, to be undertaken by only those 'qualified' to do so.

Several years later, this concern was again voiced by Angela Mitropoulos and Brett Neilson who wrote in their paper 'On the borders of the political – at the borders of activism' that

> "activism" is not a synonym for political action. It is a definition of it. It is a political doctrine – an -ism – that circumscribes what actions and dispositions might be deemed to be properly political and, therefore by contrast, those which are not. Similarly, "activist" is not a term that coincides with those who engage in political activities. Rather, "activist" is the demarcation of an identity and community that privileges particular kinds of activities, and forms of relation, by defining them as properly political. And what is deemed proper, for the most part, are the kinds of appropriations that make representational claims possible, and the apparent self-evidence of the boundaries of that appropriation. One does not speak, or act, for oneself, but for others – and, oftentimes, these others tend to be framed as "ordinary people" whose limits … are assigned a unity and homogeneity in similar fashion (2007: 4).

The disconnect from 'ordinary people' noted by Mitropoulos and Neilson was a common observation. 'Despite all the rhetoric', affirmed the Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A. Gruppe, 'activism often still has a stance that is strangely separated from people's everyday life, even that of its own protagonists' (2002). It was this separation that had to be recognized and navigated. 'The future of this global activism', continued the Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A. Gruppe 'will depend on whether it succeeds in being capable of action at the local level, the level of everyday life, while continuing to develop its transversal, border-crossing character at the same time' (ibid.).

Desires to develop such border-crossing and transversal momentums had been present within particular constellations of radical left and self-organizing communities, in which a range of experimental tactics coincided with an intention to reconfigure 'activist' territories, to live out prefigurative political worlds. Notable amongst these were creative forms of action that were seen to invite new relations between different

constituents and groups by creating what Jenny Pickerill and Paul Chatterton saw as 'spaces where there is a questioning of the laws and social norms of society and a creative desire to constitute non-capitalist, collective forms of politics, identity, and citizenship' (2006: 1). In these spaces, through these inventive creative gestures, the idiosyncrasies in the perception of social movements having a 'monopoly on social transformation' or artists having a 'monopoly on creativity', were exposed. This was an important leverage point, because, as John Jordan argued, such longstanding monopolies continued 'the unhealthy division of labour and specialism that our culture requires to separate people from each other and to stop us being self reliant' (2006: 12). What was needed to negotiate this division and to open space for self-reliance and self-determination, continued Jordan, was 'a path in the very middle: the knife edge between the two, the space in between, neither one – nor the other – but both' (ibid.).

For Jordan, then, a knife-edge. For the Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A. Gruppe, a transversal border-crossing. A rejection of activism for the authors of 'Give up activism', and a withdrawal or refusal for Mitropoulos and Neilson. What all of these different calls and observations indicate are myriad passageways marking out escape routes from the 'ghettos' and subcultures of activism. Lines of escape that overlap and bifurcate, coming together at times and fracturing at others. These are being used to discover new modalities and forms for critical political and social intervention and reflection; creative forms of producing ourselves, our relations to each another, and to the worlds we inhabit.

This book contributes to these constellations of conversation, activity and questioning. Taking such variegated observations as its point of departure, its task is to investigate one very specific creative way of countervailing what Nina Eliasoph has referred to as

> an image of political conversation that disconnects it from everyday life, makes political conversation seem to be a rare, scary activity that should happen only in special circumstances, that will disrupt meetings and rip friends apart and intimidate

neighbours … and ruin good jokes and not do any good (1999).

This task is not one then that necessitates the end of activism, or a reduction of art to 'an appendage of politics' (Zepke 2008). It does not seek to link all activists or artists in the hope of revolution, as the injunction by Raoul Vaneigem, with which this prologue opens, cautions. Rather, it hopes to participate in the construction of new links, vocabularies and relations between different spheres and spectrums of publics and politics, finding connections and antagonisms in between, across and beyond the definitions of art and activism. It wants to tease out other ways of talking about and transforming politics in everyday contexts to make it less scary and more fun, and most importantly, more caring, convivial and generous. It seeks to open channels for communication to take place. By finding the moments of excitement and potential in these experiments, in their failures and resonances, the task is to explore the spaces of dialogue and refusal that are both affirmations of worlds within the present and negations of capitalist forms of life. This is a processual, messy and open-ended labour, to which this book arrives somewhere in the middle perhaps; a contribution to what J.K. Gibson-Graham call 'the continual work of making and remaking a space for [a postcapitalist imaginary] to exist in the face of what threatens to undermine and destroy it' (2006: xxvii).

Introduction Performative Encounters, Transformative Worlds – Pirates, Pools and Politics

An act of resistance that is politically significant in the current epoch will be one that draws us beyond the merely empirical status of the event, in order to give rise to an event in thought (Hynes et al. 2007: 109).

In a concept of revolutionary machines reaching beyond molar Leninist notions of revolution, everyday resistance is to be imagined in its complicity and its relation to power, insurrection not as civil war, but as recurrent, post-national insurrection of non-conforming masses, constituent power as an ever new experiment with alternative forms of organization producing something other than state apparatuses. Just as the constituent power as a potential (*potentia*) flees the forms of constituted power (*potestas*), the new forms of resistance and insurrection are also, in turn, more than a phenomena of negativity. *Contrary to the superficial meanings of the word, resistance is not merely a reaction to domination, but as anti-dialectical concepts resistance and insurrection are productive, affirmative, creative* (Raunig 2006b: 2. Emphasis mine).

The crucial focus of social transformation is creative singularity. The existence of singularities is not to be conceived as a personal way to salvation, they may become a contagious force (Berardi 2012).

On Wednesday 28 July 2004, the pirates took over. It was an ordinary summer's day in Berlin. At the Kreuzberg Badeschiff – an old river barge converted into a swimming pool housed on the Spree River – people sunned themselves on the deck chatting idly, while others splashed about, swimming and playing. The artist-designed pool was from the moment of its unveiling an urban icon, with its open-air bar and location in the gentrifying suburb of Kreuzberg. This was a gentrification at odds with the suburb's predominantly low income, high student and migrant population. The exclusivity of the pool was reflected in its exorbitant

entrance fees. This is why the pirates took over: this event that would remain in the public imagination and spark retellings and reenactments for years to come.

First came the chants: a repeated loop of chants, growing more and more audible across the water, chants yelled in high spirited laughing voices: 'alles für alle, wir wollen alles für alle!' (everything for everyone, we want everything for everyone). On the Spree, pool guests suddenly spied around a dozen brightly coloured inflatable rafts with rakishly dressed pirates at their helms. As the pirates drew closer their intent became clear: they wanted the pool. Leaping over its edges, boarding from the river side, some jubilantly plunged into the water, others approached guests with pamphlets and smiles, keen to talk to them about why the hijacking was taking place. The fee meant that visiting the pool was an almost unjustifiable luxury for many of those living in the area. 'We don't want to make reforms and we don't want to beg', explained one of the pirates, 'all we want to say is, we will take what we want: fun, culture and life' (Blatt 2004. Translation mine).

When I first heard about the hijacking of the Badeschiff by Berlin Umsonst (Berlin for free), the event had become popular legend, a small-scale 'contagious force' (Berardi 2012). It had been documented in a handful of interviews and articles and kept alive through video screenings, public discussions, and even what might be seen as 're-enactments' (Hoyne 2009) – one of which took place over five years later. On Saturday 9 August 2008, what was described as a 'strange fusion of futuristic flotilla, activist armada and charity raft race' was launched on the waters of the River Medway in Kent, United Kingdom, during a Climate Camp day of action (The Great Rebel Raft Regatta 2008). The action was a protest against the proposed development of the first coal-fired power station to be built in the UK in thirty years. The pirate fleet, comprising around forty small watercraft, made a bid to breach the boundaries of the Kingsnorth power station with the intent of shutting it down. Despite warnings from authorities, hundreds of people took part, and like *Badeschiff Umsonst*, *The Great Rebel Raft Regatta* proved a

compelling and pleasurable event in its materialization and recollection. Yet through the many manifestations of *Badeschiff Umsonst* persistent questions remained unasked and unanswered. Just what was this encounter and what were its contours? Was it a media stunt, an art action, a theatrical event, a political demonstration? Strong undertones of performance and art could be discerned in its techniques and methods, but these were being appropriated irreverently; these aesthetic elements seemed to serve the sole purpose of helping to build a larger social-political intervention and critique. Was it a composite of these different states and forms then, or was it something else, something more? Clearly it was an organization of 'productive, affirmative, creative' insurrection, as Gerald Raunig might have put it (2006b: 2). But how did it operate: what were its 'modes of expansion, propagation, occupation, contagion, peopling' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 264)?

The use of these kinds of encounters for political contestation and communication – as a way to invite what Maria Hynes, Scott Sharpe and Bob Fagen call 'an event in thought' (2007: 109) – had been appearing, disappearing and reappearing for quite some time. Encounters that were pleasurable and funny, creative, subversive and interactive, that took place across unexpected spaces and sites, and that were antagonistic of state apparatuses and capital. Furthermore, in Germany at least, these encounters had been sparking public imaginations and conversations, infusing cultural narratives and identities. They were reverberating across the peripheries of radical aesthetic and political theory and praxis but evading the limit points of classification. This evasiveness was made clear during a conversation with an instigator of a collective contemporaneous to Berlin Umsonst, when she offhandedly remarked that collectives using such encounters

> work on the knife-edge between politics and art and in relationship to the public realm through actions that perhaps seem, from a political perspective or by political groups jokey, humorous, and not so serious. Actions from an artistic perspective that are seen less as art but work on this knife edge (Siebertz 2006. Personal communication).

Her comment offered an entry point to these more obscure forms of

action that went largely unnamed, that were written and spoken about as simply tactics of the collectives using them. But they were more than this; they signified the very 'dispositif' through which these collectives and campaigns had come to act.[1]

The uncharted and ambiguous phenomenon of the encounter underlies the enquiry of this book; the primary purpose is to carefully introduce and assemble one perspective of what this gesture of social, political and cultural resistance might be and what transformative activity it can contribute to. This perspective comes together through a select mapping of the 'encounter' across three historical and contemporary aesthetic and political scenes, focusing on several collectives and campaigns. It is a perspective that does not offer an exhaustive survey but only a preliminary elucidation, for these collectives and campaigns comprise a very contextual and specific fraction of a much more extensive milieu and operate within a very particular geographical scope.[2] At the same time it does not seek to eclipse or subsume similar events into sameness, looking instead to points of connection within difference. Our exploration begins with the Berlin Dadaists, and the Situationist International, arriving ultimately at five creative political clusters active in Germany over the past decade: Berlin Umsonst, Hamburg Umsonst, the Transnational Republic, the Bundesverband Schleppen und Schleusen or Schleuser.net and Meine Akademie. What connects these movements, campaigns and collectives is their adaptation of this form of encounter; an insurrectionary gesture that weds critiques of exclusion and domination to pleasurable action. This encounter is used not only as an aesthetic motif, as might be conventionally anticipated, but as an experimental gesture of social-political dissent. It is a gesture that recognizes its transformative potential not only, as Brian Holmes has asserted 'in the open, evolving context of a social movement outside the cliques and clienteles of the artistic game' (2003), but beyond those social movements themselves.

Politics and Aesthetics: European Contexts, Histories and

Precedents

In Germany, and Europe more generally, there has been over the past decades something of a conceptual and practical precedent for forms of action like the encounter; not specifically for the encounter itself, but for actions that similarly foreground the political while placing value upon the aesthetic.[3] The year 1997 marked the occurrence of two events that would help propel creative and pleasurable political actions into a more public consciousness. The first of these was the inaugural publication of Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A. Gruppe's *Handbuch der Kommunikationsguerilla* (Handbook of guerrilla communication); the second was the genesis of the Kein Mensch Ist Illegal (No one is illegal) campaign in the Hybrid Workspace at the Documenta X art exhibition in Kassel.

The *Handbuch der Kommunikationsguerilla* represented the first comprehensive published guide to methods and histories of political intervention utilizing aesthetic and creative techniques. It drew out paradigms from the Dadaists through the Situationists, Kommune One and Gruppe Spur to the Yippies, the Neoists and various German squatters, culture jammers, pranksters and libertines continuing the legacy of subversion well into the 1990s. Kein Mensch Ist Illegal signified the inception of one of the most expansive networks of alter-globalist resistance to European migration politics. Taken together, what these two events brought to light was a very particular conjunction of politics and aesthetics. This conjunction was an example of what David Graeber called a '"new language" of civil disobedience', which combined

> elements of street theatre, festival and what can only be called non-violent warfare – non-violent in the sense adopted by, say, Black Bloc anarchists, in that it eschews any direct physical harm to human beings (2002: 66).

This form of civil disobedience made headlines during the 1999 protests in Seattle against the World Trade Organization as a key praxis of the autonomous alter-global social and political left. Autonomy within this context meant free from the control of state, corporate, union,

political party and religious affiliation, seen in attempts to create spaces and relationships that were self-managed and self-organized. Put very simply, broadly common to these autonomous movements was a desire to live differently through the constitution of different social relations. This meant finding ways to work collectively and collaboratively, inviting participants to determine their own conditions.

Critical to this ethos was a re-composition of organization that rejected the usual leader/follower dynamic in favour of 'horizontal' and a-central formats using methods of consensus decision-making. Such methods, in part, acted to challenge the usually pre-given and immutable roles of authority by implicating all participants in collective processes. Unlike traditional leftist organization significant emphasis was placed on trying to equalize the input of diverse voices. This meant an altered understanding of conflict and positionality; rather than concentrating on assimilating conflicting ideas, positions and experiences, what was sought were points of commonality and negotiation. Given the social, political and technological context, the interfaces between communications technologies and global networks coincided with an increased internationalism and linking of geographically disparate struggles. At the same time as upholding this global view, there was a strong argument for the importance of the everyday as a site of resistance and reconfiguration. Instead of seeing autonomy as a call for hyper-individuality, it was argued that the intersections of singular and collective needs, desires and responsibilities were compelling for political work, as a process to 'be the change you want to see' rather than as a final destination. As a means to make this change, tactics of 'conscious spontaneity, militancy and confrontation' were often adopted (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006: 735).

It was in the context of these new movements and praxis forms that 'the dichotomy between art and activism' was finally left behind (Raunig 2002b). While taking up methods and forms of historical and contemporary art there was neither the goal of career success in the arts nor a need for individual attribution. This new perspective thus required

the development of conceptual tools beyond those of conventional creative tropes (Raunig 2007a). What was becoming obvious already by the end of the 1990s was how awkwardly such positions sat within the narratives and histories of both aesthetics and political theory. As Raunig commented,

> artistic activism and activist art are not only persecuted by repressive state apparatuses because they operate in the neighbouring zones of art and revolution, they are also marginalized by structural conservatisms in historiography and the art world. As a consequence of the reductive parameters of these conservatisms, such as rigid canons, fixation on objects and the absolutizing of field demarcations, activist practices are not even included in the narratives and archives of political history and art theory, if they are not purged of their radical aspects, appropriated and coopted into the machines of the spectacle (2007a: 19).

For Raunig the absence of such theorization was more often than not the result of the ambiguous and multidisciplinary nature of such practices vis-à-vis their technical and strategic organizations. This was something that the *Handbuch der Kommunikationsguerilla* had recognized a decade earlier. All too aware of this lacuna, and inspired by the work of Umberto Eco on 'semiological guerrilla warfare' (1986), the term 'kommunikationsguerilla' (guerrilla communication) was coined in the mid to late 1990s by the Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A. Gruppe, a collection of artists, theorists and media activists. For the group the idea arose in part as a response to the disenchantment and fatigue associated with traditional leftism after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of Soviet communism. In this climate the group used the term as a means to describe strategic

> political praxis forms … that traverse the old boundaries between political action and the everyday world, subjective anger and rational political action, art and politics, desire and work, theory and praxis (2002).

Extending on practices of culture jamming, guerrilla communications were conceived as creative forms that could draw 'from the watchful view of the paradoxes and absurdities of power, turning these into the starting point for political interventions by playing with representations

and identities, with alienation and over-identification' (ibid.).[4] This relationship to power, its destabilization and subversion, was also emphasized by European activist networks contemporaneous to the Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A. Gruppe. Some of these were working around tactical media: an opportunistic form of resistance analogous to the proliferation of new communications technologies and access points to information. Tactical media, the media of 'crisis, criticism and opposition' as Garcia and Lovink wrote,

> happens when the cheap "do it yourself" media, made possible by the revolution in consumer electronics and expanded forms of distribution (from public access cable to the internet) are exploited by groups and individuals who feel aggrieved by or excluded from the wider culture. Tactical media do not just report events, as they are never impartial they always participate and it is this that more than anything separates them from mainstream media … we introduced the term tactical to disrupt and take us beyond the rigid dichotomies that have restricted thinking in this area, for so long, dichotomies such as amateur vs. professional, alternative vs. mainstream. Even private vs. public (1997).

Salient in both the descriptions of guerrilla communication and tactical media was a movement of constant overlapping between aesthetics and politics, as communicative fields, spaces and categories of identification. This overlapping was imperative for the Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A. Gruppe and theorists of tactical media because it allowed the criticisms actualized through such practices to intervene in spaces both within, and beyond, specialized 'political' or 'artistic' contexts (Critical Art Ensemble 2001: 3–10). This naturally had implications for those participating in and initiating such activities, providing a vocabulary to navigate what was seen as two divergent discourses: discourses that would brand such hybrid practitioners as being either 'activist autonomists' (according to artists) or 'stupid artists' in activist circles (Schmidt 2003).

It was unsurprising then that these crossovers were also picked up by those identifying within more conventionally aesthetic circles who sought new ways to speak about their political participations. The Faculty for Radical Aesthetics, established in 2005 and coordinated by The European

Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies defined radical aesthetics in a way that echoed aspects of guerrilla communication and tactical media. 'Radical aesthetics' explained the group,

> interweave artistic practices, political activism and theory production, transgressing both trivial statements like "Every art is political!" or "Art is never political!" and vague claims of a political paedagogy [sic] with artistic means. It is precisely the overlaps and reconfigurations of the political and the artistic, which open up a field of transversal practices that potentiate political-aesthetic forms of action, expression and intervention (2005).

Tellingly, a concept common to all the definitions of such practices emerging during the last decade, in German and more broadly European networks, was 'transversality'. This idea extended from political philosopher Félix Guattari (1984) to describe a moving across and through of categories, roles, identities and territories, changing each in the process. It was this idea that was used to explain the 'new terrains of open co-operation between different activist, artistic, social and political practices' crucial to such interventions (Kelly 2005).

While the encounters of movements, campaigns and collectives such as the Berlin Dadaists, the Situationists, Berlin and Hamburg Umsonst, the Transnational Republic, Schleuser.net and Meine Akademie remained more often than not under the radar of literature surrounding such practices, these new terrains of open co-operation were easy to discern. Indeed the movement of transversality lay at the very heart of all of these encounters. The Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A. Gruppe, the theorists of tactical media and radical aesthetics offered exemplary insights into this movement across political aesthetic practices. What remained largely unanalyzed, though, were their 'modes of expansion, propagation, occupation, contagion, peopling' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 264). Left open also were questions around where the actual political potential of such practices might lie.[5]

Pathways and Procedures, Collectives and Campaigns

It is the intention of this book to elucidate some of these modes in one very specific practice, what I refer to as a 'performative encounter' in order to advance critical social movement scholarship and praxis.[6] Because its primary objective is to discover what comprises such encounters within a group of campaigns and collectives, it is enough here to preliminarily flag the encounter as a shared, creative and transitory event that is political in its focus. It is dedicated to activating new relations between people and is affirmative of self-determined ways of living and being. The performative element of the encounter is vital, for it is through this that the enaction and production of the worlds, relationships and subjectivities alternative to those of capitalism that it calls for, take place.[7] In order to unfold what political potential the encounter might have, our exploration proceeds through an intensive engagement of lives and events through which larger social issues and their importance can be drawn out. What this book comprises then is a proposition for *how* political potential is tied into the creative, aesthetic, pleasurable, collective and participatory qualities of the encounter – for *how* such political potential is tied into the movement of the transversal. Can it be conceived as a catalyst? Does it contribute some new register or voice to the discourses and praxes of political resistance or to new kinds of singular and collective social-political composition?

Asking such questions of the encounter is not to elevate it above other modes of resistance, and nor is it to suggest that it replace more ongoing social-political activity; in the words of Errico Malatesta, there cannot be '"one solution" to the social problems, but a thousand different and changing solutions [for] social existence is different and varied in time and space' (1984: 151–152). This is why it is proposed as but one of many tools and strategies for insurrection and creation, one that can contribute to performative and transformative activity and conceptualization. Given that the task of this book is to discover and demonstrate the potential of the performative encounter as a radical practice, and given that this requires both conceptual inquiry and empirical analysis of material events, each chapter brings these different

aspects into contact. In this way a dialogue takes place between the collectives and campaigns, their encounters and the wider social-political struggles to which they responded.

Chapter 1 provides a historical stage for the larger thesis of the book. It introduces the performative encounter as a communicative, interactive, political device used by the Berlin Dadaists, an avant-garde movement notorious for their anti-art position, to counter the rhetorics of war and the bourgeois ruling class in the earlier half of the twentieth century. Following from Berlin Dada, we move to look at how the encounter was later deployed by the Situationists – a political creative movement involved in the Parisian uprisings of 1968 – in their attacks on capitalist forms of life. It is argued that for both of these European movements the encounter was conceived as a means to break from the conventional relations between 'active' artists/activists and their 'passive' audiences. In this chapter we see how the Berlin Dadaists repositioned the audience as active, and how the Situationists went even further to consider them as participants of the encounter. This break was seen in various ways by these movements as a condition for the possibility of revolutionary experience. However, we also see how both movements ultimately jeopardized their own radical programme through their reproduction of vanguardist tendencies.

Reflecting on the performative encounter as a device for political transformation, Chapter 2 acts as a conceptual hinge between the historical Berlin Dadaists and the Situationists, and the more contemporary Umsonst campaigns, the Transnational Republic, Schleuser.net and Meine Akademie. What is emphasized throughout this conceptual exploration is twofold: firstly, it locates a key shift in the relation between activist/artist and audience/public between the historical and the contemporary encounters. This shift is played out through a reconsideration of the public as 'active audience' to 'participant' to 'constituent' of the encounter. It is this shift that underpins my argument on the political potential of the encounter, and in this chapter we see that this potential is closely tied to a transversal movement across categories

and identities. Secondly, to illustrate how the encounter mobilizes these transversals a theoretical analysis of several different aspects of the encounter is undertaken, which foregrounds its common, collaborative and self-determined activities.

To further consider the activity of the performative encounter as a political praxis, Chapters 3 and 4 present in-depth analyses of four contemporary collectives and campaigns. Chapter 3 introduces Berlin and Hamburg Umsonst, a cluster of campaigns active in Germany. These campaigns addressed social and economic precariousness, scarcity and privatization, initially targeting the privatization of public resources and spaces, the increases in public transport fares and the economic inaccessibility of culture and entertainment. They were also later involved in campaigns around low income and flexibilized labour. Chapter 3 investigates several of their creative encounters involving collective appropriation and occupation. To conceptually frame these encounters, contemporary and historical political discourses around precariousness, capitalism and the colonization of social and private life are drawn upon, allowing for a critical organizational reading. What is stressed through these encounters is the role of the public as vital constituents of the actions and the importance of the techniques and tactics employed to enable this constituency. Through exploring key campaigns and encounters, we see how techniques and dispositions of fun, laughter, play and jokes were essential to the creation of new channels of communication and participation. While recognizing both organizational tensions and ambiguities, this chapter closes on the affirmative potential of Umsonst found in their commitment to building links and critiques of capitalism outside of the 'ghettos' of activism.

Continuing with this close analytical focus, Chapter 4 turns to the Transnational Republic, a political artistic collective that set up an alternative to the nation-state in the form of a micronation. The campaign of Schleuser.net, a political artistic lobby organization established to improve official media portrayals of human traffickers and undocumented migrants, is also examined. The performative encounters

of each of these collectives relied on the public for their constituency as state-critical organizations. To understand the context from which these collectives arose, discussions around citizenship, the nation-state and human mobility are engaged. From this context the political resonances of these human mobility campaigns is discerned through their negation of representative and reformist politics in favour of creativity, autonomy and collective self-determination. Turning to their performative encounters, we see how the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net realized a central objective by establishing dialogic spaces for information exchange and action in which narratives often silenced by dominant media were made visible and transversals between constituents flourished. Key to these encounters was aesthetic faking. By critically appraising the benefits and detractions of faking as repetition and as semiotic subversion, I argue that that the ambivalences inherent to these encounters were what ultimately underpinned their radical potential.

These ambivalences are finally extended upon in the Conclusion through an exploration of Meine Akademie, a predominantly student group from the Universität der Künste (University of Arts), Berlin, conceived in retaliation to the sponsorship of the University of the Arts and the Technical University library by Volkswagen. As for many of the other encounters examined here, we turn to strategies of bureaucratic faking, play and performance. Using the case of Meine Akademie as a coda for the contemporary encounters, we critically consider issues and ambivalences around autonomy and complicity, aesthetics and politics that simultaneously spark the encounter's transformative potential and threaten to negate it. We come to recognize that these tensions and paradoxes are paramount to the productive capacity of the encounter; they invigorate challenges and enquiries, continuing the process of searching out new forms of resistance and alternatives. With a call to further conceptualize and realize radical practices we end then as we began: with experiments, with questions and with hope.

Thinking Toward the Performative Encounter

The act of making the political potential of 'performative encounters' and their spatialities visible, however, is by no means uncomplicated. The journey from hijacking a swimming pool, for instance, to a new 'event in thought' (Hynes et al. 2007: 109) is not immediately clear. This complexity informs all levels of the encounter. Indeed 'the phrase "performative encounters"' itself, writes Mireille Rosello,

> is not meant to be immediately transparent or understandable, and if the expression is greeted with a slight moment of hesitation, if a second look is required, I welcome my readers' hesitation as a desirable reticence. Although my goal is not to disconcert, if the unknown combination of words creates a second of discomfort, this moment of friction is not due to a lack of previous knowledge or a difficulty in understanding. On the contrary, it is the beginning of a new process that resembles the type of encounters that the phrase would like to describe (2005: 1).

The ambiguity and friction that Rosello describes here is also evident in the encounters introduced in this book. This is closely linked to the transversal nature of the encounter. Such transversality requires what Paulo Virno calls 'a rather varied kind of conceptual orchestration … changing frequently the angle of perception' (2004: 22). This is because examining an episodic or interstitial form that is defined primarily by its slipperiness and mobility is a paradoxical enterprise. The lack of literature directly attendant to such performative encounters has made this situation even more complex. Discussions of aspects or forms complimentary to, intersecting or homologous with the encounter have been undertaken in academic and intellectual disciplines as varied as performance and gender studies (Goffmann 1971, Parker and Sedgwick 1995, Butler 1997), human geography (Dewsbury 2000, Thrift 1997, 2004), philosophy (Massumi 2002), cultural and media studies (Duncombe 2007, Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A. Gruppe 2002) and critical theory (Vaneigem 1967, Raunig 2007). They have also appeared in social movement publications *Do or Die*, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Protest*, *Turbulence*, *Fibre culture*, *Mute Magazine*, *Green Pepper*, *Arranca!*, *Aufheben* and platforms such as *EIPCP* and *Interactivist*.

Perhaps because of the very mobile nature of the encounter itself,

being at once a form, device, relation and catalyst, it has eluded easy classification. Its properties and workings have been frequently overlooked. This is why an undertaking to discover its modes and contours, moreover its political potential, marks a strong departure from the traditions of theatre, cultural and visual studies that, despite recent advances, still more often than not seek to write about a phenomenon 'in-itself' rather than inventing methods to work through entangled and relational processes.

What is necessary is an ongoing, experimental composition woven together from the multiple elements at play, so to speak. This must be adequate to the task of meeting the unique requirements of a transversal phenomenon and accommodating its conceptual and material dimensions; it must be conducive to the discovery of sociabilities and subaltern acts of political becomings (Colectivo Situaciones 2003) without being either overly descriptive or prescriptive. Because this work has to contend with many disciplines, vocabularies and terminologies it has been useful to forge a grammar capable of following the same highly politicized transversal movement as the performative encounter itself. As for many multidisciplinary studies, this method and grammar has been sustained by negotiations through irreducible and often discordant terrains. It moves through political, academic and aesthetic fields, all of which require careful scholarship having their own prerogatives, languages and protocols. Moreover, it has been tempered by ethical gestures and consideration of the desires and needs of those it is speaking about (not on behalf of).[8] This composition, then, has not negated disjunction or enforced some sort of synthesis between these fields, but has let certain aspects vibrate within one another, to come into dialogue and to forge 'new terrains of open co-operation' (Kelly 2005). Such dialogue has been important to, as Raunig puts it 'avoid codification inside and outside the conventional canon … and undertake connecting contexts not previously noticed in the individual disciplines' (2007a: 19).

Performative Encounters

To begin this process it is helpful to turn to the most recognized use of the term 'performative encounter'. This has emerged from a very different milieu to that of the encounters explored here, but one can discern resonances nonetheless. It is found in the work of Mireille Rosello, who follows a trajectory of 'performativity' from the utterances of J.L. Austin (1955), through the philosophy of Jacques Derrida (1988), to the performative subjectivity and identity theory of Judith Butler (1990). Drawing upon fictional literary and filmic texts connected to the North African region of the Maghreb, Rosello uses 'performative encounters' to identify a new phenomenon emerging in Franco-Algerian relations, a potential that stands to counterbalance a violent history of colonization. Rosello argues that this potential is linked to the transformations that performative encounters effect on subjectivity. These transformations, contends Rosello, come about when groups or individuals, historically segregated through conflict or strife, refuse their subject positions and pre-existing 'scripts' or narratives of identity. This refusal is essential to the production of new kinds of subject-positions because it resists 'treating pre-existing (pre-imagined) identities as the reason for, and justification of, the protocol of encounter – whether it is one of violence or trust, respect or hostility' (2005: 1).

The potential of the encounter is activated through this resistance. When the encounter is freed from the constraints of the 'pre-established script' it becomes performative because it is in this instance, in this 'exceptional moment', that an 'unknown protocol replaces the script … in spite of an international or national conflict, in spite of the violence that reigns and imposes its rules' (ibid.). What occurs in this moment, in which the historicity of the subject is displaced, is the formation of unexpected shared languages through which relations and forms of communication are modulated. It is through the disruption of dominant scenarios via the common language formed from these narratives between incompatible sides that, Rosello suggests, 'new subject-positions, a new language, and a new type of engagement' occur (2005: 2). This sharing of language is not one that imposes a harmony upon

these relations, however; the productivity of such encounters is associated with the dynamism and reinvention of language and modes of communication themselves. For Rosello, then, the political potential of the literary and filmic performative encounter is found when an 'unknown protocol replaces the script' and when new subject positions emerge; when new common narratives are formed between historically incompatible sides.

Similarly, it is here that we seek the political potential of the encounters composed by the Berlin Dadaists, the Situationists, Berlin and Hamburg Umsonst, Schleuser.net and Meine Akademie. But, as Rosello makes clear, this potential only comes out of relations between traditionally conflictive positions. This is why to search out this potential and this change, sites of tension between subject-positions is required. With regard to the performative encounters of the groups under investigation here, this tension is located in the relationships between the so-called activist or artist or specialist and the nonactivist or nonartist or nonspecialist. Through the course of this book what will become clear is *how* political potential is tied to the new relationships and spaces between activists, artists, specialists, nonactivists, nonartists and nonspecialists brought about by the creative encounter, which emphasizes the mutability and transversality of subject identities. In these encounters creativity and play are used to find and strengthen points of connection between different communities and publics, to forge shared languages around everyday struggles and concerns. These aspects are linked to both the encounter's activation via performance and to the unanticipated subject positions and worlds it generates.[9] This is connected to different ways of relating, experiencing and speaking, and other ways of constructing virtual and actual spaces and worlds.[10]

Political Imaginings for Antagonistic Subjects

The transformation I refer to has been the consequence of one persistent objective: to imagine other possibilities through which to trace out

pathways within and through the contemporary regimes of capitalism. It is here that the political potential of the performative encounter can be found. Because this potential is relational it must be understood through the degrees of intensity it engenders between people, places and things.

Similarly, politics is not only a politics of reflection and critique but also a politics of creation and failure, of experimentation. Here, creation is framed as a strategic interaction of forces that anticipates alternatives to capitalism in the present, not as one cataclysmic revolutionary moment, but also as ongoing small events and instances of resistance. This resistance can be read, to recall the words of Raunig at the start of this chapter, as 'not merely a reaction to domination, but as … productive, affirmative, creative' (2006b: 2). In speaking about desire, relationality and politics two entwined currents of thought stand out. These are the philosophies of 'becoming' of Deleuze and Guattari, and the philosophies deriving from the Italian post-Operaist (workerist) and post-Autonomist Marxist movements from the 1960s onwards: a 'tradition of Marxism which places at its centre the self-activity of the working class' (Dyer-Witheford 1994: 85).

The work of Deleuze and Guattari has been frequently used to speak to social movements, indeed as Paul Patton affirms, 'Deleuze and Guattari provide a conceptual language in which to describe the impact of social movements that impose new political demands upon the qualitative or cultural dimensions of social life' (2000: 8). Against the grain, however, it is not so much the work of Deleuze that has informed the theoretical and conceptual torsions present in this book, but that of Guattari. Guattari's own often paradoxical and quixotic wanderings into the worlds of social-political activism lend a peculiar quality to his work. This is a quality of fallibility and grandiosity, of incongruity and discordance, which brings a life to events often set aside by the more restrained studies of philosophical and political enquiry.[11] The experimental and political refrains found in Guattari's writings were played out, in part, through his political collaborations with the Italian movements of autonomist Marxism. These included his co-authorship of

Communists Like Us – New Spaces of Liberty, New Lines of Alliance
(1990) with Antonio Negri, and his work with the free radio movements
of Radio Alice in the 1970s and 1980s. Such collaborations influenced the
political voice of his writing, much like the lexicon he constructed with
Deleuze found its way into the writings of the Italian traditions and their
inheritors. This is why the political and conceptual tools for thinking
these subjectivities, relations and worlds are to be found in these
feedback loops.

Most importantly, where both Deleuze and Guattari and the various
movements of the Autonomia coincided was in a displacement of the
individuated subject – the 'historical subject inherited from the Hegelian
legacy' (Berardi 2003: np). Instead of this subject, Deleuze and Guattari
proposed an understanding of subjectivity as processual and social – what
they referred to as subjectivation (1987). 'Subjectivation in the place of
subject' wrote Bifo Berardi, 'means that we should not focus on the
identity, but on the process of becoming' (2003). Following Marx's
arguments in his 1844 manuscripts (1961) capitalism could be understood
as manifest in social relations. This was later taken to mean that any
conceptualization of subjectivity as social and processual had to coincide
with a critique of capitalist systems and regimes. As Guattari affirmed,
because 'capitalist profit is basically the production of subjective power,
subjectivity is not situated in the individual field, but in every process of
social and material production' (2008: 45).

If subjectivity is to be situated in 'every process of social and
material production', as Guattari argued, then, as Berardi deduced, 'the
concept of social class' is also to be seen not 'as an ontological concept,
but rather as a vectorial concept' (2003: np). A vectorial understanding of
social class brought lived labour conditions through capitalism into
contact with the principles associated with philosophies of becoming.
Because in these philosophies subjectivation is considered as 'a process
susceptible to creative reconfiguration … not in terms of a facile
voluntarism, nor in terms of an equally facile imperative to permanently
resist all designations of identity, but in terms of a careful art or ethics of

experimentation' (Armstrong 2002: 51), the capacities of subjects were suddenly accentuated. Simply put, it now became possible to conceive of how capitalism was formative of, and simultaneously formed by, its subjects. This was to be a crucial feature of Autonomist thought. In reevaluating concepts of power to conceive of capitalism as being forced to adapt to the struggles and demands of all subjects as much as subjects adapting to capitalism, the possibilities for resistance were also multiplied. These resistances were to be manifest as something alternative to capital and the state. They were to be the *self-determined* creations of different ways of living, different ways of relating to one another, through the compositions, extension and defense of different social spaces and practices that 'refused' the value logics of capitalism.

This aspect of self-determination signified a marked departure from a state oriented politics of reform, as each of the chapters in this book demonstrates. 'The reason that the state cannot be used to bring about radical change in society', explains John Holloway,

> is that the state itself is a form of social relations that is embedded in the totality of capitalist social relations. The very existence of the state as an instance separated from society means that, whatever the content of its policies, it takes part actively in the process of separating people from control of their own lives. Capitalism is simply that: the separating of people from their own doing (2002: 1).

It was through such self-determined and nonstatist politics that, as Gene Ray proposed, 'the project of rethinking the problems of revolution and trying to determine what new forms, agencies, and temporalities may be available today' began (2007: 2). And it was this, he continued, that distinguished it 'from all analyses of contemporary conditions that conclude or dogmatically assume that revolution is dead and that no passage beyond capitalism is possible' (ibid.).

Conclusion

The political sensibility introduced here underscores the encounters

comprising the enquiry of this book, encounters that were, and continue to be, instances of such multiplied resistances and experimental practices. In undertaking an investigation of such practices in view of their political resonances, it is essential to address the specificity of their articulations, their contexts, influences and aspirations. It is imperative to be as equally supportive of their potentials as remaining open to their idiosyncrasies and breakdowns, even, perhaps, their impasses. In this respect, a proposition by Massimo de Angelis (2007) on the construction of 'alternative value practices' is instructive.[12] De Angelis argues that value practices that seek to move beyond those that consider capitalism as immanent and attempt to enunciate new ontological modes must be the focus, for

> the process of social constitution of a reality beyond capitalism can only be the creation, the production of other dimensions of living, of other *modes* of doing and relating, valuing and judging, and co-producing livelihoods. All the rest, regulations, reforms, "alternatives", the party, elections, social movements, "Europe" and even "revolutions", are just words with no meaning if not taken back to the question of other dimensions of living (2007: 1).

Each of the collectives included in this book has demonstrated an insistent concern with discovering new modes of living, relating and worlding: in other words, with the expansion of singular and collective capacities. As such, the value of their interventions are critically defined in the context set out by de Angelis above, in 'the creation, the production of other dimensions of living, of other *modes* of doing and relating'.

For the collectives and movements that will be introduced throughout the course of this book, these other dimensions emerged in direct response to shared everyday conditions of living and struggling through capitalist relations and logics.[13] To give shape to these other modes of living, relating and worlding, each of the subsequent chapters takes as its point for departure some of the conditions that necessitated them. In Chapter 3, this was for Umsonst the precariousness of life and labour within contemporary European capitalism. Such precariousness was also addressed by the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net in Chapter 4,

with their focus on xenophobic state regulations, and differential mobilities and migrations across borders. And for Meine Akademie, whose encounter functions as a coda, it was the increasing insertion of corporate and commercial interests into state and public education. All these groups attended to a common neoliberal paradigm, a paradigm we recognize today. It is this paradigm that sparked their desires to find escape routes and affirm other ways of being, collectively and collaboratively. Well over half a century earlier, the encounter had been similarly used to incite action against state and capitalist imperatives. To better understand and analyze the later encounters, it is to these historical encounters that we turn in Chapter 1 – to the interventions of the Berlin Dadaists set against the backdrop of the first World War, and to the Situationists with their dreams of revolutionizing everyday life.

1 The term dispositif or structuring device is employed with reference to its use by Bifo Berardi, drawing from Michel Foucault (1977) and Gilles Deleuze (1992). He states 'by the word *dispositif* I refer to a semiotic engine able to act as the paradigm of a series of events, behaviours, narrations, and projections modelling social reality' (2005: 67). From this we may consider the performative encounter as a performance oriented device committed to the modification and transformation of particular social relations via the interruption of narratives. Thus it is a means by which to intervene in, and reconfigure, dominant narratives and discourses, and the ways that we receive and interpret them.

2 To examine recent German expressions of this tactic is not to negate the important legacy similar styles of intervention have had in other countries, nor is it to forget the very prevalent intersections of language, academic Eurocentrism and institutional racism that render particular cultural and creative expressions more visible than others. North America for instance has had a long heritage of 'happenings', culture jamming and subversive actions, notably by groups since the 1960s such as the Yippies, Black Mask/Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers, Guerrilla Girls and ACT UP (Epstein 1991, Felshin 1995, Lasn 2000, Thompson and Sholette 2004, Shepard 2010). The counterculture movements in Italy and elsewhere during the late 1970s associated with the political Autonomia, such as the Metropolitan Indians also used comparable tactics. Similarly themed contemporary interventions have also been coordinated and documented by collectives and individuals such as Yomango (Spain), Publicxtheatre Caravan (Austria), planka.nu (Sweden), The Assembly Against Permanent War (Spain), 0100101110101101 (Italy), Radio Alice (Italy), Luther Blissett (Italy), Tute Bianche (Italy), Urad za Intervencije (The Office for Intervention) (Slovenia), Dost je! (It's Enough!) (Slovenia), Minerva Cuevas (Mexico), Etcétera (Errorist International) (Argentina), the Yes Men (USA), Rude Mechanical Orchestra (USA), Reverend Billy (USA), Barbie Liberation Organization (USA), the Space Hijackers (United Kingdom), CIRCA (United Kingdom), The Vacuum Cleaner (United Kingdom) and the Laboratory for Insurrectionary Imagination (United Kingdom), for instance.

3 The European political and philosophical theorization of the relationship between art and politics however has had a very long lineage over the past century, which while offering useful analyses of the functioning and mechanisms of art and capital do not explicitly interrogate or disrupt the role of the artist-producer/specialist (see for instance Benjamin 1968, Adorno 1991, Marcuse 1978, Bürger 1984, Ranciere 2004, Badiou 2003, 2005).

4 The term culture jamming was extensively outline by Mark Dery. According to Dery, culture jamming seeks to 'introduce noise into the signal as it passes from transmitter to receiver, encouraging idiosyncratic, unintended interpretations. Intruding on the intruders, they invest ads, newscasts, and other media artifacts with subversive meanings; simultaneously, they decrypt them, rendering their seductions impotent. Jammers offer irrefutable evidence that the right has no copyright on war waged with incantations and simulations … they refuse the role of passive shoppers, renewing the notion of a public discourse. Finally, and just as importantly, culture jammers are Groucho Marxists, ever mindful of the fun to be had in the joyful demolition of oppressive ideologies' (1993). The practices of the encounter can be seen to fall within this spectrum of activity and share a lineage with tactics such as transmission jamming, pirate tv and radio, counter-surveillance, media activism, billboard liberation, subvertising, media hoaxing and audio agit-prop.

5 This is with the exception of Raunig's *Art and Revolution. Transversal Activism in the Long Twentieth Century* (2007).

6 It can be argued that all encounters are performative; such work is becoming more typical in geography (see Dewsbury 2000, McCormack 2005, Thrift 1997 and 2004b). The conjunction performative encounter here is intended to emphasize the world-making capacities of such kinds of experimental politics.

7 The use of 'capitalism' throughout this book to indicate historically and spatially particular sets of systems, relations and mechanisms must be understood not as a fixative measure. Here capitalism is seen to be as malleable and performative as the encounters themselves. This is a way of reading capitalism following J.K. Gibson-Graham (1996), who take it as crucial to argue against 'familiar representations of capitalism as an obdurate structure or system, coextensive with the social space', on the grounds that the 'performative effect of these representations [is] to dampen and discourage non-capitalist initiatives, since power [is] assumed to be concentrated in capitalism and to be largely absent from other forms of economy' (2008: 615). The use of specific political and philosophical trajectories of thought that try to highlight the ambivalences, performativity and unevenness of capitalist and state authorities and forces is seen as a means here to problematize these kinds of encompassing discourses.

8 My relationships and friendships with the many people whose voices shaped this work arose from ongoing processes of being involved, questioning, speculating, organizing and listening. Crucial to these processes has been the experimentation with ways of building contact zones between radical political praxes and academic worlds (Cobarrubias 2003). Because 'traditional objectivist perspectives fail to grasp the concrete logic of activist practice, leading to inadequate accounts and theoretical models of little use to activists themselves' (Juris 2004), what has been required is the composition of a work that moves between various infrastructures. This formation has brought with it a particular ethical political bias: one that accentuates care and generosity toward the many subjects of this work, but which at the same time does not preclude a critical reflexivity. This could also be related to the 'weak theory' proposed by Sedgwick (2003) and Gibson-Graham (2008) undertaken with 'a reparative motive that welcomes surprise, tolerates coexistence, and cares for the new, providing a welcoming environment for the objects of our thought' (Gibson-Graham ibid.: 615).

9 This is also something that performance studies scholar Jill Dolan credits to particular theatre performances. Calling these 'utopian performatives', Dolan writes that such events 'describe small but profound moments in which performance calls the attention to the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense. As a performative, performance itself becomes a "doing" in linguistic philosopher J.L Austin's sense of the term, something that in its enunciation acts – that is, performs as an action' (2005: 5).

10 'This virtuality' writes Nicholas Thoburn following Deleuze and Guattari 'is not in opposition to the "real": rather it is the reality of a creative matter as it exists in ever-new configurations as the base of the real' (2003: 4).

11 A quality that Richard Rorty (1989) terms 'ironic' in his anti-foundationalist position on epistemological questions, which is manifest as 'a thinker that does not take herself wholly seriously, but instead revels in the possibility of someone destroying her argumentation … by allowing a certain amount of holes in her defences, the ironist makes her science a little more interesting, a little more dangerous' (Rehn 2002: 47). Coincidentally, Guattari himself

comments that such qualities arouse his sympathies in the works of Sartre, stating 'I like Sartre not so much for the consistency of his theoretical contribution, but the opposite – for the way he goes off on tangents, for all his mistakes and the good faith in which he makes them … I like Sartre precisely because of his failure … Sartre's confusions, his naiveties, his passion, all add to his value in my eyes' (1984: 27).

12 Value production here, for de Angelis, signals those actions and procedures (and networks of co-produced relationality arising through, and correlative of, these) that are formulated on a pre-existent value system and are simultaneously reproductive of it (2007: 24).

13 Of course both antecedent to and preceding my knowledge about the hijacking of the Badeschiff other creative interventions and other collectives contemporaneous to the ones presented here had come to my attention. The Umsonst affiliated Überflussigen, Front Deutscher Äpfel, Kanak Attack, Karawane, Hedonist International, Urbane Panik, Florian Kramer, and Ligna have all in one form or another attended to timely social-political and cultural issues in synchronicity with the collectives and encounters being examined in this book. However for various reasons such as accessibility, visibility, duration and intensity, I have chosen not to include them here.

Chapter 1
'Revolution is not "showing" life to people, but making them live': The Performative Encounter of Berlin Dada and the Situationist International

The revolutionary imperative of the twentieth century underwent an experimental and innovative turn through the Berlin Dadaists (1917–1920) and subsequently the Situationist International (S.I.) (1957–1972). Of utmost urgency for both of these movements was the composition of a creative revolution – one that was not only political, but also aesthetic, social and cultural. Like many of their contemporaries, these movements strove to emancipate life from the mechanisms of capitalism and state sovereignty. They were artists, activists and political critics who argued that the revolutionary dream could only be realized through the radicalization of all experience. This necessitated the intensification of affective exchanges and ways of relating, determined by individuals and collectives themselves; as Situationist Guy Debord proclaimed in 1961, 'revolution is not "showing" life to people, but making them live'. One means by which to manifest this radicalization was a performative form of encounter, conceived to liberate communication and invigorate common desires. This form was to be the paragon of their calls for the destratification of specialization: for the end of the artist as vanguard.

This conception of creative revolutionlent a militant flair to the performative encounters of Berlin Dada, a politicization that was, from all accounts, decidedly more vibrant in Berlin Dada than in any other section of the Dada movement (Foster 1988, Richter 1965). Self-proclaimed 'Überdada' (super Dada) and lead provocateur Johannes Baader in particular took as his prerogative the disruption of political bureaucratic apparatuses, generating maximum publicity for the project.

In his monograph on the movement, *Dada Art and Anti-Art* (1965), Hans Richter retells the story of Baader's dramatic intervention on 16 July 1919 at the Weimar National Assembly. Opposed to the further consolidation of German state and military power, Baader declared himself representative of the Central Dada Council of the World Revolution and launched an attack on the attending members, comparing Weimar to the Stations of the Cross. Following his denunciations of the German state, he proceeded to distribute a pamphlet entitled *The Green Corpse* – printed with the slogan 'Dadaists against Weimar' – to members of the assembly. In the furore that erupted Baader was dragged from the parliament by police, all the while hurling pamphlets into the gallery and press boxes (Foster 1988: 9). Three days after the event, Baader took to the streets proclaiming the Socialist candidate, Philip Scheidemann as the 'Ehrendada' (honorary Dada).

Reminiscent of the Dadaists before them, members of the S.I. and their affiliates also employed performative encounters to intervene in capitalist conditions and relations.[1] These actions proliferated around the time that the group began to conceptualize what they called the 'constructed situation'. For many of the Situationists of this period, the artistic institution presented a fitting target. In 1958 a plan was made to vilify the International Assembly of Art Critics in Belgium. On 12 April members of the group issued a statement condemning the event and its participants for their commodification of art, calling for the uprising of new and subversive aesthetic ideologies. A direct offensive was launched the following day against the attending critics, with copies of the text circulated amongst the crowd, read over the phone and flung from the Press Club. Leaflets were also thrown from the windows of buildings and passing cars. The critics in attendance desperately rushed to suppress the text in an attempt to minimize public participation in the scandal. Police were called and the text was banned from being reprinted by the press. Members of the group were later threatened with criminal prosecution (S.I. 1958a: 48–50).

From anecdotes such as these it is easy to understand how the Berlin

Dadaists and the diffuse network of the S.I. (including the later Second International) presented an affront to aesthetic and political sensibilities at the time.[2] In the moment of their historical articulation, these movements challenged expected modes of producing, understanding and evaluating creative gestures. Within this challenge, the performative encounter operated as an effective tactic for unsettling the stability and necessity of state and capitalist driven economies of production and subjectivation.

Berlin Dada

In an interview with political art publication, *Chto delat?* (What is to be done), Jacques Ranciere (2008) identifies an inherent tension at the heart of the avant-garde project, a tension indicated by the political efficacy of avant-garde art. The crux of this tension, argues Ranciere, was the result of two divergent paths within the avant-gardist objective. One path entailed an impulse toward the construction of new worlds via the amalgamation of forms and materials in radical new ways, leveraged through the sublation of art into life. The other path entailed a similar rejection of historical representations of art, but concentrated on the autonomy of the avant-garde programme and its capacity to change the experiential quality of the aesthetic encounter. This quality did not arise from a desire to provoke new modalities of collective experience rather it was the very rupture of contexts – the context of creation and the context of reception – that invested these forms with political intensity. For Ranciere, these two paths bifurcated into separate registers of the avant-garde and ultimately of political subjectivity.

Both of these paths were present in the project of the Berlin Dadaists. This dyadic tendency was shown by their desire to intervene in everyday and political realms through their aesthetic praxes, to subsume their aesthetics into the everyday. Simultaneous to this was their desire for the maintenance of self-autonomy through their identification and categorization as artists – albeit artists in possession of revolutionary

consciousness. It was this dual tendency in the movement that was to signify both the greatest triumph and the most devastating failure of Berlin Dada.

Against War, Nationalism and the Institution of Art

Erupting out of the turbulence of war stricken Germany, Dada's arrival in Berlin in February 1917 was precipitated by the return of Richard Huelsenbeck from Zurich following the demise of the Cabaret Voltaire, home to the disparate Zurich Dada movement (Adkins 1988: 1). From the outset, the Berlin Dadaists deviated from other sections of the Dada movement through their commitment to political struggle (Richter 1965: 101–103). Berlin's eviscerated cultural and economic landscape offered a fitting backdrop for a movement comprised largely of artists who were also vocal anti-war activists, some of whom were also closely affiliated with the Spartakusbund (German Spartacist Group, later the KPD – Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands) and, by extension, were comrades of socialist leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. This political association resonated through the campaigns of the Berlin Dadaists who were already dedicated political activists, publishing and distributing illustrated left-wing periodicals such as *Die Freie Strasse* (1915), the *Neue Jugend* (1916) and later, *Jedermann sein eigener Fussball* (1919). These attracted the attention of Berlin officials and were repeatedly confiscated and often censored. Wieland Herzfelde was also instrumental in the establishment of the radical publishing house, the *Malik-Verlag* in 1917. It was from this position of political engagement that their aesthetic critique was informed, which afforded the group a simultaneous presence in the various fields of political and artistic struggle.[3]

For the Berlin Dadaists, the co-constitution of the aesthetic and the political was vital to the incitement of revolt (Willett 1978: 28–29), requiring a supersession of all previous forms and modes of production, the outcome of which was an almost violent aesthetic nihilism. As Huelsenbeck stressed in 1920 in one of the first Berlin Dada manifestos 'art should altogether get a sound thrashing, and Dada stands for the

thrashing with all the vehemence of its limited nature' (2003: 262). Their consternation toward prior aesthetic models was most obvious in their attitudes toward the bourgeois German idolization of autonomous art, culture and idealism. This, according to Huelsenbeck, served to keep the populace on their knees in the worship of some transcendental 'great spirit' (ibid.: 260), which turned attention away from the streets toward aesthetic contemplation. As a result, art was placed beyond the everyday, and riven from its interventional potential. The Berlin Dadaists argued that this stratification made autonomous art passive and impotent; it could do little more than offer a detached critique incapable of intersecting the social-political realm (Bürger 1984: 13). Furthermore the institutionalization of art placed it within a system of commodity circulation, rendering it even more passive. Suffice it to say, art that was seen as aesthetically autonomous was considered irrevocably compromised on the register of the political.

For the Dadaists, movements associated with the institutionalization of art, such as Expressionism and Cubism, represented this subject-focused contemplation and were thus openly derided. During the inaugural Berlin Dada meeting 'Saal der neuen Sezession', held on 18 February 1918, Huelsenbeck vociferously dismissed abstract art, claiming that Dada had surpassed the detached, inward searching tendencies of Expressionism and Cubism. Scorning them for their open institutionalism, he argued that associated artists were simply seeking out canonical validation, and were furthermore premising their creative expression on a false and ignorant understanding of the world as free from 'content or strife' (in Richter 1965: 104). The reference by Huelsenbeck to the ways in which art, through its autonomous status, alluded to the possibility of some higher and untouched realm crucially underpinned their rejection of the bourgeois art system as a whole. Within this system, they claimed, the artwork was unable to deal with the violence of the everyday (Bürger 1984: 22), and the abstracted artist, or 'politically aloof cultural specialist', was destined to remain duplicitous and irrelevant (Bonnett 1992: 71).

To counteract the threat of aesthetic irrelevance, the Berlin Dadaists framed their activity in antagonistic response. Reflecting upon this first meeting, Huelsenbeck asserted that directness was of preeminent importance, proposing that what was necessary was the destruction of a romantic and nostalgic silence through unfettered action (Richter 1965: 103). This kind of incitement was to become archetypal of their dissent. As a final rejection of the pleasurable function of bourgeois art, which validated the inert spectator, the Berlin Dadaists sought to provoke their public, regardless of the consequences (Bürger 1984: 12–13). As Udo Rusker explained in the 1920 *Dada-Almanach*,

> Dadaism is a stratagem by which the artist can impart to the citizen something of the inner unrest which prevents the artist himself from being lulled to sleep by custom and routine. By means of external stimuli, he can compensate for the citizen's lack of inner urgency and vitality, and shake him into new life (in Richter 1965: 101).

Through shaking the citizen 'into a new life', art would became the platform through which the German cultural and political condition could be renounced; a critique of the aesthetic institution was a critique levelled at German political consciousness, on cultural history and on the social system. And this critique was all the more forceful when it came, argued the Dadaists, from the German public themselves: a public that had to ensure that a new political system would be implemented and the disasters of war never repeated. By proposing the provocation of the public as axial to the challenging of these spheres, the Berlin Dadaists affirmed the public as actors in revolutionary struggle. What this affirmation in turn implied was that the Dadaists saw themselves as facilitating revolutionary activity.

The Performative Encounter in the Berlin Dada Movement

The aspiration of the Berlin Dadaists to create an aesthetic capable of opening up new modes and channels of communication was materialized through their rejection of conventional creative modes in favour of innovative aesthetic forms. These arose from the Dadaist

deterritorialization of poetry, sound, text, drawing, painting and theatre, which they reterritorialized through techniques such as montage and bricolage. By refusing to reproduce conventional aesthetic relationships between form and content, the Dadaists signalled their dismissal of the 'autonomous' regime. This was further heightened by their political platforms, which deemed the full subjugation of the artistic into the material everyday as a salient revolutionary strategy.[4]

Performance as a live form of direct intervention and communication became one of the most effective techniques used by the Berlin Dadaists. As Stephen Foster (1988) argues, the performance event was seen to bring about a liminal moment, rupturing everyday narratives through social change. By using disruptive and affective tactics such as shock, humour and parody, the Dadaists constructed the encounter as a method for the widespread communication of their dissent. As such, the encounter offered a conduit through which to make palpable their critiques of the bourgeois class. Events by the group often incorporated confrontational manifestos, poetry comprised of 'pure – onomatopoetic or vowel – sounds', nonsensical and simultaneous actions, interactions with spectators, cabaret, cinema, improvisation and 'anti-illusionist scenic design' (Gordon 1974: 114). These experimental, hybrid media forms rejected representational and disengaged methods. As Foster observed, 'the arts began to present their content through the structure of outside, non-art events rather than to *re*present the world's events through traditional art genres' (1988: 5. Original emphasis).

The petit-bourgeois were most susceptible to Dadaist mockery. Performance was deployed as a weapon against refined sensibilities and performative gestures were formulated to maximize the level of offence and outrage. As the erstwhile companion of Raoul Hausmann, Vera Broido-Cohn recalled, one technique to elicit this affront was the dislocation of performances from expected into unexpected territories: from specialized art spaces into sites of the 'everyday'. Because the spaces and sites that the Berlin Dadaists exploited were not conventionally recognized as aesthetic, they were left vulnerable to

subversion, and economically richer and more conservative districts and municipalities such as Steglitz were taken up as stages for performance.

One such performance took place in a disused shop front. Renting out the space, the group decorated the back room with a huge red divan, hidden by a purple velvet curtain. Johannes Baader, naked and covered only with his heavy beard, reclined on the divan while others sat outside and sold tickets. Because of the suburban location, the unusual event drew many spectators, predominantly locals and elderly people, who, after being guided through the empty building were highly excited and curious by the time they reached the curtain's edge. As they gathered, the curtain was lifted to reveal Baader to the disgust and shock of the audience, most of whom promptly fled (Broido-Cohn 1978: 5–6).

The encounters between the Berlin Dadaists and their public in territories far removed from the hushed tones of Berlin's galleries were relatively frequent. Baader, in particular exemplified an irreverant virtuosity for facilitating such events. His militant stances against the German state, culture and religion motivated numerous messianic interventions over the three-year manifestation of Berlin Dada. These included, but were not limited to, an attempt to establish a Dada Republic in the suburb of Nikolassee with Hausmann; a self-nominated candidature for the Reichstag; diatribes against the usefulness of Christ to the 'common man' in the Berlin cathedral; his own highly promoted death and resurrection; and most remarkably the commissioning of a private plane to lower him from the sky into a 'Congress of Christs' held in a meadow in Thuiringa (Foster 1985: 254, Broido-Cohn 1978: 4). George Grosz was also partial to public manifestations or demonstrations such as his numerous passages through Berlin's central shopping district the Kurfürstendamm as Death, dressed in a cowl, with a skeleton face and scythe (Gordon 1974: 117).

The desire to reconfigure and empower social and political subjects was manifest through such events of the performative encounter. According to Foster, for Baader, Hausmann, Richter and Grosz, the event acted as an 'instrument for achieving, in reality or by illusion, a

positioning of themselves and their audiences in a hostile and self-destructive world and as a potential instrument of change' (1988: 3). Through its exclusive focus on social and political concerns, the performative event constituted a form of insurrection. When combined with its immediate and affective mode of address, the encounter acted as a mechanism for opening up dialogue (Foster 1988: 6), because it positioned the audience as active spectators; through its demands for attention it incited public involvement. What is clear from the encounters of Baader, Grosz, Hausmann and Richter is their unwavering commitment to, on the one hand, fleeing recognized aesthetic realms and on the other, to criticizing repressive state, cultural and religious apparatuses. This commitment coalesced around a desire to shake the citizen 'into a new life', as Rusker wrote, and to provoke singular and collective political activity. By shifting the spaces of the encounter from the zones of the gallery and the theatre into unexpected and everyday spheres, the Berlin Dadaists broke from the expected functions of spectatorship and passive contemplation. This unequivocally reconfigured the role of the public, from 'passive' to 'active' spectator, implicated by the encounter and its content. By trying to elicit public outrage and incite debate, the Berlin Dadaists challenged perceptions of political and social hegemony and hierarchies of power, resituating sites of resistance into public realms. Thus, the performative encounter was hoped to manifest the revolutionary force seen to be lying dormant within the 'masses'.

The Performative Encounter and the Dada Vanguard

For the Berlin Dadaists the perception of the encounter as a means to radicalize public consciousness led them to favour it over more so-called representational modes. This was relative to the avant-garde in general as a movement poised on the cutting edge of cultural and aesthetic history. The idea of the avant-garde in this sense was associated with cultural and political groups in France during the nineteenth century that subscribed to a conception of history as progress. Within this conception the avant-

garde acted as the enunciators of a historical continuum: the harbingers of a radical progression of culmination and rupture. Thus, like the militaristic vanguard, the Berlin Dadaists saw as it as their duty to reveal the situational openings for attack in order to forge a new, more superior status quo through the destruction of the old (Malgré Tout Collective 1995: 2).

The Berlin Dadaists' definition as avant-garde artists was fuelled by their identification with the uprising of the Bolsheviks and the triumph of early Soviet communism following October 1917. This equivocation went further than the merely rhetorical – as Huelsenbeck announced in his 1920 manifesto with typical flair, 'Dada is German Bolshevism' (in Harrison and Wood 2003: 262). Reminiscent of Lenin's vanguard, the Dadaists saw themselves as the artistic leaders of the people: artists who, through their creative medium, were crucial to the provocation of a revolutionary desire. For Lenin a vanguard – an organization of professional revolutionaries that would guide and organize the working class – was 'an essential factor in "accomplishing" the political revolution' (1988: 173–174). These professional 'revolutionaries', comprising intellectuals, students, and educated 'proletariat', were posited to understand the urgency for political change far more than the proletarian 'masses'. This notion of the vanguard was based on Lenin's assertion that there lay in the proletarian class an uneven distribution of political consciousness. Lenin argued that the masses were capable of organization at the level of trade unions at best, staging spontaneous strikes but ultimately vulnerable to the logic of the bourgeois. The vanguard, however, were seen to have a higher political awareness through their capacity to break out of the ruling class ideology to reach the true socialist ideal. In this way, they were perceived as bearers of an acute political consciousness, responsible for the enlightenment of the workers against the capitalist regime, and ultimately for their comprehension of proletarian agency and eventual reign.

This understanding of the vanguard at the forefront of political consciousness was evident in the Berlin avant-garde, who framed

Dadaism as a 'stratagem' for awakening the apolitical citizen. This framing suggested a delegation of knowledge and expertise, compelling the Dadaists to raise the public to their level of critique. As Lenin wrote in *What is to be Done*, the lifting of 'amateurs to the level of revolutionaries' was one of the objectives of the vanguard (1988: 188). As part of the aesthetic vanguard, the Berlin Dadaists proposed that their methods could activate a revolutionary spirit within the public. This did not mean that the Dadaists conceived of themselves as being outside of the public milieu. Rather, like Lenin's vanguard the Dadaists saw themselves as embedded *within*, and in service of, the revolution, especially in comparison to a number of their avant-garde contemporaries who upheld the autonomous production of art without collective emancipation or engagement with the political ideal. That the Berlin Dadaists positioned themselves as being both part of the proletarian 'masses' and artist revolutionaries (or specialists in social change) was the crux of the tension between the political affiliations of the Berlin Dadaists on the one hand, and the organization during the performative encounter on the other. There were two ways in which the Berlin Dadaists maintained and deviated from the vanguardist aspirations of the aesthetic avant-garde. The first of these was in this persistent spectre of hierarchy. The second was in their particular understanding of temporality.

In the performative encounter of Dada, the active participation of the public was held as ideal. This was clear in that, for the most part, participation was solicited and encouraged. Encounters like Baader's nude spectacle in Steglitz and the Dada Republic in the Nikolassee required some level of consensus and direct engagement. This public exchange made the encounter function as such: a principal of involvement that, despite political meritocracies, questioned evaluations of participation through positioning the public as agents of their own experiences. Furthermore, in their intense moments of articulation these encounters negated the vanguardist concept of time as chronological progression. The encounter of the Dadaists sought out the temporality of rupture, disjunction and conflict, what Susan Buck-Morss defines as the

'phenomenological experience of avant-garde practice' (2002: 221). For Buck-Morss, avant-garde movements largely shifted away from this phenomenological experience as they aligned themselves with the socialist political project. This shift was to the detriment of the avant-gardes as it effectively historicized their rebellion. By refusing the vanguardist teleology, the performative encounter maintained a radical potential, constructing a temporal experience 'eternally in opposition to history's chronological continuum, and just as eternally in opposition to fashion's repetitive gesture of the "new"' (ibid.). In the case of the Berlin Dadaists this did not require a return to the alienating tendencies of autonomous art, nor did it mean the complete disintegration of art into the political. Rather it necessitated a new conception of the public as actors.

The performative encounter, read here as an instance of what Buck-Morss calls 'the constant construction of constellations that arrest time' (ibid.), was an aesthetic intervention in the everyday that challenged the linear narratives of the socialist vanguard, as well as their vertical lines of organization and division. This was because mobilized by these ruptures were encounters that tried to recognize singular and collective difference. Through deviating from expected relationships between the audience and the initiators, what was opened up were, to use the words of Félix Guattari, possible 'mutant nuclei of subjectivation' (1995a: 18). As a rupture of sense, the performative encounter of the Berlin Dadaists critically affected both the terrains of the artistic and the social-political. Simultaneously, the ways in which these terrains affected both the productions of singular and collective subjectivities was also reconfigured.

While the performative encounters of Berlin Dada, and the subjectivities engendered through them, went some way in addressing the organizational contradictions of their project, it was nonetheless underpinned by aporia. This was the paradox of their role as provocateurs of revolutionary consciousness, and their desire to amalgamate the aesthetic and everyday realms; they both wanted to retain their specialist

roles, and do away with class hierarchies and the bourgeois aesthetic order. The Berlin Dadaists disrupted conventional aesthetic relationships through denouncing the autonomous artwork. They also politicized the avant-garde artwork and developed the interventional potential of the aesthetic as a tactic of the political. However, they did not fulfill their desire for the subsumption of the aesthetic into the everyday: art did not become synthesized with political life. Where the strength and invention of the Dada movement lay more generally, as noted by Gerald Raunig, was in the ways in which it

> subjected production conditions to an examination with the desiring-machine, igniting a cheerful deterritorialization beyond all territorialities of nation and party with its anti-militarist, internationalist, anarchic practice. As long as it undertook this risk within the framework of the strongest attacks on art and under threat of beatings or forced labor for artists specifically within the manageable and limited spaces of art, it remained successful (2007a: 24).

While the transgressive artistic mobilizations of the Dadaist objective were acknowledged as successful, their political intentions were met with less enthusiasm; politics, as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari wryly concluded, was not 'the strongest facet of the Dadaists' (1983: 148). The steady recuperation of aberrant artistic gestures back into the institutional canon led, for the Berlin Dadaists as for much of the avant-garde, to the foreclosure of any significant intervention into the field of politics. This is why the contradiction inherent to the way in which the Berlin Dadaists perceived their revolutionary subjectivity is an important perspective from which to locate why and how such failures may have occurred.

The Situationist International

Over three decades later the Situationist International (S.I.) and their affiliates, including the Second International (1962–), addressed some of the Berlin Dada movement's idiosyncrasies.[5] Founded in 1957 in Italy, the S.I. assembled artists, creative workers and scholars from the Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus (1953–1957); the Lettrist

International (1952–1957); and the London Psychogeographical Committee (1957). In 1959 the Munich based Gruppe SPUR (1957–1965) formed the German section of the group.

The S.I., at least preliminarily, took the struggles of the historical avant-gardes as influential, in particular the Dadaists and the Surrealists. The Dadaists, they argued, were one of the first movements to voice their distrust of the aesthetic and political order and sought to realize change on all levels of life (Khayati 1966: np). For the S.I., the Dada movement effectively explored the limits and possibilities of language and finally closed off the specialized role of art. What was problematic for the S.I. however was that Dada was firmly fixated on the abolition of art, with no concern for its realization. Surrealism, on the contrary, sought the realization of art but without its abolition. Against these historical precedents, the S.I. determined that 'the abolition and the realization of art are inseparable aspects of a single transcendence of art' (Debord 1994: 136).

While the Berlin Dadaists consolidated their objectives to the sublation of art into life, the early 'singular transcendence of art' of the S.I. signalled something of a different gesture. This was 'neither the becoming-art of life, nor the becoming-life of art' but the supersession of *both* art and life into a new ontological process (Agamben 2000: 77). For the S.I. this was intimately tied to a change in social relations and geographies (Pinder 2000: 358). The S.I.'s demands responded to what they called the 'society of the spectacle'. The spectacle was, for Debord, the dominant organizational principle underpinning modern (Western) society. Debord and the S.I. used this idea of the spectacle to critique what they saw as the colonization of all relations by the semiotics of capital (Debord 1994: 12). They argued that this colonization proliferated in spectacular society as commodity regimes incorporated and fractured cultural and social experience. The spectacle acted to mediate social relations between individuals, presenting a facade of unity through the image but in actuality isolating them from their everyday lives. This paralleled the separation of the worker from the commodity and its

dissemination, paradigmatic of capitalist production. The isolation wrought by the spectacle was not only present in direct experiences of mediation, such as advertising or consumption, but in all human and nonhuman relations, desires, experiences and interactions.

By thinking of society in terms of the spectacle, Debord and the S.I. extended Marx's theories of alienation and the processes of production/consumption to the everyday. For Debord, separation reigned as 'the alpha and omega' of quotidian experience. Moreover, the pervasive nature of the spectacle led Debord to conclude that it was not some state removed from reality, but rather a constituent of that reality itself. 'The spectacle, grasped in its totality, is both the result and the project of the existing mode of production', wrote Debord, 'It is not a supplement to the real world, an additional decoration. It is the heart of the unrealism of the real society (ibid.: 2).

The alienation inherent to capitalism was seen by the S.I. as reproduced in the classical categories of art and revolution. These categories perpetuated models and structures based upon detaching individuals and collectives from their own means of production and expression. The avant-gardist endeavours of Dada, their organization and their negative stance, participated in these systems – a participation that the S.I. saw as their ultimate downfall. The solidarity that the Berlin Dadaists unflinchingly gave to the Bolshevik struggle was denounced by the S.I., who identified separatism in Lenin's structures of organization. Because the S.I. considered Soviet-inspired communism to function as an organizational autocracy, they held little regard for reformist Party apparatuses such as those of the PCF/CGT (the French Communist Party and its labour union) and their associates. Moreover they claimed that by placing so much emphasis on the Bolshevik uprising, the destruction of art was made contingent on the success of the proletarian revolution.[6] As later Situationist Mustapha Khayati affirmed, the failure of the Spatakists was also the failure of the Dadaists, and Dada became no more than the expression of absence (1966: np).

Through branding the Dada project as tantamount to the creative

expression of nothingness, the S.I. distanced themselves from what they saw as the pure negativity of Dada, which precipitated the group's demise through the rejection of any affirmative or even mutable position. What this meant for Debord was that while Dada successfully challenged the superstructures of bourgeois culture, their failure in part rested in their ignorance of aesthetics as a powerful and subversive force (McDonough 2004: ix). While the reactionary nihilism of Dada was considered initially necessary in terms of the S.I. strategy, it was seen as fundamentally untenable. What was needed instead, they argued, was the affirmative composition of radical subjectivities and nonideological, nonhierarchical modes. These were vital to the propagation of emancipatory states (Vaneigem 1967, Debord 1957, 1963). The aspiration toward the liberation of desire engendered experimentation with creative strategies for the S.I. One such strategy was the 'constructed situation' – what the S.I. defined early on as 'a moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organization of a unitary ambiance and game of events' (1958b: 45).

The 'constructed situation' or Performative Encounter of the Situationist International

The colonization of the spaces and rhythms of daily life by modern capitalist production could only be navigated for the S.I. through emancipatory activity determined by the individual and collective social body. From their beginnings, the Situationists considered one of their central purposes the construction of situations. These were to jettison all formal and figural representations through unmediated, ludic experiences. Such situations or encounters were conceived to intervene in, and refuse, the subjugation and alienation endemic to spectacular society (Debord 1957: 44); it was a proposition for the deterritorialization of the spectacle and a reinvigoration of desire from its reification by capitalism. What was emphasized by the S.I. was that the spectacle could only be destabilized through experimenting with new participatory and reciprocal ways of living and being. The equivocation of the spectacle

with the very processes making up contemporary experience suggested that only the most fundamental rupture of this, as was possible through the 'constructed situation' could 'generate and sustain social forms and structures of value independent of relations instituted under the society of the spectacle' (McClure 2004: np).

Situationist texts and bulletins offered little insight into what kind of praxis might foster such situations. Despite the ambiguity surrounding the material situation, their earlier theorizations foregrounded techniques of the dérive (drifting) and détournement (linguistic and semiotic subversion) as vital to such encounters.[7] Encounters, like those facilitated by the dérive, enabled the simultaneous transformation of dispositions and urban environments through new affective relationships with sites and localities. As Debord described, activities such as nighttime urban adventures, explorations of vacant lots and empty buildings, aimless hitchhiking, any kind of geographical expedition, shared the sensibilities of the dérive, which could be realized better in action than description (1956: np). For the Situationists, ostensibly 'unmediated' activities such as clandestine spatial investigations were a way to wrest creative practice from the commodification and reification of the institutions and galleries. This was because they were relocated into the social realm, into the cities and onto the streets. Such gestures disrupted the familiar ways of being typified by passive, isolated interactions (Debord 1994: 35–54). Thus, for the S.I., experiments that altered assumed relationships to space and time could spark unmediated playful and pleasurable experiences.

Similar to the dérive, the encounter of détournement was thought to promote reconsiderations of class struggle and social-political culture by diverting 'elements of domination into vehicles of liberation' (Cleaver 1992a: 130). This was meant to lead to what Debord and Gil Wolman called a 'real means of proletarian artistic education, the first step toward a literary communism' (1956: 11), prompted through the subversion of pre-existing aesthetic media and texts into novel combinations. This often took place through parody and mimicry: comic strips used to denounce capitalists or Trotskyists, or plagiarized images and words

remade into humorous and scathing cultural critiques that were pasted on walls, shops and advertising billboards. The extensive plagiarism of the works of Marx, Hegel and countless other political theorists, artists and philosophers by Debord in his seminal work *The Society of the Spectacle* reflected the assertion that plagiarism was a necessary device for the constant reconfiguration of ideas.

Before the height of Situationism in the late 1960s, methods of détournement were already being put to use by the immediate precursors of the S.I. The hijacking of the Notre-Dame Cathedral in 1950 stands out as a highly public and notable example (CDDC: nd). On Easter Sunday, several Lettrists alighted Notre-Dame. Given the significance of the day, the cathedral was filled with thousands of people and the mass was being televised. A former Dominican theologian, Michel Mourre, clothed in his monk's cloak and surrounded by his co-conspirators, took to the pulpit during a pause in the High Easter Mass and began to preach on the death of god. The group had composed a sermon to be read before the congregation in which they accused the Catholic Church of swindling money and 'infecting the world with its funereal morality' (Marcus 1989: 279), and proclaimed that the prayers of the Church had been 'the greasy smoke over the battlefields of our Europe' (ibid.). The protagonists were swiftly arrested and Mourre was immediately incarcerated in a psychiatric facility. A heated debate ensued between the irate public, supporting artists and activists and the Church, and Mourre was eventually released. The contention was so great that the action resonated throughout the Lettrist movement, preceding the schism that would later lead to the formation of the S.I. Thus, even early on, the reach of such détourned forms were not to be underestimated and they attained an almost cultlike status in the lead up to, during, and after the Parisian uprisings of 1968.

While the dérive and détournement were creative and performative techniques celebrated by the S.I. they certainly did not comprise the situation or encounter. The constructed situation was far more evasive, and furthermore *interactive*.[8] Despite the deliberate opacity around

practices of the situation, what was consistently stressed was its organization: an organization that privileged the input and participation of the public. This differentiated the situation from its theatrical contemporaries, regardless of superficial similarities.[9] Even through the constructed situation shared aesthetic characteristics in terms of theatrical effects and the role of the director, it was deeply opposed to any representationalism, calling for the full participation of all present. As such, the S.I sought to depart from the hierarchy of participation that defined the role of the 'active' producer from the 'passive' spectator. This was a passivity that the S.I. regarded as fatally extending into all experiences under the capitalist spectacle; through all registers of private, social, political and cultural life. As Jens Jørgen Thorsen, Jørgen Nash and Hardy Strid of the Second International made clear in the *Co-Ritus Manifesto*, the traditional distinction between the performer and audience spoke of a blockage of all cultural development, effectively rendering everyone impotent in the face of cultural and consumptive repression (1962: np).

For the S.I then, where creative situations or performative encounters could be truly transformative was in the spectator's relationships to her own activities and experiences. The capacity for unmediated experience was contingent upon individuals becoming singularly conscious of their own participation and agencies. This meant that unlike the tendency of nonintervention (reiterated in the structures of the theatre and cinema), the public would recognize their active implication in the event, which would act to draw them 'into activity by provoking their capacities to revolutionize their own lives' (Debord 1957: 47). While the S.I. hoped this would lead the public to revolutionize their lives individually it was, more importantly, a call to collectivity. This was because the 'creativity and participation' of the public could 'only be awakened by a *collective* project explicitly concerned with all aspects of lived experience' (S.I. 1961: 63–64. Italics mine). The encounter of the S.I., like the outrages of Dada, was to be above all an encounter of potential commons: a stimulation and motivation for a more intense kind of reciprocity and

communication. As the S.I stated in their *Manifesto*, the situation, like the greater Situationist culture, would be 'an art of dialogue, an art of interaction' (1960). They saw this as an art of global proportions whereby each participant, every member of the public, across every social and economic strata, every community and collective, would become the artist, the *constructor*, the agent of their own desires.

Even in their early texts (those written prior to the split that would witness the exclusion of the artistic current) the Situationists dedicated considerable energy to formulating how and why a total revolution of 'everyday life' would be a liberation of collective subjectivity. But in both the early attempts of situations, such as the intervention in Belgium against art critics mentioned earlier, and in later moments, such as those around May 1968, conflicts remained regarding the theorization of the constructed situation and its actualization. The most pressing questions were those of organization and the human relationships within new organizational models; as the S.I. admitted what was most difficult in the creation of revolutionary forms of organization was the creation of different social relations, which were crucial for the composition of new socialities. For the group, this task was key to the formation of a nonspecialized politics, one in which full participation or constitution could be concretely conceived (1961: 63).

'Revolution is made every day despite, and in opposition to, the specialists of revolution': The Organization of the 'constructed situation'

The role of each individual as *participant* rather than as spectator marked a shift away from avant-garde paradigms that never reconciled their separation between the artist and the audience. By contrast, the constructed situation required more than the representation of the action or ideology by the actor, author or specialist. As Raoul Vaneigem asserted in 1967, 'revolution is made every day despite, and in opposition to, the specialists of revolution' (1981: 165). This was a sensibility already in evidence a decade earlier, when on first conceptualizing the

constructed situation, Debord remarked that the situation was designed to be lived out by those taking part, by those constructing it (1957: 47).

Despite recognizing the individual's capacity to mobilize this action, and the collective preparation of the situation, Debord still expressed doubt that this movement would come from, and be sustained by, the 'public' themselves, at least not initially. It was not until everyone had become 'artists' that individual and collective self-determination could be realized. Until that time, the S.I. suggested that some sort of 'direction' of the spectators was required to provoke them into participation. This was why, as Gerald Raunig points out, Debord and the S.I. conceived of a temporary three-tiered hierarchy to describe the different activity of the 'livers' within the situation (2007a: 175). At the apex of this division was the 'director or producer responsible for coordinating the basic elements necessary for the construction of the decor and for working out certain interventions in the events' (S.I. 1958c: 44). Below the director or producer were 'the direct agents living the situation, who have taken part in creating the collective project and worked on the practical composition of the ambiance' (ibid.). And at the bottom remained the 'few passive spectators who have not participated in the constructive work, who should be forced into action' (ibid.).

This triadic hierarchy, suggested Raunig, placed the audience in an impossible position. He proposed two directions that could be taken: either the affirmation of the audience as audience (activating them through their specific role as seen in Bertolt Brecht's *Lehrstücke*), or the 'opening up to the complexity of political processes' (2007a: 176). For Raunig the latter was achieved by the S.I. through their politicization from the late 1960s onwards. This was particularly evident in what he read as their transversals through art and revolution during the events of the May uprising (ibid.: 177–178). Such an emphasis helped to consider the activity of the S.I. in light of the potential the constructed situation opened out in the political realm. As Raunig wrote,

> starting from performatively processing the situation and its necessary hierarchy the
> S.I. developed a practice of a pre-productive opening of the situation and its 'viveurs',

igniting a spark that suspended its organizers (ibid.: 177).

Although it would be remiss to underestimate the importance of this transversal between aesthetics and revolution, we might wonder if this 'spark' ever wholly suspended the delimitation of its specialist organizers from its nonspecialist participants.[10] While Raunig's observations on the role of the organizer are certainly supported by the later writings and activities of the S.I., it is nonetheless useful to return to the question of the audience in those earlier manifestos. In 1958 the S.I. readily acknowledged that the establishment of a director within the situation was only to be a temporary one, stating, 'this relation between the director and the "livers" of the situation must naturally never become a permanent specialization. It's only a matter of a temporary subordination of a team of situationists to the person responsible for a particular project' (1958c: 44). While Debord stressed that this directorial role was to be only ever transitory, it designated a segregation of individual roles in a system of value determined by the Situationist doctrine.

The conflict internal to this designation is clear, on the one hand the desire for collective organization and individual autonomy, and on the other, the need for a lead provocateur. Rather than individuals coming together through a common desire or concern – similar to what Massimo de Angelis might refer to under the term 'temporary space-time commons' (2007: 23–24) – what is implicit is the need for an autocratic individual or group to impress upon a less 'awakened' public the urgency for radical activity. This, as Guattari contends, is inherently counter-productive to any desire for a collective ensemble, for 'the thought of multiplicity, *a collective set-up of enunciation*, is a type of thought unattributable to a given individual or *cast* which must assure the representation of the interests of the masses' (Seem 1974: 39).

The division of function based on degrees of specialization was further compounded by the pronouncement that any individual not participating must be 'forced into action'. More than just placing the audience in an 'impossible position', it negated the possibility of leniency. While it is not necessary to argue that the desires of participants

were rendered obsolete, it is worth noting that the framing of controlled participation revealed more than a hint of vanguardist principles. Even prior to the magnum opus of Raoul Vaneigem *The Revolution of Everyday Life* (1967), this illustrates the uneasy coexistence of a quite rigid dialecticism alongside an emancipatory aspiration in Situationst philosophy.[11] As the Scandinavian faction attested after their split from the first S.I., the 'situationist's action programme – at the intellectual level – is suffering from a cancer. The root of this cancer lies in the adherence to old-fashioned, classical and ultra-rigid patterns of organisation' (Jorn et al. 1962: np). While there was undoubtedly bad blood between the Scandinavian section and the 'intellectualist' French section at the time this comment was made, it nonetheless flags some of the irreconciled patterns plaguing the S.I.'s objectives, and the methods of their realization.

Thus while the S.I. unarguably made great leaps in overcoming some of the organizational anachronisms of the Dadaist performative encounter – especially through their repositioning of the audience from 'active' spectator to participant, and their extrication of the aesthetic work from the realm of art – questions around the concrete organization and materialization of the constructed situation remain. As the S.I. themselves acknowledged in 1963: 'the S.I. is still far from having created situations' (151). Aside from a handful of anecdotal dérives, notes on activities around 1968, and early encounters such as the action in Belgium, little documentation is available with which to reconstruct the lived experience of the event. What the conceptualization of the situation achieved, in terms of its political effect, was to decisively move beyond the galleries, theatres and salons, into public spaces and sites, into different forms of social relation and reproduction. In the constructed situation, the avant-gardist desire to *subsume* art into life was, as Giorgio Agamben explains, reconsidered as 'a point of indifference between life and art, where *both* undergo a decisive metamorphosis simultaneously' (2000: 77).

Conclusion

The metamorphosis of art and life *together* that Agamben speaks about, which affects and changes both states in some definitive manner, can be seen at play in the projects of the Berlin Dadaists and the Situationists. This is clear in their shared desires for facilitating new subjectivities, relations and worlds by way of creative revolution. These desires compelled both movements to experiment with the tactic of the encounter (the Dada 'outrages', the S.I. 'constructed situation') as a means to open up and intensify channels of communication and exchange between themselves and diverse publics. This experimental sensibility forms a nexus between the two movements, and it is from here that further general points of connection and disjunction can be drawn out. These include the relationships between art and life, and the question of organization, which the dynamic between the instigator of the encounter and her public is informed by, and informs.

For the Berlin Dadaists, comrades of the KPD and the broader Bolshevik struggles, the autonomy and alienation of art from the postwar everyday necessitated a refusal of the bourgeois aesthetic paradigm through sublating art into life. Like the Dadaists before them, the S.I. strove to reject the institutional aesthetic and cultural order. But unlike the Dadaists they saw that the decomposition of art into the everyday would cancel the potential for its realization. Hence they proposed the transformation of both art and life. Their calls for the reconfiguration of all creative and social life translated into new modes of organization that would engender self-determined experiences. For the S.I. this was a form of organization that did not reproduce the specializations of classical Leninist and avant-gardist structures, or the economic imperatives and segregations of capitalist individualization. Despite intentions to the contrary, the organizational apparatus of the S.I retained a dialectical ontology similar to that seen in the historical avant-gardes. This not only separated the public from the initiator (the 'director' so to speak), but also reinstantiated a temporal chasm between aesthetics and revolution:

what Raunig has referred to as a 'sequential concatenation'. In this way the S.I., like Dada, was marked by an almost inescapable teleology that informed the segregation of art from revolution, audience from director, initiator from public.

For both the Dadaists and the S.I the most successful call for the destratification of specialization came through their versions of the performative encounter. It was in the encounter that notable overlaps occurred between art and revolution, audience and instigator. This was because the encounter – whether performed in the case of the Dadaists or more abstract and preliminary in the case of the earlier S.I. – fostered dialogic modes of communication and interaction. The encounter played a central role in the emergence of politicized exchanges; indeed in the case of the later S.I. it was the encounter that mobilized openings into revolutionary praxes. As Raunig proposed, it was from the 'artistic-political practice of creating, performing and processing the "situation"' that 'a pre-productive opening emerged in the course of the 1960s, triggering revolutionary machines' (2007b: 386). These revolutionary machines were present in movements such as those of the occupations movement of 1968, which ignited

> a passion for bringing everything and everyone together that included a holistic critique of all alienations, of all ideologies and of the entire old organization of real life … The recognized desire for genuine dialogue, completely free expression and real community … manifested this real practice of communication. The occupations movement was obviously a rejection of alienated labor; it was a festival, a game, a real presence of people and of time. And it was a rejection of all authority, all specialization, all hierarchical dispossession; a rejection of the state and thus of the parties and unions; and of sociologists and professors, of the health-care system and repressive morality (Riesel 1969: np).

Moments and encounters like those associated with the occupations movement fundamentally changed how people conceived of themselves, their desires and experiences. In these encounters new political subjectivities flourished, developed and mutated – other worlds became simultaneously glimpsed in the present and in the future. The potential for an experimental and creative politics was envisaged, one that was

conducive to transversals through categories, identities and classes. These specific expressions of the performative encounter – the Dada 'outrages', the Situationist 'constructed situation' – inspired a tactical legacy that can be usefully read for the possibilities it opens for political practices. By examining the encounters composed by the Berlin Dadaists and the S.I., a common desire to transform the relations of subjectivation and self-valorization is foregrounded. This transformation performatively calls into being the negotiation and self-production of subjectivities, relations and worlds. It is precisely this transformation that underpins a need to more thoroughly examine how the performative encounter might realize such intentions; it is important to see *why* the encounter signifies an inventive and relevant response to both historical and contemporary imaginings.

1 As Gerald Raunig points out, while the encounter may have shared characteristics, the intervention of Baader and early Situationist actions bifurcated notably in ideology. While Baader's action demonstrated against (but within the parameters of) the state and representative democracies, the encounter of the Situationists already contained traces of their later objection to any kind of reformism or state engagement (2009. Personal communication).

2 The Berlin Dadaists and the S.I. were of course not the only movements concerned with these themes. European contemporaries of the former: such as the Novembergruppe, Arbeitsrat, Paris Dada, Prolekult, the Soviet Agit-Prop, the LEF, the Surrealists and the Constructivists to name but a few, and of the latter: Kommune 1, the Lettrists, COBRA and Fluxus, and later, the movement of Neue Slowenische Kunst amongst others were also concerned with the relationship between art and life. These movements however did not adopt the encounter in the same way or for the same purpose, or if they did it went largely unconceptualized.

3 John Willett offers an excellent overview and detailed prehistory to the political activities of the Berlin Dadaists in his chapter 'Revolution and the arts: Germany 1918–20, from Arbeitsrat to Dada' (1978: 44–57).

4 This is not to suggest that the intentions of the Berlin Dadaists can be unified. Retrospective accounts such as Huelsenbeck's *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer* (1974) for instance, defines Berlin Dada as an artistic movement, possibly so as to recapitulate their stake in the art world (Foster 1985: 251). The divergent concerns and political affiliations of the group, and their general omission from academic and historical literature has often meant the assimilation of the political objectives of Berlin Dada into the broader Dada movement. One consequence of this is that for the most part Berlin Dada has been referred to predominantly, if not wholly, in artistic terms.

5 To speak about the S.I. and the Second International here does not conflate them into one general movement. Indeed what marks the movements as discrete from one another is their conception of art: in the earlier S.I. art was conceived as a possible vehicle for revolution, in the later art was jettisoned by a greater concern with political interventions. This concern saw the expulsion in 1961 of the entire artistic constituent, although Asger Jorn continued to fund the activities of the French section with the sale of his artworks. The expulsion included the Scandinavian section, the Gruppe Spur, and other individual artists. Many of these banded together to form the Second Situationist International. See Stewart Home (1991).

6 Taking up Marx's assertion that the transcendence of art is contingent on the destruction of class structures, the Situationists argued that it is through the realization of art via 'situationist transcendence' (Kauffman 2004: 295) that a classless society can emerge. As Asger Jorn contended 'communism realized will be the work of art transformed into the totality of everyday life' (1960: np).

7 As the Situationists clarified in 1958 in their paper 'Definitions': 'dérive: a mode of experimental behaviour linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of transient passage through varied ambiances … détournement: short for: détournement of preexisting aesthetic elements. The integration of present or past artistic production into a superior construction of a milieu. In this sense there can be no situationist painting or music, but only a situationist use of these means. In a more primitive sense, détournement within the old cultural spheres is a method of propaganda, a method which testifies to the wearing out and loss of importance of those spheres' (45–46). As much as has been written on both of these techniques I

make only brief mention of them here. See Debord and Wolman (1956) 'Methods of Détournement', Debord's (1958a) 'Theory of the Derive', and S.I. (1959) 'Détournement as negation and prelude'. It is important to bear in mind that the practice of détournement was not unique to the S.I., precursors to which have been found in the works of eighteenth century English writers, and nor was the dérive, which was widely practiced by the Surrealists amongst others. See Cuninghame (2007).

8 So much so that Kauffman comments 'Situationist constructions are typified by their exemplary invisibility, proof simultaneously of their existence and of their revolutionary character … their own ludic actions remain clandestine; they are made neither for visual consumption nor for publication, only being made visible when presented in a theoretical and obscure way. Their presentation is always restrained: their texts never propose anything more than conditions of possibility. The desired outcome is indeed a stage, but one from which the actors who set out to build it have disappeared into the wings, leaving it indefinitely empty' (2004: 300).

9 The Situationists were adamant that the constructed situation was not to be conflated with the contemporary movements of happenings and performance art, which they saw as entirely unrelated to their project. At the same time however, they acknowledged that the apolitical nature of happenings and performance art was more attributable to the specific contemporary condition in which the realization of art had not yet occurred, rather than the artists themselves. See 'Editorial notes: the Avant-Garde of Presence' (1963: 146–148).

10 While it is incorrect to equate the early experiments of the constructed situation with the later manifestations of the 1968 period, and while there is a marked theoretical shift in terms of how the Situationists considered their participants, based on the little evidence available over the decade a certain continuity can be found in some aspects of the materialization of organization. Even during and after 1968 Debord insisted on the vanguard-like role of the Situationists, and while their influence on the events cannot be denied, this sense of authority clearly shows a privileging of specific kinds of knowledge and power.

11 This was quite clearly manifest through the way that the S.I. thought of themselves in terms of organization. In Vaneigem's 'To have as goal practical truth' he writes that the S.I., as revolutionary organization, 'refuses to reproduce within itself any of the hierarchical conditions of the dominant world. The only limit to participating in its total democracy is that each member must have recognized and appropriated the coherence of its critique' (1967: 216). Internally the S.I. ostensibly functioned with no discernable formal hierarchy or reproduction of classical bureaucratic apparatuses. The only requirement for participation was the adherence to Situationist doctrines (which implied stratification itself).

Chapter 2
Toward New Creative Politics: Transversal Activism and the Performative Encounter

In *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonisation of Everyday Life*, George Katsiaficas writes: 'the cumulative effect of dozens of groups transforming regional culture and daily life along the lines of aesthetic avant-gardes could well prepare the majority to take control of their lives' (2006: 230). What his proposition articulates is the potential the performative encounter has for transforming social relations and the worlds we inhabit. We have already seen how the performative encounter was put to use in two of its historical manifestations, namely the 'outrages' of the Berlin Dadaists and the 'constructed situation' of the Situationist International (S.I.). We saw that, despite the different themes and contexts the encounter has been used to address, its paramount concern is the creation of new ways of being and relating – new ways of imagining virtual and actual worlds. In the process of its expression, the encounter provides a platform through which intensified and reciprocal exchanges can occur between the artists/activists/initiators and their audiences/participants. These exchanges threaten fixed roles that place the artist/activist over the public and activate singular and collective political subjects.

Given that the encounter is a tactic capable of contributing to such processes, we must begin by asking: what properties or conditions of the encounter underpin this transformative movement? By uncovering the central conceptual mechanisms associated with a 'transversal' movement, we start to map out *how* the performative encounter generates new relations, subjectivities and worlds. The method and development of this mapping is an inventive and messy, ever-unfinished one, which

emphasizes the interpretive activity involved in making visible the contours of a form whose limit points constantly evade translation. What is brought forth through this experimental process is a means for further questioning, and intervening in, political and aesthetic fields. With a commitment to developing political and aesthetic debate, we must also explore the consequences of the performative encounter. This book proposes that a profound social-political potential emerges from the ways in which the encounter reconfigures specialized roles and modes of interaction. Such transfiguration is made clear through a shift in how the initiators of the encounter conceive of the public. This moves from the public as active spectator in the Berlin Dadaists, to the public as directed participant in the Situationists, to finally the public as *constituent* of the performative encounter in the contemporary examples of Umsonst, the Transnational Republic, the Bundesverband Schleppen und Schleusen and Meine Akademie. It is this transition that is central to this book.

This chapter will investigate how the transition from spectator to constituent takes place, proposing that what underpins it is a 'transversal' movement ascribed to the performative encounter as a tactic of guerilla communications/tactical media/radical aesthetics. The transversal is seen here as a crossing over or deviation that 'tries to overcome both the impasse of pure verticality and that of mere horizontality', tending to be achieved 'when there is a maximum communication among different levels and, above all, in different meanings' (Guattari 1984: 18). The transversal – as a movement across and through subjectivities, categories, disciplines, institutions and scenes, that is reconfigurative in its progression – forms a refrain throughout this chapter. The concept and materialization of the transversal appears, disappears and reappears to mark out what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as a 'territorial assemblage' (1987: 344). As a refrain, transversality functions as a tool of connection and disconnection, stressing the relational contingencies and affective dynamics between different elements that come together to form the performative encounter. What is underscored by this reading of the transversal is its complexity; to speak about the performative encounter

as a vehicle of transversality makes it vulnerable to confusion. In framing the encounter as transversal, it becomes difficult to conceive how it operates and what the consequences of its operation might be. Although this confusion and friction is itself inherently productive, we must negotiate this line between ambiguity and transparency to reveal the potential of the encounter as a tool for social-political dissent. To this end, this chapter is ordered into several interrelated sections. The purpose of these sections is to explore some of the encounter's 'modes of expansion, propagation, occupation, contagion, peopling' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 264) with a focus on how the encounter invites new collective political subjectivities. Each of these sections take transversality in the performative encounter as their starting point, and while they are organized into a linear form, they must be read as layers of the encounter as opposed to successive segments or facets.

The Transformation of Subjectivities

'A performative encounter' defines Mireille Rosello, 'is a multidimensional event that creates subjects' (2005: 2). As proposed in the introduction to this book, the production of subjectivity, and of 'subjects', can be understood through the works of certain political philosophers and scholars as being processual and performative: instead of the 'subject' we move toward subjectivation or subjectification (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, Foucault 1982, Butler 1990). Subjectivation refers to the ongoing formation of subjects through power, whereby individuals are understood as autonomous while at the same time being governed by biopolitical, social, historical, cultural and economic institutions and apparatuses. The importance of this double movement of being formed by and formative of, is highlighted by Bifo Berardi when he writes that the subject does not exist prior to social and historical processes, power formations or 'the political subjectivation that founds autonomy. There is no subject, but subjectivation' (2005b).

Berardi's comment both indicates the contingent movement of

subjectivation, and recognizes the production of subjectivity and of subjective bodies as linked to the register of the social. These two points are central to the works of Deleuze and Guattari, who develop a substantial vocabulary through which to speak about subjectivation. This chapter takes up some of those terms to consider the performative encounter as a transversal and collaborative phenomenon of resistance, one that can expand the potential for action. What will be concentrated on is the political capacity of collective productions of subjectivity rather than a revisitation of an identity politics. Following Deleuze and Guattari, what is foregrounded are specific modes of resistance to subjectivation, that through their creation of new connections and intersections also produce 'new possibilities of life, new modes of existence and types of practice' (Armstrong 2002: 49).

Transversality and Subject Groups

> Transversality belongs to the processual subject's engendering of an existential territory and self-transportation beyond it. The key concepts involved are: *mobility* (traversing domains, levels, dimensions, the ability to carry and be carried beyond); *creativity* (productivity, adventurousness, aspiration, laying down lines of flight); *self-engendering* (autoproduction, self-positing subjectivity), territories from which one can really take off into new universes of reference (Genosko 2002: 55).

The production of 'new universes of reference': this is a phrase that both Guattari (1989) and Gary Genosko (2002) deploy when they write about transversality and its effects on the individual and collective subject. For Guattari, transversality pertains to the production of radical collective subjectivities, in one sense by enabling what he described in his early text *Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and Politics* (1984) as 'subject groups'. Through his focus on the radicalization and formulation of individuals and collectives, Guattari sought to depart from both Freudian and Marxist traditions, which relied heavily on divisions between the personal unconscious and the social-political by arguing for causal and overly structured definitions of society and subjects. In contrast, Guattari was keen to understand the complexities within operations of power,

informed by and informative of the ways in which people, social codification, ecologies and capitalist regimes mutually produce one another. What the concept of transversality provided for Guattari was a way to 'think the interactions between ecosystems, the mecanosphere, and social and individual universes of reference' (1989: 135).

The description of transversality in the opening quote taken from Genosko pinpoints the mobile and interactive quality of the transversal across different terrains of subjectivities and worlds. Transversality was originally imported into critical enquiry from mathematical discourses by Jean Paul Sartre in *The Transcendence of the Ego* to describe how consciousness retrospectively synthesizes itself over time (1957: 39). Attentive to, but departing from this homology, Guattari developed his understanding of transversality in his early writings as a response to psychoanalytic institutions and practices. In doing so, Guattari significantly shifted the temporality ascribed to it by Sartre, to describe an anticipatory movement: productive of group subjectivity and power. Initially for Guattari transversality became a central conceptual tool, employed in his clinical work to help institutional and therapeutic productivity. As Genosko explains, Guattari conceived of transversality operating in a clinical setting as

> a measure (a so-called coefficient) of how much communication exists between different levels, in different directions, of an organization. The goal is to increase the coefficients of transversality, that is, to reduce blindness and bureaucratic-mindedness, in favour of openness, overcoming the impasses of both vertical and horizontal organizations, by means of creative organizational innovations (2002: 200).

For Guattari, a means by which to induce this coefficient or measure is through the modifications of relations, forces and environments between groups (and their effects) within and across institutions. Within these institutions Guattari was intent on discovering the sites of latent power, which often did not coincide with the formal distribution of roles. In the initial sense this meant looking at the latent power held in the *relationships* between nurses and patients, or staff, even doctors or institutional heads. Transversality offered such latencies of power a way

to shake up the vertically structured institution through the opening out of communicative conduits between different groups. It was this idea of transversality that was partially traced out through Guattari's conceptualizations of the subject group in his early essays from 1971–1977 developed at the La Borde clinic in France.

Within this early work, Guattari produced an analysis of group formation within institutional environments in which he distinguished two fluid types of group: the subjugated group and the subject group.[1] He saw the subjugated group as dependent, constantly subsumed to some form of power, desiring of authority, and usually linked to totalizing activities and ideologies. For Guattari these reactive characteristics propagate the group's incapacity for self-determined statements (1984: 14). Subjugated groups were also found by Guattari outside of the medical institution. In texts such as *Molecular Revolution*, Guattari identified subjugated groups in unions or political parties such as the enemies of the S.I. – the PCF and the CGT – where numerous voices, desires and objectives become assimilated into one official party line.

Offsetting, but not entirely antithetical to, these subjugated groups are group subjects or subject groups, which for Guattari are more molecular, localized, and generative of becoming-action rather than encompassing structures.[2] Contra to the subjugated group, the organization of the subject group upholds the idea that the group exceeds the sum of its individual constituents, and cannot be represented by one delegate but must remain polyphonic (Guattari 1984: 33). This nonrepresentative, heterogeneous organization allows for a recognizable autonomy; unlike the external determination dictating the terms of the subjugated group, the subject group 'endeavours to control its own behaviour and elucidate its object, and in this case can produce its own tools of elucidation' (Guattari 1984: 14). It is in this auto-production that Guattari located the autonomous capabilities of the group, for the group, once having found the freedom to determine their own procedures are able to interpret and reflect on their own situation and those around them (2007: 66). As such, the subject group maintains an active role in terms of its own project. For

the participant of the subject group there is space for her own articulations, at the same time as a coming together of common investments and practices.

From these descriptions it is easy to understand why Guattari extended his theory of the subject group – its organization and modes of enunciation – beyond the psychiatric institution into the realm of political organization. As Genosko asserts, for Guattari transversality was seen as 'a key element of a militant practice aiming at a rupture with inherited models of organization' because

> to transversalise the organization of a given institution is a creative act giving rise to subject groups capable of internally generating and directing their own projects, ensuring that organization remains close to the groups themselves, while simultaneously avoiding the slide into bureaucratic sclerosis (2002: 96).

Guattari's thesis on the political implications of transversal organization crystallized through his discovery of the movement of March 22nd, born during the actions by the Situationist *enrages* (the enraged ones) in Nanterre at the beginning of 1968 (Raunig 2007a: 180). Impressed by their rejection of the structures governing statist institutions, political parties, unions and ideological orthodoxies, Guattari saw revolutionary potential in groups that strove to invent other modes of organizing. What was immediately at stake for Guattari, then, was on the one hand the group dynamics and interactions between the patients and staff at La Borde, and on the other, the political after-effects of the Paris uprisings of May 1968. However, while Guattari was captivated by these articulations of the subject group in political endeavours, an amalgamation of his clinical assertions and his examples of political clusters shows that he was less certain about its material outcomes.

Using Guattari's concepts of transversality and subject groups, some of these material outcomes and questions can be addressed in terms of the potential collective and communicative dimension of the performative encounter: namely, to what extent was this potential enacted through the realization of the encounters engaged in by groups such as the Berlin Dadaists and the S.I.? One response could be as follows: in his work,

Guattari emphasized that the potential of transversal subject groups is contingent on organizational factors and the openings for coefficients of transversality. When considering this particular argument it would seem that the potential proposed by Guattari remained more or less nascent in the historical encounters because of their inability to fully overcome dyadic structures (artist vs. nonartist, for instance). For both the Berlin Dadaists and the S.I., the attribution of a largely specialist role to the artist/activist over the public was retained to varying degrees. It is in the retention of such fundamental hierarchies that a deviation can be found between the historical and more contemporary examples of the encounter that will be explored throughout this book. More recent initiatives, like those of Umsonst, the Transnational Republic, Schleuser.net and Meine Akademie, responded to these gaps in the experiments and encounters of the Berlin Dadaists and the Situationists through their attempts to compose collaborative transversal collectives, or in other words transitory subject groups.

What we see being activated through the extension of Guattari's theories of the subject group and transversality to political practice and interpersonal relations, then, is a theoretical translation of the material organizational differences between the historical collectives and their encounters, and the more contemporary collectives. This theoretical terrain allows us to locate the transition leading to the participant as *constituent* of more recent performative encounters. What has changed is that the public is no longer seen as spectators of the event as with the Dadaists, or as directed participants of the event as with the Situationists. Rather, what is now acknowledged is that the public is *the requisite condition* through which the encounter may be understood as such. Transversality thus has direct resonances for how such later practices change the textures of conventional organization: how they use transversality as a tool for 'creatively autoproducing themselves as they adapt, cross, communicate and travel, in short as they transverse different levels, segments and roles' (Genosko 2002: 55).

The Transformation of Subjectivities and Relations

Political Artistic Transversals and Their Radical Organization

> The combination of art/revolution is not a scurrilous exception, but rather a recurring figure in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, albeit under different conditions and in varying forms. Yet what exactly happens when revolutionary machines meet art machines, when neighbouring zones develop for a certain period of time? What occurs along the lines of flight of art *and* revolution? (Raunig 2007b: 2).

Through crossing and reconfiguring 'different levels, segments and roles', theories of the subject group and transversality link to revolutionary political organization. But it is not only in the production of experimental politics that transversality acts as a revolutionary force: it is also present across the domain of aesthetics, as Gerald Raunig's comment above suggests. In his final work *Chaosmosis* (1995), Guattari elaborated the movement of transversality with respect to artistic creation. For Guattari, ideal aesthetic praxes and activities (not limited to professional artists) are made up of transversal lines that affectively engender 'unprecedented, unforeseen and unthinkable qualities of being' (1995: 106). The transversal lines that animate these qualities of being are thus notable in both what Guattari calls a new aesthetic paradigm, and in a-central political organization.

The specific manner in which Guattari sets up these thematic vectors of aesthetics and politics, and the processes of subjectivation implicit to them, has been usefully taken up by Raunig. Throughout his writings Raunig employs several of Guattari and Deleuze's conceptual tools to explore European historical and contemporary political-aesthetic events, institutions and methods of organization. In these explorations he configures aesthetics and politics via an assessment of the exchange between 'art machines' and 'revolutionary machines'. He contends that when art and revolution come into contact, temporary overlaps between the two are catalyzed. These overlaps do not entail incorporation, but rather indicate 'a concrete exchange relationship for a limited time'

(2007: 18), which is transversal insofar as it transforms the terrains of both aesthetic and political infrastructures, institutions and categories. The affective and transformative labour of the transversal occurs through the accumulative linkage of singularities and collectives in new relations, modalities, and co-operations without the goal of permanent synthesis (Raunig 2002a: 4). Echoing Guattari's thesis, Raunig's notion of transversality implements radical gestures that fundamentally challenge the limits of these categories and institutions.

If we acknowledge this analytical proposition, rather than concentrate on art forms that are thematically concerned with political struggle but are un-reflexive in their processes of production and dissemination, we can turn to aesthetics that are organized from the perspective of a prefigurative politics. This is particularly pertinent given that encounters are as reliant on their creative and relational elements for their operation as they are on their political elements. What is most significant is how these processes function with respect to the reconfiguration of organization, and how this describes a movement between categories and subjectivities. For Guattari, the transformative nature of the transversal brings about a parallax shift in discussions on aesthetic constitution and subjectivation, because 'the emphasis is no longer placed on Being … it is placed on the manner of being, the machination producing the existent, the generative praxes of heterogeneity and complexity' (1995: 109). That is to say, the transversal renders visible the vectoral nature of subjectivation, showing that there is no fundamental subject form but rather movements and compositions of identity. When considered in terms of political-aesthetic organization, a transversal exchange can be found both in the ambivalent and critical relationship to the institutions being moved through, and in the structure of the creative political collective itself.

Through this exchange the encounter furthermore unequivocally calls into question the dynamic between power and resistance. Being spatio-temporally transitory, indeterminate in its classification and peripheral in its actualization, the encounter generally circumvents documentation

through its ambiguity. As such the encounter challenges the evaluative logic of both the capitalistic market and the institutionalization of creative and political insurrection. What transversality and ambiguity help to generate in the encounter is a perpetual contradistinction between power and dissent. Transversal structures and lines tend to avoid the reproduction of dominant flows of power because rather than vertically or horizontally hierarchical networks they compose a-centrically. That is to say, they do not necessarily move down given pathways or channels, they do not necessarily connect multiple centre points. Rather they elide systems of coordination, crossing anywhere, everywhere and nowhere, in flight. What these organizational models are thus inclined toward are momentary overlappings and linkages of political organization that have no discrete beginning or end. This is why we see the creation of relatively decentralized and flexible political territories, which do not operate as a hermetic unit but are open for participation and reappropriation.

From this position, it is evident how transversal organization can jettison seemingly immutable hierarchies wherein an individual or elite group would claim organizational authority over its participants. Posited as a move away from orthodox structures, transversal organizations signify a critical departure from models of organization predicated on statist and vanguardist forms and ideologies. Moreover, transversal modes problematize hierarchies invisibly embedded in alternative 'activist' discourses that find it difficult to reconcile the rhetorics of inclusivity and poly-centralism with actual practice. These are mediated via malleable and nonspecialist modes of engagement that attempt to overturn stratifications of value based on expertise. This overturning challenges the often hidden meritocracies lurking in activist organization that (self)delegate tasks according to systems of legitimation based on recognition within activist sub-cultures. In taking on experimental transversal methods of organizing within the encounter, what is given priority is the acknowledgement of different skills, knowledges, desires and social-cultural affiliations.[3]

Political Artistic Transversals and Accumulative Subjectivities

The changing relationship between how the artist/activist conceives of herself in relation to the public is where we find correlations between organizational transversals and the making visible of processes of subjectivation. Through these junctures, the roles generally upheld in differential hierarchical structures (artist/revolutionary over public/masses) are problematized. This problematization can be seen both in the categorical indeterminacy prompted by the encounter's transversal through the arenas of politics and art, and through its accumulative aspect: what can be attributed to the Deleuzean conjunctive *and* (1987).

This *and* is of paramount importance, for it helps us to think about how art and revolution, artist and nonartist, activist and nonactivist, occurs in profusion. In this state, subjectivities and categories that seek to multiply rather than to subsume or homogenize boundaries of identification are engendered. Here we can see that by recognizing multiple contours to identity, individuals and collectives can valorize and orient themselves as heterogeneous and motley agents. The multiplication of categories, and their ensuing ambiguity, invoked by Deleuze's *and* can be made visible through practices such as the performative encounter – in terms of the form itself and the subjectivities produced through, and productive of, it. This association is best captured by the Critical Art Ensemble, a US based tactical media collective, and is worth quoting at length. They write that participants in creative encounters and initiatives

> are neither fish nor fowl. They aren't artists in any traditional sense and don't want to be caught in the web of metaphysical, historical, and romantic signage that accompanies that designation. Nor are they political activists in any traditional sense, because they refuse to solely take the reactive position of anti-logos, and are just as willing to flow through fields of nomos in defiance of efficiency and necessity. In either case, such role designations are too restrictive in that the role boundaries exclude access to social and knowledge systems that are the materials for their work. Here may be a final link to invisibility: these participants value access over expertise, and who really cares about the work of an amateur? (Critical Art Ensemble 2001: 3–4).

As the next chapters will show, the performative encounter of the contemporary collectives and campaigns illustrates a transversal mode between politics and art; it does not act as a permanent unification between productions of subjectivities and fields. Rather, it sets up temporary meeting points, which transform the parameters and textures of identities, categories and disciplines in the process. As observed by the Critical Art Ensemble, this variability means that creative political practices that are predicated upon transversal modes are difficult to recognize within conventional taxonomies. This is because they neither fall definitively into the category of traditional activist or political practice, nor into traditional artistic practice. The dynamic of displacement at work here flags what is at once the most risky and the most appealing aspect of such practices. As they do not arise from legitimized spaces and ways of operating but rather erupt from new inventions of actions and procedures, and as they cannot be easily defined, such encounters are susceptible to invisibility. At the same time, it is this ambiguity that affords a flexibility that constantly challenges borders, giving such encounters and practices the capacity to 'push against and even re-organise the institutional and political structures of … recognition and production' (Kelly 2005).

In this mutual movement of deconstruction and refiguration, the transversal produces subjectivities and 'self-engendering practices that seek to create their own signifiers and systems of value' (Kelly 2005). With this accent on self-determined value systems that complement those attributed by Guattari to subject groups, it is clear why such conceptualizations of transversality have been instrumental in opening up new vocabularies. These are especially helpful when seeking to understand creativity in terms of radical subjectivities that inhabit multiple identities. This is because qualities of these subjectivities – such as their heightened adaptability to contingency – inherently infuse them with possibility. This is precisely where we can see Deleuze's *and* come into play. 'Neither fish nor fowl' as the Critical Art Ensemble write: hence, not the disjunctive 'artist *or* activist', 'specialist *or* nonspecialist',

but instead the conjunctive 'artist *and* activist', 'specialist *and* nonspecialist'. Here we can recognize some third (or fourth or fifth) state that transverses and transforms these categorical concatenations (Deleuze and Parnet 1987). For Raunig, this *and* should not be thought of as a means by which to escape contradictions through the chance connection of random elements in some act of political propaganda, but as a 'multitude of temporary alliances, as a productive concatenation of what never fits together smoothly, what is constantly in friction and impelled by this friction or caused to evaporate again' (2002a: 4).

It is useful to reflect for a moment on the productivity of contradiction here. For, while evoking 'new terrains of open co-operation between different activist, artistic, social and political practices' (Kelly 2005), transversal modes do not signify a permanent interdisciplinarity but instead create fleeting mutant coalitions through a movement of accumulation, inherently changing the fields and institutions in the process. What is important to remember is that this *and* negates mass unification as well as factionalization and splintering. As such transversality is a vehicle of rupture and convergence in a constant state of becoming, a form or mode of operation constituted through events, collective alliances and transitory organizations. What is revealed in this additive process is not a forced synthesis or unification of the parts into some 'whole,' nor the negation of singularity or the specificity of experience. It does not seek to assimilate – quite the opposite – for as Deleuze comments, even when there are only two terms the *and* is 'neither one nor the other, nor the one which becomes the other, but which constitutes the multiplicity' (1987: 34–35).

When thinking about these accumulations as 'temporary alliances' it becomes possible to imagine how, through a transversal between politics and art, the many roles and identities enacted by individuals are made apparent. These roles and identities are distributed across different contexts – sometimes in commonality, sometimes in alterity – without being subsumed into one or the other. What also becomes clear is how this movement threatens narratives of identity and subjectivity that

privilege a univocal, individuated subject. However, as we have seen, the challenging of a cohesive concept of the subject does not simply imply a rejection of the possibility of resistance. Rather, what an accumulative subjectivity marks out is political potential itself. This potential is recognized through a *collective* ontology, radical for the proliferation of connections and relationships it opens up.

It is a transversal between politics and art, and this collective ontology that performative encounters can generate to make visible and fracture normative discourses of agency. In these collective formations of struggle and articulation, and in the development of such moments, possibilities are opened out for new permutations of subjectivation. Self-conceptions and repetitions of identities, behaviours and perceptions, the 'stiffening of the existential refrain' (Berardi 2008: np) can be reconceived as polyphonic through the act of resistance that is in the same moment an act of affirmation. Transversal organization runs alongside the additive forms of identity and disciplines that the performative encounter engages. The ingenuity of this style of praxis lies in its border crossing character, which deliberately sidesteps categorization in favour of mobility and perhaps adversely, ambiguity. While traditional political organization uses ideological doctrines and activities as validating measures, transversal modes trouble such strict lines of classification. What Deleuze's accumulative *and* does for the performative encounter is emphasize that in the act of collectively constituting the encounter, a political event unfolds. In this event, the self-identification as an activist/artist is no longer the issue. Through the encounter, the possibility of constituting artist *and* activist *and* nonartist *and* nonactivist within different scenes and circumstances is realized. Thus, what is at stake is the self-valorization that comes through the constitution of such actions. In this way, transversals between art and revolution apprehend political agency, self-determination and collective enunciation.

Political Artistic Transversals and Affective Exchanges

> The importance of affect is not necessarily its personal or interpersonal quality but its transversal quality, the way in which it operates as a catalytically eventful bridge between a multiplicity of movements and relations (McCormack 2003: 496).

In speaking about the subjectivities and relations that the encounter is generative of and makes visible, it is important to recognize how these co-operations and alliances – these new collectives and collaborations – are assembled in time and space. By this I mean how they are brought forth and into exchange to invite worlds that affirm conditions alternative to those within the present; how they act as what Bryan Reynolds calls a 'transversal territory', a 'catalyzing and transitional space from which new experiences, subjective reconfigurations, and, by extension, dissident mobilizations can emerge' (2009: 287).[4]

The argument proposed by Stevphen Shukaitis in his essay 'Affective composition and aesthetics: On dissolving the audience and facilitating the mob' (2007) begins to set up a response via a discourse of affect. Shukaitis uses affect to speak about the task of political art as a creative production of common spaces and public realms 'through intensive engagement not circumscribed by accepted identities and positions' (2007: 1). These geographies are activated through the affective potential that transversalities between aesthetics and politics open up. Such potential is predicated on a notion of aesthetics that is attenuated more to the relations and transversal spaces that arise from the process of collaborative production than to the content or culmination of the end goal. This is an understanding of aesthetics that, as Shukaitis explains, 'is focused on the relations of production not as a concern secondary to the content of what is produced, but rather as the explicit process of self-institution and the creation of a space where the art of politics is possible' (2007: 1).

What is pivotal here, as is for Guattari and Raunig, is an idea of aesthetics that concentrates on a 'process of collective creation' and on relations of production, again, the *how* of what is produced through intensities of affect. To understand how this works we must understand

affect as a mobile and transitive extra-human threshold of potential, closely tied to thought in action or process (Thrift 2004: 60). This sees affect moving through and across events, bodies, spaces and experiences, in excess of individual or community, and eluding any kind of capture. Affect is in this sense a force that arises out of and through exchange, which operates, as Derek McCormack puts it, as a 'catalytically eventful bridge between a multiplicity of movements and relations' (2003: 496). This conceptualization helps draw attention to the experimental dimension of the performative encounter as an affective political event; the experimental and transversal aspect is what in this instance affords affect potency across different terrains and situations – such as politics and aesthetics – giving rise to intensities (Massumi 2002b).

The immanence of affect can be traced out in the possibilities for intensity. Affect, argues Brian Massumi, underlies and accompanies every event, from the exceptional to the banal, and is sensed in the 'perception of one's own vitality, one's sense of aliveness, of changeability' (2002a: 36), giving us a feeling of embedded-ness in our experiences and perceptions. The changeable nature of affect, and our sense of it, intensifies our experiences and our positionalities to them. Moreover, affect as intensity is both a catalyst for connection and rupture: it is transformative in that it can break open socialities, and it is connective through the relations and worlds it compels. Simply put, it is catalyzed by, and further catalyzes, change and transduction. The ethical crux of affect, suggests Massumi, can be found here: in a concentration on the immersion and participation in the world, in belonging to the world and to *each other* as a lived, self-affirming reality independent from the value of bureaucratic, state or religious apparatuses (2002b: 242).[5] This is why an 'aesthetic politics' for Massumi is one whose 'aim would be to expand the range of affective potential' (2002b: 235).

So how is this understanding of affect as intensity taken up in a reading of aesthetics and politics, and how might it pertain to the performative encounters of Umsonst, the Transnational Republic, Schleuser.net and Meine Akademie still to come? What is key is a

reinterpretation of aesthetics and the spaces of political-aesthetic engagement, which invites the living out of possible worlds. This reframes aesthetics as the affective composition that comes out of, and produces, experiences from common processes. Rather than isolating the encounter and its content, what is central is the transversal movement in its development. That is to say, the additive inter-subjective element that is contingent on the relations of individuals, ecologies and experiences in its event. The transversal spaces and territories created and reshaped through this are affective and 'common' spaces, vital to the emergence of connections beyond the usual designated zones. Such framing reveals the encounter as a political as well as an aesthetic event that mobilizes new forms of life between people and their environments. These relationships antagonize the logics of the nation-state and capitalism at the same time as affirming shared imaginaries of possible present and future conditions. If we follow Shukaitis to argue that, 'the task of politics is precisely the creation of common space through intensive engagement not circumscribed by accepted identities and positions' (2007: 2), then the performative encounter as a conduit for the creation of affective spaces is a fundamentally political gesture (Massumi 2002b: 234). The encounter is political in its generation and transformation of subjectivities and relations through affective modes of communication and interaction that are based on reciprocity, which envision alternatives to capitalist and statist socialities.

This political dimension is stressed even more so if we understand these spaces as spaces of 'affective composition' (Grindon 2007, Shukaitis 2007, Read 2011): a term linking affect with an autonomist Marxist reading of class composition. In bringing a class perspective to affect, a capitalist critique is added as 'the notion of political composition identifies *as political* moments of otherwise invisible or illegible performative social relations' (Grindon 2011: 86). Composition in this sense places the development of forms of capitalism and labour as occurring in synchronicity with, and response to, daily forms of resistance and self-determined organization (Wright 2002). The double

movement of capitalism and its discontents is seen in the constant dance of displacement and recomposition of both capital and those myriad struggles against its hegemony. As such, this argument stresses the multidirectional processes that contribute to productions of class, labour, subjectivity and agency. Consequentially it engenders a theory of 'revolution' not only as a mass event of crisis, but also as ongoing progressions of resistance and creation. This demonstrates the complexity of the relations between production and capital, and the possibility for spaces of alternative self-determined activity. In this way, what gets opened up is what Massumi refers to as 'that margin of manoeuvrability, the "where we might be able to go and what we might be able to do" in every present situation' (2002b: 212), which explains 'why focusing on the next experimental step rather than the big utopian picture isn't settling for less' (Massumi 2002b: 212).

Coming back to the 'experimental step' of the performative encounter, it is possible to understand why, in terms of the encounter and other examples of transversals between politics and art, to use affective composition as a conceptual tool means to 'examine the capacities they create, and how they contribute to the development of forms of self-organization' (Shukaitis 2007: 2). Affect, and especially affective composition, provides a means by which to understand how the performative encounter generates junctures between people and environments that agitate systems of value. It does so by heightening intensities of experience, by implicating each person in the collective constitution of the encounter, and by accentuating singular and collective sites of power. As a vehicle for reciprocal connection the encounter operates along lines of organization that depart from usual models reliant on distinct and reified conceptions of roles and specialization.

The lines of exodus charted out by the encounter are not without discrepancy, however, nor are they predictable. They are prone to stutters and collapse as much as they are coalition, which is why Shukaitis insists that

the compositional capacities of these ruptures are not unlimited, for they too through repetition become ritualised and fall back into solidified patterns of circulation. The question becomes one of keeping open the affective capacities of the created space: to find ways to avoid the traps of spectacular recuperation and the solidification of constituent moments and possibilities into fixed and constituted forms that have lost their vitality (2007: 5).

The element of crisis that this illuminates, namely the impasses faced by affective geographies, the fleeting nature of these interventions in precariousness, privatization and gentrification, might leave us wondering what kind of response a transversal ontology can actually offer – a political disposition that foregrounds movement, an ontology of 'becoming', so to speak. I would argue that one response may be found in the potential of the performative encounter to construct shared *spaces* and *places* that challenge flows and concentrations of power.

Transformations of Spaces and Worlds

The affective and transversal collective space that we are exploring by way of the encounter is an explicitly political one. It is political in the sense that it enables, and is enabled through, the composition of new relations and modes of interaction between people, environments and worlds. In this sense the potential of the encounter as a political device that affects and is affected by its environment comes from the entwining of space and collective subjectivities. Acknowledging this (extra-human) *spatial* element as co-constitutive of affective relationality, we must foreground space, place and materiality in discussions on alternative social-political praxes such as the encounter.[6] This is not a new idea: Deleuze and Guattari, too, invoke the spatial when they comment that 'thinking takes place in the relationship between territory and earth' (1994: 85) and as Doreen Massey has underscored, it is space that is 'one of the axes along which we experience and conceptualise the world' (1993: 143).

The conceptualization of space as political and creative becomes viable when space, like identity, is acknowledged to be processual and

transversal: in a process of becoming. For Massey, the recognition of the magnitude of space – especially for imaginings of space as political – marks an important departure from a viewpoint that frame space as an inert, static and hence apolitical realm, situated in opposition to classical notions of time.[7] Against such claims geographers like Massey (2005) and David Harvey (1989) have, much like the S.I. themselves, argued for a political economy of space that complicates notions of space and time by accentuating their dynamic nature. Through offering different conceptions of space, Massey and Harvey's propositions reject the dualisms plaguing narratives of linear historicity that separate the spaces of capitalist alienation and accumulation (labour/leisure, private/public etc.) from their temporal actualization. Furthermore, they demonstrate the permeation of capitalist relations into all levels of production from the affective to the biopolitical to the institutional. For Massey, thinking space in this way significantly extends the proposition of Henri Lefebvre (1991b) that space and the spatial are implicated in the production of history, and thereby implicated in the production of politics (1993: 146).

By naming the relationship between the spatial and the political as productive what is opened out, argues Massey, is a need to read space 'as constructed out of interrelations, as the simultaneous coexistence of social interrelations and interactions at all spatial scales, from the most local level to the most global' (1993: 155). Marcus Doel adds that when we interpret space as an active and dynamic force, 'the integrity of space is no longer simply given' (1999: 136). Spatial integrity is now seen as 'a contingent and local effect of pinning down the differential network of traces within which spatialization is inscribed' (ibid.). Through such readings we can see how a consideration of space as something absolute and immobile neglects the productive capabilities of space. What is also neglected is the active role played by the spatial in the configuration of the social, in subjectivities and identities. This has political consequences for, as Helga Leitner, Eric Sheppard and Kristin Sziarto affirm, 'by shaping social interaction and mobility, the materiality of space also shapes the nature and possibility of contention' (2008: 161).

An acknowledgement of the active nature of space does not, however, privilege the spatial in this composition, indeed the social equally and mutually inscribes the spatial dimension. In this way, the social and the spatial inextricably realize one another. The spatial and the social are thus co-implicated realms, not ossified but always becoming – becoming out of consequence and bringing new consequences to light. From this position we must consider power from its spatial orientation, because if space is processually constituted, then breaks and folds are opened through which hegemonic norms can be contested. When space, place, politics and identity are regarded as in movement, then attention can be paid to how spaces are perpetually created, politicized and conserved (Keith and Pile 1993: 37).[8] It is this that we have already seen in the actions of the Berlin Dadaists and the S.I., and will explore further in the following chapters by looking at how space operates in the encounters of Umsonst, the Transnational Republic, Schleuser.net and Meine Akademie.

One avenue through which to think through the creation of the social-spatial is performativity. Performativity here is taken from Butler (1990), who, drawing from the work of linguist J.L. Austin (1955), conceives of the performative as an act of doing, of performance and (re)iteration, that brings a certain state into being. From this perspective, performativity can be used as a theoretical mechanism to deconstruct the production and regulation of subjectivity and power. Drawing from an analysis of power, which understands power not as a univocal exercise but rather as a saturation of all social and relational fields (Foucault 1980), a critical theory of performativity exposes the ways in which power and subjectivities are reproduced through patterns of recognition and repetition. The method popularized by Butler has been employed by human geographers who maintain that performativity not only underpins and apprehends subjectivity but also the formation of sociality, space and place: space, like subjectivity, is not anterior to its performance (Gregson and Rose 2000).

In the performative encounter, specific performances bring into being

specific spatialities and vice versa. These spaces are infused with productions of power and they themselves articulate certain relations of power (Gregson and Rose 2000, Huston and Pulido 2002). The power of dominant discourses to interpolate spaces operates in much the same way as Butler proposes with subjectivity, and it is the shifting quality of this interpolation that signals its performativity. This process is intensified by the diverse agencies and embodied subject positions that mutually affect and are affected by this construction of space. It is exactly this complex play of space and subjectivity that David Crouch attempts to chart through the term 'spacing', which describes

> subjective and practical ways in which the individual handles his or her material surroundings. Spacing is positioned in terms of action, making sense (including the refiguring of "given" space), and mechanisms of opening up possibilities (2003: 1945).

This dynamic is identified by Gregson in spaces that are constituted through their performance and event participation – that is to say those spaces that are generated through their expressive *doing* (2000: 442–447), such as the performative encounter, as will become clear in the following chapters. The spaces the encounter inhabits are always transitory, always very situated, but also always exceeding any given context: the encounter can deterritorialize space through its unexpected actualization.

Co-incidental to subjectivity space is necessarily unstable and changeable, and this is where we find the potential of the performative. As Crouch puts it, 'the uncertainties of flows and the momentary character of performativity elaborate the uncertainties and complexities of spacing, and its potential, as part of performativity, to reconstitute life' (2003: 1947). The dynamic quality of spacing is what occurs through the transversal movement of the encounter both materially and conceptually. Gregson and Rose point out that a 'source of performative instability is the blurring of clear distinctions between positions and spaces. Performed spaces are not discreet, bounded stages, but threatened, contaminated, stained, enriched by other spaces' (2000: 442). Returning to the encounter, this is seen in the ways in which it transverses through and

between, even amalgamating, the contexts of generalized art (galleries, exhibition centres, theatres) and so-called nonart arenas (footpaths, streets, walkways, pools, bars, clubs, train stations), generic political (universities, meetings, community centres, parliamentary halls) and so-called nonpolitical arenas (churches, public areas), contaminating and confusing known spaces with difference. So at the same time as being volatile and processual, space and place must also be understood as reproduced and normalized.

Like identity, space vacillates between its performative becoming and its reification, and it is this vacillation that the encounter taps into. This is because the disorienting property of the encounter is reliant on the recognized and reiterated demarcation of different zones. As J.D. Dewsbury points out,

> whilst univocally speaking of the incessant alterity within the spaces of our encounters, the potential the performative etches out for refusal, fracture, and torsion is set within *specific* sites. In this it is necessarily aberrant and parasitic upon conventional, citational, and socially stratified context (2000: 4750).

Dewsbury's comment demonstrates very clearly how actions like those of the Berlin Dadaist's came to have such spectacular resonances, namely through the disruption of one context via the sometimes shocking insertion of another. This is how the performative encounter composes new entities out of concatenations and crossovers. As the encounter illuminates, the performative nature of space and its dependency on citationality opens space up to transformation. At the same time, it also reterritorializes embodiment and space in temporary crystallizations that are necessary to their recognition and verification as sites, however fragile those sites might be. The encounter demonstrates how the intertwined valencies of spacing and performativity have the possibility to reconfigure the way we understand our relationships to places and locations. More importantly, the encounter helps to stimulate reflections on the possibilities for response and action. These reflections emanate from the intertwining of political spatialities and collective subjectivities.

In framing the performative encounter from the perspective of

performativity and space, what is brought to the fore is the relationship of the encounter to material environments and the ways in which it affects and is affected by them. The performative character of space signals the need to consider space as active and political. As Dewsbury writes, 'the performative is the ushering in of the worlds that it affects' (2000: 476). This is particularly important in the contemporary political and economic climate, for, as articulated by J.K. Gibson-Graham's many propositions, there is the need to develop discourses not entirely determined by capitalocentrism (1996, 2008). As Jenny Pickerill and Paul Chatterton attest,

> by acknowledging the discursive construction of economic neoliberal globalization, an instability appears that permits the construction of alternative narratives. By recognizing that actions serve to constitute globalization's "reality", we can begin to challenge globalization through changing everyday practices (2006: 735).

As it transverses and further transforms spatial fields, the performative encounter, as a practice of dissent, renders visible the 'discursive construction' of space by expanding the scene of the creative gesture beyond its recognized zones. By crossing the borderlines of spatial recognition, the encounter demonstrates how space, like subjectivity, is contingent on its continual reproduction and reiteration. Like space, the encounter is not given but is constructed, and vulnerable to hijackings. Through this dynamic process of making, unmaking and remaking, the encounter effectively enacts radical subjectivities, relations and worlds that challenge neoliberal capital through spatial reconfiguration.

But what are the outcomes of this process, and how can the subjectivities, relations and worlds that emerge be seen as politically interesting? One answer links closely to an observation made by Gillian Rose with respect to participants in community arts projects who, through their participation, alter both community spaces and their own agencies within them. As Rose writes,

> the process of participation … is itself productive in its creation of group identity. That

understanding of identity suggests that its particular form will depend on the particularity of the issue addressed and of the process performed, rather than on preexisting social identities (2000: 440).

Akin to these community arts projects, participation in the performative encounter engenders the self-valorization and performance of self-determined and heterogeneous collective enunciations of subjectivity and space. It is precisely this self-valorization and performance of *collective* articulation that has the potential to make worlds.

The Transformation of Subjectivities, Relations and Worlds

In developing an analysis of the transversal through subject groups, art and revolution, spaces and worlds, it becomes clear that this movement is one in which experimental ontologies of becoming attain a social-political potential. With respect to the performative encounter more specifically, the transversal is foregrounded by the transitory collectives and commons that arise from creative modes of participation. While these collectives and commons are present across all permutations of the encounter, they are present unevenly: in the earlier cases of the Dadaists and the Situationists to lesser degrees, and in the later campaigns of Umsonst, the Transnational Republic, Schleuser.net and Meine Akademie to greater degrees, as we will presently see. These collectives and commons are neither given nor are they without friction. Rather, they activate and are activated by momentary flashes of shared desires, perspectives and needs. These flashes are then negotiated through the encounter in a way that does not abrogate heterogeneity, conflict or singularity. In order to consider how these flashes are composed into subject groups, it is useful to think through a notion of collective desire, in conjunction with looking more closely at what might be meant by 'commons' in this context.

Collective Desire and the Subject Group of the Performative

Encounter[9]

The relevance of desire to the political can be drawn out by employing Guattari's notion of collective desire: desire not in the sense of a yearning for an unattainable state – as a gap or lack – but as a force of activation. This is a force that can be politically efficacious; as Guattari quite overtly affirms, 'desire concerns any sequence, any and all links in a revolutionary action at whatever level' (in Seem 1974: 41). Desire in this sense is thus vital to a conception of the performative encounter in that it enables a reading of the encounter as a political praxis that transversally engages diverse and a-central subject groups. For Guattari, the concept of transversality is key to both his conception of the subject group and of collective desire. This is because the singularities that come together in the subject group operate not only on the discursive and structural planes, but also on affective ones. The transversal aspect carries forth desire in the subject group and it is through this mobilization of desire that the subject group differentiates from the subjugated group (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 349). In linking desire and subject groups, Guattari insists upon the *collective* processes comprising the productions of subjectivity. As I have already suggested, subjectivity is not isolated to individual composition but is polyphonic and is produced through collective assemblages of enunciation on many different levels, including those, Guattari writes, of an

> extrapersonal, extra-individual nature (machinic, economic, social, technological, iconic, ecological, ethological, or media systems, in other words systems that are no longer immediately anthropological), or of an infrahuman, infrapsychic, infrapersonal nature (systems of perception, sensibility, affect, desire, representation, image, and value, modes of memorization and production of ideas, systems of inhibition and automation, corporeal, organic, biological, or physiological systems, and so on) (2008: 43).

This is why the idea of any one author or director of the encounter, as was demonstrated by the S.I., is inherently problematic. The designation of a sovereign authority of collective expression in the gesture of representing, assuming, or speaking on behalf of, is one of the failures of

classic revolutionary politics for Guattari. He argues in order to overcome or avoid the pitfalls of bureaucratic inertia, recuperation and representation, political objectives must take into consideration the workings of many desires and the diversities of political struggle (1996a: 9–10).

From the viewpoint of the performative encounter, this illustration can be seen to be immensely valuable as it highlights the fundamental difference between the earlier and later examples of the encounter: namely, it is this potential for the subject group, which speaks to collective desires, that is more apparent in the encounters of Umsonst, the Transnational Republic, Schleuser.net and Meine Akademie. In these encounters, principles of self-determined and networked organization are practiced; again, the participant is the *constituent* of the encounter. This praxis traces out a notable difference from the former encounters, which perhaps inadvertently tended toward the reproduction of representative political models; models that Guattari associated with bureaucratic impotencies.

An aversion to bureaucratic sclerosis featured heavily in Deleuze and Guattari's (1983) conceptualizations of revolutionary politics and the mechanisms of desire. This was seen in their concern with repressive structures that acted to block the forces of desire in political aggregates. As Guattari observed, the structures of parties and unions explicitly shy away from, and suppress, creativity rather than encouraging it (1984: 33). Countering the oppressive tendency seen in such organizations, they insisted on the subject group as a kind of group that is already revolutionary on the level of 'libidinal' investments, catalyzing a saturation of the whole social field with desiring production (1983: 349). To understand the immanence of desire, its manifestation through subject groupings and its general relevance to the performative encounter in the later instances discussed in this book, it is important to underscore why Deleuze and Guattari gave such a primacy to desire. Their emphasis on desire came from their assertion that desiring production is co-existent to social production. As they wrote,

social production is purely and simply desiring-production itself under determinate conditions. We maintain that the social field is immediately invested by desire, that it is the historically determined product of desire, and that libido has no need of any mediation of sublimation, and psychic operation, any transformation, in order to invade and invest the productive forces and the relations of production. *There is only desire and the social, and nothing else* (1983: 29).

'Only desire and the social, and nothing else': from this maxim alone the centrality of desire as a productive force underpinning social-political flows and ruptures is already made clear. Desire here deviates acutely from that defined by traditional psychoanalytical scholarship. Instead of indicating a lack, desire for Deleuze and Guattari exceeds all attempts of quantification, that is to say, it is irreducible.[10] Desire, like affect, is not contained to one body, identity or community. It is only secondarily or self-reflexively related to doing something to the self, and is firstly a dynamic activation.

This is how desire becomes caught up in the movement of social and political systems and their applications, and why it can be suggested that desire is not simply present in revolution, but is revolutionary in itself through its inherently disruptive character. The revolutionary force of desire can be mobilized in multiple ways from the production of despotic to emancipatory states. When desire becomes reified, or is forced into systems of expression, its movement is inhibited and it fails to produce affirmative intensities that are conducive to revolution. According to Guattari, this is apparent in the ways that desire is co-opted by both fascist and leftist party politics through the transference of particular representative pathways and subjectivities (1984: 217–232). Such statist political apparatuses enact this on a mass scale: mass representation, mass participation. However, while Guattari opposes the fettering of desire by these kinds of political apparatuses, he does not contest their focus on the extra-individual element, insisting instead that desire must be quantitatively tapped into for it to be a force of mobilization; it must resonate on a collective plane.

Given these conditions, what does this mean for the evocation of an

emancipatory politics in the context of the small-scale encounters composed by Umsonst, the Transnational Republic, Schleuser.net and Meine Akademie and the temporary subject groups formed within and through them? Throughout his work, Guattari seems to dance around the question of micropolitical liberations of desire and their efficacy within social-political struggles. In *Anti-Oedipus* (1983) Deleuze and Guattari argue that 'if desire is repressed, it is because every position of desire, no matter how small, is capable of calling into question the established order of society' (1983: 116). At the same time, in his essay 'Capitalism: A very special delirium' (1995b), Guattari concludes that an economy of desire cannot work optimally at the level of the molecular, but must rather infuse the whole social fabric rather than aggregate within small communities attempting to work 'outside' of the socius. If we accept what this implies for local organization, is it still viable to speak about collective desire in the micropolitical performative encounters that we are examining? If as Guattari claims, 'desire is not liberated in simple moments of celebration' (1995b: 61), then what conditions must be present to allow for the transformation of subjectivities, relations and worlds through the encounter?

In order to address these questions we must address two related lines of inquiry: firstly, the collective and trans-human specificity of desire and secondly, the building of risky and potentiate zones involving what Massimo de Angelis (2007) refers to as temporary space-time commons. To turn to the collective specificity of desire requires an equal turn to collective assemblages of enunciation. This is because desire is not individual; it precedes a split of subject and object, representation and production (Guattari 1996b: 205). Put this way, desire is not isolated as a subjective force, nor does it inhabit a particular assemblage or entity. Rather it arises from interrelation. What this suggests is that desire is mobilized through the syndication and translation of forces, the arrangements of which, for Deleuze and Guattari, are not blocked by 'distinctions between persons, organs, material flows, and semiotic flows' (Guattari 1996b: 205).

As a desiring machine, the performative encounter works by connecting singular to collective enunciations – a point that will become clearer in the following chapter on the Umsonst campaigns. This is a process of uncovering and participating, in which invention occurs through the building of novel alliances. Such discovery constructs bonds between people, and environments. In the production of desire and the social, the lines of individuation become porous, and action is seen as shared – the composition of life is a collective one. As an entity composed by a subject group, the performative encounter can only come into being through the interplay and co-existence of social relations. This is why the concentration on a-central collectivism in desiring production can be interpreted as a means to break from the authority of the 'expert' and the passivity implied by the idea of the audience as politically inert. To read the performative encounter in this way begins to tease out Guattari's trepidations around molecular and local nodes of liberated desire. But these are difficult concerns to allay, especially if we heed Philip Goodchild's caution that 'collective activity is where the politics of desire meets its essential confrontation with capitalism' (1996: 196).

This was certainly the case with the canonization and capitalization of the Dadaist and Situationist movements. So if we are to take up this challenge then we must further propose how contemporary movements can navigate around such impasses. We must ask: how is it possible to rethink these moments of collective desire as genuinely liberated? An answer might lie in the ways that they transform subjectivities, relations and worlds by hooking into common flows of desire, which they use to connect people and spaces to one another in affective and creative moments. And this is a point that Deleuze and Guattari agree with when they write that 'the victory of a revolution is immanent and consists in the new bonds it installs between people, even if these bonds last no longer than the revolution's fused material and quickly give way to division and betrayal' (1994: 176–77). In order to explain the affective and creative shared moments of the performative encounter that forge and intensify these bonds, in order to think about these as presenting

'different modes of exercising and articulating social powers' as Massimo de Angelis (2007: 12) puts it, we must look to what he defines as temporary space-time commons.

The Performative Encounter as Temporary Space-Time Commons

> The positing of the new cannot be anything else but the positing of different modes of exercising and articulating social powers … we need to extend the realm of commons in more and more spheres of our social doing, at any scale of social action, to … run our lives as free social individuals (de Angelis 2007: 12).

As I conceive of it, the performative encounter becomes an instance of temporary-space time commons when it connects into collective desires and hopes. The concept of temporary space-time commons is introduced by de Angelis (2007) to refer to a transitory spatio-temporal event organized through a shared, yet not reducible, condition. Through this condition, the reevaluation of value relations – the experimentation with new value practices and the making visible of value practices alternative to those of capital – are able to emerge (2007: 24). For de Angelis, value practices refer to corresponding networks of relations, actions and processes that are produced through, and reproductive of, specific value systems which express and effect bodies (both singular and collective) in particular ways. This expression comes into being through selection and evaluation of what constitutes 'good' from 'bad' within a value system, from which the evaluation is used as a predicate for action. The procedure of evaluation is transmitted through the social body via feedback mechanisms, which reiterate and/or limit these determinates of value judgment (ibid.).

What this means for de Angelis is that to speak about value practices and their formation is to speak about how social relations and reproduction, organizations, power, are all composed through social processes (2007: 24). Furthermore, it is to accentuate that people's actions are ultimately informed by the meanings they give to them. Following de Angelis, how is this event of temporary space-time

commons, in which social value practices are transformed and renewed, manifested? De Angelis explains this by way of example, drawing on his experiences of participating in a group at the 2005 anti-G8 protests that converged through a mutual apprehension of police brutality toward their children, and hence a desire to form a protective bloc. The group came together via a specific affinity in which decision-making processes and themes arose from shared stakes and dispositions rather than shared ideologies (2007: 23). For de Angelis then, the event of temporary space-time commons is motivated not by sectarianism or ideological membership, but rather by a shared desire and self-determination, much like the performative encounter itself.

Here we can make out a point of connection to Guattari's notions of collective desire and collective assemblages of enunciation. It is also here that we can discern how the performative encounter, as an example of temporary space-time commons, is fundamentally based upon the capacity to discern currents of desire articulated in common through the event. Such commonality is engendered and organized through the convergence of plural singularities. This convergence does not belie their complex character but composes a dynamic state that they constitute. Hence, there is not one predetermined attitude to which all must adhere but that a 'common sense', to use a phrase from de Angelis, is discovered through shared interaction.

If we pause on this idea of collective sense and interaction for a moment, we can also recall Guattari's thesis of the subject group. In the event of temporary-space time commons there is no single authoritative voice that steers the group, no delegated individual that presumes to stand at the helm, but instead a group come together in what Genosko understands as a reciprocal 'flash of common praxis' (2002: 86). Furthermore, because the becoming-collective constituents of the performative encounter act as a subject group (albeit a transitory one – a point to which I will shortly return), they have the capacity to invent new discourses and produce their own tools of elucidation. It is this inventive aspect that leads us to consider de Angelis' idea of temporary space-time

commons as a means through which alternative value practices (alternative to those paradigmatically upheld through capitalist relations) can emerge. This happens for de Angelis through a self-responsibility of the group as a self-managed entity, making visible alternative value practices outside those of capital (2007: 24).[11]

In this way the disciplinary mechanisms and apparatuses of capitalism are confronted and countervailed.[12] Through the struggle of value practices clashing with dominant market structures, the collective activity of temporary space-time commons comes into direct conflict with capital. This is, in a sense, what Guattari was concerned about: the ability for a 'liberated' or independent community to ward off the integrative advances of capitalist logics. However, what Guattari was envisioning suggests a far more conventional interpretation of community to that which is inferred by the emergent community of temporary space-time commons. What is fundamentally different is an emphasis on the *duration* of the convergence, in some ways akin to Hakim Bey's (1985) notion of temporary autonomous zones (TAZ) – spaces of insurgence that elude control and permanent structuration, and as such attempt to avoid repression and reification. The TAZ and temporary space-time commons thus seem to point toward a particular genus of community; one that is signified by its focus on mutual experience and participation, its transitory temporality (which has consequences for recuperability), its physical immediacy and its political leanings.

These aspects of temporary space-time commons can possibly help to respond to Guattari's wariness of small liberate communities. This is because community, for de Angelis, can be spoken about as a 'domain of relational modes, the problematic of how *free individuals* who are self-aware as being part of a social body in which they are related to each other, articulate their co-production' (2007: 242). Within his conception, commons and community are interlinked on the level of what is being shared and *how* the sharing takes place.[13] The relational field of community, argues De Angelis, births common stakes that underpin the

behaviours of the subjects that articulate them (2007: 243). It is also simultaneously the juxtaposition of commons that acts to create the specific community. Thus the two differentiate and actualize one another.

It is this co-originary movement of reciprocal exposition, a being-in-common rather than a *common being*, that Jean-Luc Nancy sees as vital to a reevaluation of community for prefigurative politics. Put another way, for Nancy community is not an amalgamation of individual subjects, but rather the articulation of singularities that can be understood as such by virtue of the community itself (Illuminati 1996: 171). Opposing the essentialism that is often tied up with notions of community, Nancy asserts that the absorption of plurality into a common body actually stifles the productive capacities that exist through its variegated composition (1991: xxxix). Simply put, when the parts are subsumed into the whole, the capacity for a common coming together that takes diversity as its basis is lost. So, while Guattari's idea of the liberated community insinuates in this instance a delimited and systematized entity ostensibly located outside of repressive apparatuses (an image inspired perhaps by the prevalence of communes, primitivist communities and autonomous societies during the 1960s and 1970s), both de Angelis' and Nancy's understandings signify an idea of community as entirely amorphous.

Here the ambiguity of identity, of categorization, that we have already seen to be associated with the transversal movement of the performative encounter is again played out. The mutability of the space and time, of the subjects who participate, of what principles are at that point shared, and what value practices emerge, makes the performative encounter as an instance of temporary space-time commons a site for the transversal of subjectivities and identities. As the encounter is reliant on self-determination, a flexible redefinition of subjectivity is insinuated. This is because pluralities of subjects are offered the space to interact based on a very situational and contingent common desire and objective. Such diversity countervails more assimilative identity group logics that implicitly set up verticalities of expertise. These conjugal conditions of

processuality and transience are also suggestive of how such temporary space-time commons move away from the future oriented utopianism implicit in the ideological countenance of the Berlin Dadaist 'outrages' and the 'constructed situation' of the S.I.

This is a difference that is of consequence to a reevaluation of duration as a tactical manoeuvre. The event of temporary space-time commons is based in the present: it is a *performative gesture* that generates actions and subjectivities in what de Angelis calls the 'now-here' (2007: 241). It is not the striving for a utopian goal ossified into a *future* scenario, as a pretext for a totalizing ideal (Illuminati 1996: 174). Rather, what is foregrounded is an unfolding that develops autopoietic negotiations and recompositions.[14] As de Angelis proposes, subjects in struggle are constituted *through* commons not *for* commons, alternatives take place through the living out of different ways of relating and being in the present, as a process of composition despite capitalism (2007: 239). Again, the importance of recognizing the progressive interplay of collective enunciations and shared desires in creating new value systems and socialities – as a force of becoming through performative iteration – is revealed by de Angelis. As for Deleuze and Guattari (1983; 1987), this production of singular and collective subjectivity occurs in feedback loops: 'to the extent that the real is constituted by a plurality of value practices, we can regard social subjects as being traversed by the social forces they contribute towards constituting' (de Angelis 2007: 30).

As a laboratory for experimentation and co-production, temporary space-time commons arise from a desire to seek out and invent broadly participatory decision-making formations, not constrained by ideological categories (de Angelis 2007: 244). Here the demands for new value productions necessitates the exploration of new arrangements of social interaction and communality in the present, *despite* present conditions, *alternate* to present conditions. In this way, de Angelis echoes Guattari's call for finding methods for 'apprehending and creating, in pathic modes, mutant existent virtualities' (1995a: 120). The performative encounter as temporary space-time commons in the campaigns of Umsonst, the

Transnational Republic, Schleuser.net and Meine Akademie, acts as a mutant existent virtuality, as will become evident. It does so in the sense that it is a potential site for the disruption and reassessment of value practices. The encounter is composed through the coming together of diverse and changing participants, which constitute it in both its heteronymous permutations and singular events. The very act of assembling in this precise way makes it imperative to investigate how and why such a community can be an effective method of political and social self-determination and affirmative direct action.

Some Critical Reflections on Commons and New Public Spaces

To make this claim for the performative encounter as a politically resistant commoning activity, critical reflection on the intricacies associated with subjectivation and regimes of contemporary labour production underpinning these new communities and publics, must also be present. This is in part because of changing ideas and practices of public space. Conceptualizations of public space and commons have been paramount to the imaginaries of current global social and political movements. One trajectory of these has been interestingly explored by Paulo Virno who examines the discursive creation of subjectivities, relations and worlds amidst contemporary labour systems. What Virno shows as being syncopated by much geographical, philosophical and cultural studies literature around such performative modes is a sensitivity to the ambivalences embedded in performative, 'virtuosic' and linguistic processes as both articulations and disarticulations of capital.[15]

In an interview with Flavia Costa, Virno argues that coincidental with the demise of the Fordist factory and assembly line was the emphasis on the production of intellectual and communicational resources (Costa 2004). What became paradigmatic of this emphasis for Virno, as for many other autonomist Marxist scholars, was the putting to work of those traditionally nonwork attributes: aesthetic and cultural tastes, emotions, interpersonal skills, language and so forth. This, of course, had consequences for understandings of what separated labour from leisure,

private from public. For Virno, ambivalence lies in the way that intellect, language, and emotions function as the cornerstones of labour systems. Here the general intellect – quite literally the capacity to think and the productions of thought/emotions such as ideas, knowledge, imagination, language, self-reflexivity, relatability and the like – has become the central productive attribute of living labour (2001).

Where this intersects with a notion of commons is in the public or mass nature of this intellect, that is to say that the putting to labour of the general intellect is premised on a mutual intellectual and communicative life. At the heart of this life are what Virno, deriving from Aristotle, refers to as 'common places': generic logical-linguistic forms that are appropriate across numerous public spheres (instead of specialized to one specific sphere) and that function as safety havens (2004: 37). Such common places or shared ways of speaking and communicating become the very basis for life. This makes the life of the mind and the intellect public rather than private. What Virno sees in this transfiguration is what he takes from Marx's conception of 'general intellect', namely the exteriorization, collectivization, and socialization attributable to intellectual activity when it becomes the real source of production (2004: 38).

Virno's ambivalence, then, is underscored by an acute awareness of those opposing directions that can develop out of the public intellect. Because the general intellect is the unifying base, these developments have significant consequences. On the one hand it can catalyze a genuine public sphere, a *republic*, a space of common politics, community and the sharing of public issues, through the dissolution of its bond to capitalist modes of production, commodification and the wage labour system (2004: 40). On the other, if it is removed from the public sphere or a political community as such, it can become a conduit for the further manifestation of capitalist massification, of subservience and false reassurance. This is captured perfectly, for instance, by the *sharing* of linguistic and cognitive operations: being both a characteristic of the many, or the multitude, and a key element of contemporary production

and labour modes. In these cognitivized cycles and systems, affirms Bifo Berardi, production can no longer be conceptualized as a distinctly economic process discrete from extra-economic factors. On the contrary factors such as culture, language, ideologies, expectations, emotions, imaginaries and ideals substantively affect the production processes (2007: 58–59).

It is within this ambivalence borne by the imbrications of social and capitalist forms of life that it becomes possible to see how Virno critically composes his new architectures of the public. Virno writes that these can

> manifest themselves in opposite ways: as servility or as liberty. The multitude has a direct link with the dimension of the possible: each state of things is contingent, no one has a destiny … it can favor opportunism, cynicism, the desire to take advantage of the occasion in order to prevail over others; or it can express itself as conflict and insubordination, defection and exodus from the present situation (in Costa 2004).

Discussions of temporary space-time commons must find ways to navigate these ambivalences, or to translate them into a creative force. Essential to these new public spaces, discourses and social relations, as we shall see through the following chapters, is a break from the cycles of commodity production and systems of wage labour (Virno in Costa 2004). This is a break that de Angelis attempts to express through his positing of temporary space-time commons as a means for seizing capitalism's cooption of social life through alternative value systems and communities. This is done without unification; indeed in these accounts commons do not suggest an aversion to antagonism, or even a focus on negotiation. When local and trans-local communities and social relations arise from the common political spaces stressed by Virno, they are in contradistinction to those of capitalism. As de Angelis explains,

> alternatives become actualised through the power of seizing control of our lives, of transcending alienation beginning from our life-worlds and spheres of action. Our life-worlds define communities we belong to immediately, and these are nothing other than networks of real individuals, living real conditions, having real needs and aspirations and enjoying real relations among them. *Seizing power over our lives*

implies therefore not only being able to access resources and means of existence that enable us to organize social production, but also getting on with defending, building and transforming our communities (2003: 10).

This transformation of communities and human relations is juxtaposed to new modalities of social production: ways of organizing, relating, being in the present rather than in an utopian vision of the future. These are adventures in nonrepresentative and prefigurative politics that are highly amenable to ways of living coincidental with the general intellect (Illuminati 1996: 183). For Illuminati such forms of life are not fixed, nostalgic or pre-given but take place as linguistic games populated by multiple constituencies. The performative encounter is one such pursuit. But in order for these to function politically they must evade the demands of capital. They must also guard against the implicit or explicit imposition of unchecked hierarchies, those that Virno sees activated when the division of labour crumbles and instead of leading to the emancipation of workloads, leads to the arbitrary proliferation of insidious control (2004: 41). Thus it is precisely this ambivalence between the self-determined seizure of power, the creation of a-central social modalities, and the contemporary systems of capitalism and labour, especially creative and political 'virtuosic' and performative labour, that must be underscored as an antagonistic tendency within any iteration of a radical, creative politics.

Conclusion

New collective assemblages of enunciation are beginning to form an identity out of fragmentary ventures, at times risky initiatives, trial and error experiments: different ways of seeing and of making the world, different ways of being and of bringing to light modalities of being will open up, be irrigated and enrich one another (Guattari 1995a: 120).

The performative encounter is a transversal form that bespeaks a politics of desire. It is a 'fragmentary venture', a 'risky initiative', a 'trial and error experiment' (Guattari 1995a: 120). It is thus a form that remains at

the peripheries of political theorization and action and as such, it does not arrive with an already invested legitimacy. As de Angelis admits 'one can easily dismiss the practices of temporary space-time commons as ineffective and naïve, and indeed, most of the traditional left does precisely that' (2007: 23). Guattari too was pessimistic about the possibilities for radicalizing the traditional left (i.e. reformist communist and trade organizations) into models more conducive to desiring subjectivities. Despite misgivings voiced from within the ranks of revolutionary movements, both de Angelis and Guattari persist in thinking about alternative modalities of social-political engagement related to the productions of subjectivity and agency – alternative to those forms already established. These conceptualizations as we have seen, are predicated on principles of experimentation, participation and affective communication. Allied in a commitment to these principles are transversal tactics of guerrilla communications/tactical media/radical aesthetics, of which the performative encounter can be considered a cohort.

What is revealed through the process of mapping and conceptualizing the encounter is a political position that insists upon and carries further the hope of de Angelis and Guattari for the potential of molecular gestures and common praxes. This position remains a refrain in what follows, and reiterates those transitory intensified moments of shared desire and collaboration, of additive subjectivity and agency. Such a position draws out the struggles for new value practices and meaning that navigate around capitalist and institutional apparatuses that also employ creative and affective insurrection. These struggles are found in the campaigns of Umsonst against privatization; the micronation of the Transnational Republic; the lobby organization for smugglers and traffickers of Schleuser.net; and the resistance against the corporatization of knowledge by Meine Akademie. By manoeuvring around state and capitalist forms these collectives, and the performative encounters that they instigate, accomplish the performance of other modes of existence, inciting meetings of alterity and possibility that extend far beyond the

encounters' conclusion.

1 Deleuze and Guattari repeatedly stress the fluxes of such groupings and their capacities to articulate properties of each category simultaneously or to morph into each other at any given point: 'What complicates everything, it is true, is that the same individuals can participate in both types of groups in diverse ways (Saint-Juste, Lenin). Or the same group can present both characteristics at the same time, in diverse situations that are nevertheless coexistent. A revolutionary group can already have reassumed the form of a subjugated group, yet to be determined under certain conditions to continue to play the role of a subject group. One is continually passing from one type of group to the other' (1983: 349).

2 As Guattari explains, subject groups risk their own self-mutilation through the reification (and hence vulnerability to neurosis and fetishization) of their transversality; they are therefore virtual subjugated groups. However, as Guattari indicates this decay is not definite, it is not necessary and can be manoeuvred through. He explains, 'It is my hypothesis that there is nothing inevitable about the bureaucratic self-mutilation of a subject group, or its unconscious report to mechanisms that militate against its potential transversality. They depend, from the first moment, on an acceptance of the risk — which accompanies the emergence of any phenomena of real meaning — of having to confront irrationality, death, and the otherness of the other' (1984: 23).

3 There was still in these movements a self-directed delegation principle present, which was predicated on division of labour and sub sectors of function and cliché (the limitation of individuals to their sections of expertise or formal competency) (Raunig 2002a: 4). What was seen here then might be titled as what Raunig calls a 'pseudo-non-hierarchy' (ibid.), for while aspects did negate the fully hierarchical organization of party and state systems, aspects of these were ideologically reproduced.

4 See also Hakim Bey's (1991) writings on temporary autonomous zones.

5 This 'each other' has significance for Massumi who argues for a political response imbued with an ethics of care and hospitality. This is all the more imperative because of the uncertain nature of affect (2002b: 240–241).

6 I say extra-human because this spatial element encompasses more than simply the human strata, it extends into ecologies, environments, biological and machinic systems and so forth. For an excellent perspective on how to politically situate the autonomy of space from the traditional centrism of the subject see Jones, Marston and Woodward (2012) who argue that such an enquiry 'can best be answered through consideration of certain material (counter-) movements that not only constitute the event-space of the site, but simultaneously "suspend" the subject' (2012: 206).

7 This is the sort of spatial understanding that forms the basis of those communitarian and participative art practices that Raunig (2006a) criticizes, which, as mentioned in the introduction, view space as an antecedent entity that can be redistributed and apportioned through time.

8 In using the terminologies of space and place in this respect, I am aligning myself with Doel who argues that place, like space, is not invariable. The polarization of space from place, contends Doel 'hinges on the glaciation of events in perpetual process' (1999: 9). From this perspective 'neither space nor place are given, least of all as ready made loci of authenticity, rather they must be lent consistency, a task both contextual and inexhaustible' (ibid.: 10).

9 In using the term 'collective', Guattari stresses complexity and contingency to subjectivity,

stating: 'the term "collective" should be understood in the sense of a multiplicity that deploys itself as much beyond the individual, on the side of the socius, as before the person, on the side of the proverbial intensities, indicating a logic of affects rather than a logic of delimited sets' (1995a: 9). It is this selfsame attitude that I deploy when I speak of collective groups and collectivity more broadly.

10 As a libidinal energy desire already exceeds and dissipates the boundaries of conventional Oedipal terrains of circulation (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 116). This necessarily includes sexuality because 'once desire is specified as sexuality, it enters into forms of particularized power, into the stratification of castes, of styles, of sexual classes' (Guattari 1996b: 204).

11 This outside for de Angelis is not a discrete 'outside' that would act in diametric opposition to an 'inside' but rather a spatio-temporal site that is composed when the values of capitalism are thrown into crisis and other values may be formulated. Following the poststructural influence he recognizes that 'since enclosures and sites of disciplinary integration are almost everywhere, then their mirror image … is also everywhere. Because, when you look at it systematically, as feedback mechanisms, there is no more split between individual and society, agents and structure. There is no split between "in here" and "out there" … the same body is called to act along conflicting value practices' (2007: 247).

12 De Angelis, like Deleuze and Guattari (1983, 2004), jettisons moral certitude in his formulations of capitalism, recasting his argument beyond bourgeois conceptions of freedom and democracy. What this entails is a problematization of the fact that 'markets imply specific forms of social relations and corresponding specific processes of doing, of positing heteronymous measures and of negotiating social norms behind the back of the actual doers, whether waged or unwaged' (2007: 240).

13 Following Jean-Luc Nancy (1991), this question of how and what is reevaluated by Augusto Illuminati through the positioning of community between the uncertain borders of communication and communion: as 'the being-in-common of singularities and also the repartitioning of territory and property subsumed under an immanent collectivity. By community I mean not the counterutopic community that is always mourned as recently lost, but the thought of the being-in-common of singularities, of their alterity' (1996: 173–174).

14 Autopoiesis is a term imported by Guattari from biological discourses, summarized as 'the process of bringing into existence autonomous nuclei of subjectivation capable of reproducing themselves while constantly opening into the so-called outside worlds' (Bosteels 2001: 165).

15 Virno (2004) sees virtuosity as an 'activity which finds its own fulfillment (that is, its own purpose) in itself … an activity which requires the presence of others' (2004: 52). This activity is not confined to performing artists but is also a characteristic of political action. Virno writes 'every political action, in fact, shares with virtuosity a sense of contingency, the absence of a "finished product", the immediate and unavoidable presence of others' (ibid.: 53).

Chapter 3
Everything for Everyone and for Free! Reclaiming Commons with Berlin and Hamburg Umsonst

What has been developing is the story of a creative political device, the performative encounter. For the Berlin Dadaists and affiliates of the Situationists with their dreams of revolution, this encounter was conceived as a way to intervene in relations of alienation and subjugation. In the thirty years following the collapse of the S.I., the performative encounter has been evocatively used for various means.[1] Most interesting, however, is how it has been reemerging over the past decade, where organizational reconfigurations may be noted, setting in motion transversals between the (specialist) artist/activist initiator of the encounter and its (nonspecialist) nonartist/nonactivist participants. This reconfiguration no longer sees the participant of the encounter as merely its subsidiary, but as the elementary condition for its possibility – as its *constituent*.

In Germany these shifts were most visibly illuminated in the campaigns of 'Umsonst' (for free): activated in 2003 during the height of the European precarity debates around the uncertainty of life and labour in contemporary capitalism.[2] Their popular slogan 'alles für alle, und zwar umsonst' (everything for everyone, and for free) spread through streets of several German cities.[3] Umsonst echoed the cries of the Italian Mirafiori factory workers who over thirty years previously had demanded 'vogliamo tutto' (we want everything) (Bologna 1977: 56). The strategies of the factory workers were taken up along with this sentiment, one of which took the form of collective appropriation.[4] This found its manifestation in encounters that called for the free access of all people to public spaces, resources and services, the free participation in social and

cultural 'commons', and an end to the exploitation of under-waged flexworkers.[5] The objective of the Umsonst campaigns proved to be relevant across broad social spheres, connecting with multiple points of contention. One such point was the increasingly expensive activity of visiting the cinema. To show their opposition to the frequent increases in ticket prices, Hamburg Umsonst decided to take matters into their own hands. On Friday 24 October 2003 at 8pm, approximately seventy people associated with the campaign *Hamburg Umsonst – Heute: Kino Umsonst* (Hamburg for free – Today: Cinema for free) arrived at the Cinemaxx cinema at Dammtor ready to watch a film.

To a soundtrack playing the Pink Panther, they decorated the foyer with confetti and streamers and handed out bags of popcorn to cinema-goers. Others presented guests waiting in queues with fake movie tickets (modelled on the official tickets and bearing the Hamburg Umsonst logo) and invited them to enter the cinema for free. One of the primary goals of the intervention – for the group to collectively view a film – was unsuccessful due to heavy police presence. This did not mark the end of the encounter though, for while police managed to apprehend ten people, others managed to sneak into the cinema in spite of staff halting the screening to assist police raids. Eluding over thirty police officers, the remaining contingent enjoyed the film to its close. Public response was from all accounts positive: as one of the bystanders enthused, 'I work in a call centre, and it's also poorly paid. I find this action super' (Hamburg Umsonst 2003). Here we find a striking example of a comment made by Brian Massumi 'it was like everything was thrown up in the air for a moment and people came down after the shock in a slightly different order, and some were interconnected in ways that they hadn't been before' (2002b: 234). Belonging to the same milieu of contemporary alter-globalist resistance that Massumi is speaking about, it was also like something very much out of the ordinary had transpired in the encounters of Berlin and Hamburg Umsonst; something that, through its collective and affective elements, had the capacity to set into motion the transformation of subjectivities, relations and worlds.[6]

'Hier spielt das Leben' (Life Plays Here): Umsonst as a Strategy for Taking Back Your Life[7]

The *Kino Umsonst* action, the first action of Hamburg Umsonst, was typical of all of the Umsonst encounters. The encounter was part of the larger Hamburg action-day 'Halbzeit. Ende. Aus' (Half time. End. Out), a day called by a network of Hamburg-based collectives to protest the dissolution of social welfare, the increasing rhetoric of social and economic exclusion and scarcity, and cuts to education and vocational training, all of which had increased under a centrist-left coalition government.

The visibility of such issues had been intensifying in the European radical left, especially through the conceptual field of 'precarity' or precariousness (precariedad, précarité, precarietà) – a term used to describe the effects associated with the broad assimilation of working and nonworking life into capitalist logics (Vanni and Tari 2005).[8] This understanding of precarity had been most vigorously promoted from within the EuroMayDay networks. While the Umsonst campaigns did not explicitly come out of the European precarity discourses, they most definitely shared an impetus for action. For Umsonst the accelerating privatization of public resources and services was correlative to the general temperament of precarious living and working conditions; a condition publicly acknowledged in an address by a Left Party federal spokesperson for public business and trade unions, who stated that neoliberalization and competitive European Union policy served the acceleration of globalized capital at the cost of public services and utilities (Wils 2007). The economic and structural changes around public resources and services motivated the Umsonst campaigns: first established in Berlin in 2003 by around ten to fifteen members of the larger radical left network FeLS: Für eine Linke Strömung (For a Left Current). What inspired the campaign to come together at that moment was the unrest resulting from allegations of corruption in the Berlin banking and lending system in 2002, which necessitated what was at that

time Europe's largest bank bailout. The Berlin financial crisis was but symptomatic of a bigger problem and shortly after the genesis of Berlin Umsonst, Hamburg Umsonst also emerged.

Central to the Umsonst campaigns was the creation of a 'culture of everyday resistance' (Berlin Umsonst 2006. Personal communication. Translation mine). This was conceived as an antagonistic retaliation to the discourses of economic rationalism and privatization used by the government to justify austere directives to 'pull the belt tighter'. In the face of such austerity, 'we had to ask', said one constituent, 'why should we be denied "luxuries" like culture and art, like public pools or public services like transport just because we can't afford to pay for them?' (ibid.). Suffice it to say, the encounters of Umsonst were conceived to both counteract the rhetoric of scarcity rampant in Germany and draw public attention to the struggles faced by low-waged, unwaged and underwaged peoples. This was why a principal objective for Umsonst was 'the collective appropriation of common space and wealth for everybody': an objective manifest through 'creative forms of social and political direct action' (ibid.).

'Alles für alle, und zwar umsonst': it was this slogan that accompanied the prodigious encounters of Umsonst. At stake in these was turning disenfranchisement into self-determination. Acts of civil disobedience such as public transport occupations, stolen buffet meals and the mass storming of pop concerts and swimming pools, became emblematic of the Umsonst style. The regional uptake of the Umsonst agenda helped to open conversations about social protest and appropriative political action within radical left movements, to both greater and lesser critical acclaim. Response was polarized because some critics saw the platform of appropriation as reproductive of principles of consumer capital and commodity fetishism. At the same time, it was contended that such methods could not affect the central conflict of labour and capital. However as one constituent refuted, 'practices of appropriation reduced the pressures to work', adding that while Umsonst were critical of capitalism they were more intent on finding proactive

means of subversion than blanket opposition (Berlin Umsonst 2006. Personal communication. Translation mine).

An additional point of contention was that, unlike many of the current German alternative movements, the Umsonst campaigns maintained a socially rather than ideologically directed focus. As such, Umsonst concentrated their activity on finding the intersections of public resentment against state imposed regulations and micropolitical, often individual and clandestine, acts of appropriation based on a sentiment that was critical of capitalism. These clandestine acts engaged in by the public ranged from entering pools and public buildings without authorization to fare evasion, sneaking into cinemas and concerts to not paying for amenities such as gas and electricity, calling in sick to work to petty theft. Recognizing these individual tactics as gestures of self-affirmation, Umsonst conceived of politicizing them through their translation from singular to collective praxis. In this sense, these acts were 'made political', as one constituent put it, 'through a visible, collective presence which we used to connect with everyday practices of resistance' (Berlin Umsonst 2006. Personal communication. Translation mine). This shift from what Illuminati referred to as 'individual defection' to 'collective exodus' (1996: 181), marked the activity of the campaigns as more than merely opportunistic; political both for their strategic reference to historical social protest and for their composition of temporary space-time commons, which embraced expressions of collective desire.

The longevity and popularity of Umsonst's experimental direct action campaigns outlived many of its contemporaries. This longevity is impressive when the organizational methods of Umsonst are taken into account: loose groups conducting effervescent campaigning, with no strictly classifiable political ideology and with very little organizational or support infrastructure. While factions of Umsonst were exhausted or silenced by state apparatuses, a notable contingent made up of Berlin and Hamburg campaigners were conspicuously present at the demonstrations against the G8 in Rostock, Germany in 2007. Dressed as precarious

superheroes, the Umsonst campaigners solicited participation in their bloc by providing costumes and placards for constituents to fill out themselves.

But what precisely was it that made these Umsonst campaigns and this sentiment, so appealing across different geographical and social demographics? And how, despite that an ideological politics was never conceded, did it proliferate so quickly amongst the political left spectrum as a self-defined 'social' protest? Using the conditions of economic exclusion and precariousness as the grounds for their encounters of collective appropriation, Umsonst managed to create sites for collective self-determination and 'self-valorization' that didn't just abrogate capital but affirmed and created new ways of being. These sites were instances of temporary space-time commons, bringing people together – students, low-income earners, casual workers and interns of different ages, ethnicities, gender and cultures – through their desires for public services, resources and spaces.

When We Said We Wanted Flexibility We Didn't Mean Precarity

Understanding Precariousness and Labour Regimes

The advance of the precarity discourses throughout the radical left coincided approximately with the expansion of the alter-globalization MayDay campaign – a campaign that factions of Umsonst later affiliated with.[9] This originated in Milan in 2001, and, according to the Chainworkers – a Milan based collective dealing with labour and social precarity – had by 2006 garnered the participation of at least twenty mainly Western European cities and towns (2005a). The involvement of these Western European metropolises was aided by a caucus of various libertarian and syndicalist collectives during the 2004 'Beyond ESF' event held in the United Kingdom. This influenced a call for a unified European MayDay action around precarious and migrant labour: seen in

sectors such as retail, call centre work, domestic work, the service industries and in creative and cognitive production. While the specific political and economic definition of precariousness continues to be debated (a point to which I will shortly return), a migration-oriented collective associated with EuroMayDay, the Frassanito Network, defined it as referring to that which is

> unsure, uncertain, difficult, delicate. As a political term it refers to living and working conditions without any guarantees: for example the precarious residential status of migrants and refugees, or the precariousness of everyday life for single mothers. Since the early 1980s the term has been used more and more in relation to labour. Precarious work refers to all possible forms of insecure, non-guaranteed, flexible exploitation: from illegalised, seasonal and temporary employment to homework, flex- and temp-work, to subcontractors, freelancers, or so called self-employed persons (2006: 30).

Despite the accent on labour in the definition given by the Frassanito Network here, precariousness is considered to be by no means unique to the realm of work, extending as equally into the conditions of everyday life and into corporeal and biopolitical existence. As the Precarias a la Deriva (2005) clarified, 'we define precarity as the set of material and symbolic conditions that determine a vital uncertainty with respect to the sustained access to the essential resources for the full development of the life of a subject'. Precariousness could be understood then as the immanent insecurity that is present in, and reflective of, crises in housing, debt, education and even the ability for affective intersubjective relations: precisely the reason why it has had substantive effects upon subjectivation and class composition, as we will later see.

These theories of precarity as a form of life and work are, of course, not limited to activist research. It is precisely this state that has been prolifically analyzed by political economic scholars aligned with the Italian post-Operaist (workerist) and autonomist Marxist currents since the 1970s, including Virno (2004) and de Angelis (2007). Such scholarship has strongly influenced activist discourses in two ways. Firstly, by tracing out a passage alternate to those of Gramsci and the Frankfurt School around capital's hegemony – whereby class conflict

saturates all fields including the social and cultural. And secondly, by charting the recalibrations from so-called material to immaterial labour production, and to precarious labour conditions. Here immaterial labour is that which 'produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity' (Lazzarato 1996: 133), tied to fragmentations in labour processes and sites, as well as redefinitions of work to include traditionally nonwork activities and affects. Simply put, while this labour still obviously involves bodily and cognitive functions, the products of this labour rather than the labour itself have become immaterial (Hardt and Negri 2005: 109).

Correlating immaterial labour and precarity, the Italian tradition contends that the rise of these conditions have been consequent to the progressive restructuring of the labour market from Fordist (secure, long-term, regulated, factory style labour) into post-Fordist (fractured, flexible, cognitive unregulated labour) systems (Lazzarato 1996). For those historically involved with this line of argumentation, such as Mario Tronti, this transition emerged in Italy under the force of the mass exodus of workers from standardized working conditions (Tronti 1980, Virno 2004, Berardi 2003). An escalating mistrust of representative unions served to push workers further into self-activity. Concomitant to this exodus were a multiplicity of social-economic changes that included the downsizing of large scale fixed capital investment and an opposition to rigid labour allocation, contracts and markets. These factors, amongst others, anticipated the flexibilization of the Fordist approach to accommodate the instability and complexities of the capitalist economy.

But what kind of shifts did this entail? And what modes of subjectivation were present? There are several points of commonality within the different narratives in post-Operaist debates. The first of these is the movement from a labour system made up of hierarchically organized, mass integrated formations to one that is more spread out, using small networked nodes (Tajani and Roggero 2006). This has been evident in the growth of deregulated and casualized labour, and a diminishment in traditional employment modes. Coincidental also is a

general multiplication of employment regimes, so that roles are not necessarily the same, even within firms or across industries. As already suggested, a substantive change has occurred in the production process with an accelerating demand for communicational, emotional and intellectual skills. This has engendered what Cristina Tajani and Gigi Roggero point to as the significance of information technologies and the networked labour models associated with the so-called IT revolution (2006: 154). Not all of this production demand is aggregated around the higher paid cognitive industries, however, for it has also come with a growing quotient of menial, oppressive low waged jobs, often populated by an itinerant and less privileged workforce.

Post-Fordism, then, cannot be seen as fundamentally emancipatory despite any inferences to the contrary found in the first five points made by Tajani and Roggero. This is because the condition of precariousness cannot be contrasted to the Fordist principle, which is itself another version of precarity. As Angela Mitropoulos (2005) asserts, precarity was already inscribed in the Fordist system through the formalization of temporal divisions and valuations (eight hour day, five day week, free time as the counterpart to work time etc). In this state, all leisure time, life, energy, creativity and autonomy was sacrificed for the promise of security. Where the precarity of the Fordist system is distinct from the post-Fordist is in that the latter poses the impossibility of transparently delineating work time from leisure time: the worker must always be looking, preparing for or apprehending the possibility of labour, which is volatile and often temporary. What is clear is that while post-Fordist labour conditions have become less formally prescribed, they have hardly culminated in egalitarian structures in terms of production and consumption.

What they have precipitated, though, are different contingencies for action and organization. Antonio Negri has observed that contemporary labour conditions of flexibility and uncertainty are ambivalent. It is this interchange between condition (resistance) and constraint (exploitation) that can be found in the post-Fordist forms of life and labour that, at the

same time as being exploitative, furnish new lines of insurrection (Negri 2003). Such tension is paramount to these systems and it is this that we must also keep at the forefront of our thoughts.

Moving the Precarity Debate into Political Organization

Given these conditions and stakes, how might it be possible to address the anxiety associated with the capitalization and economization of our everyday lives (Martin 2002) through political organization? One of the largest networks attempting to understand and respond to these aspects of life under capitalism on a transnational scale has been the EuroMayDay initiative. This was a series of information and awareness raising social and political campaigns looking at precariousness that aimed to collectively produce knowledge and insight into contemporary life and labour (Raunig 2007c: 1). EuroMayDay was initially conceived as an open platform for the meeting of activists (media, social, political, creative and the like), radical unionists and other collectives organizing in a-central and experimental ways, to build solidarity for and mobilize the more

> invisible strata of workers in the service city: cashiers, cleaners, call-center [sic] operators, programmers, knowledge and culture workers with temporary, part-time and freelance contracts, overexploited men and women from all continents (Chainworkers 2005a).

The articulation and development of the EuroMayDay project, which Umsonst later tied into, was axial to the intense discussions around precarity as a conceptual field. This field maintained an elusive, at times messianic quality, for while the theorizations surrounding precarity had been some of the most popular in leftist circles, attempts to define the terms remained problematic.[10] The crisis was in part due to the multiple resonances and meanings that the terms generated depending on the particular social, geographical and spatio-temporal contexts they found themselves in. The ambiguity that such varied contexts inspired in these debates often led to accusations of generalization and class exclusion,

despite acknowledgments to difficulties and contradictions. Indeed, such conceptual crises were one of the reasons that Umsonst tended toward quite concrete and everyday social practices in which to locate their campaigns. Amongst the various criticisms that arose there have been several recurrent interrelated claims, constellating around problems of equivalence and of a Euro or Western-centric narrative. It is necessary to go over these, as they give a better framework for understanding what the encounters of Umsonst sought to negotiate.

Firstly is a contention over the representation of the 'creative worker' as the precarious worker par excellence, and related to this, the idea of a stereotypical precarious worker. The hypothesis for the centrality of cognitive, immaterial, linguistic and creative labour to present economic and productive systems has been widely supported (Virno 2004, Lazzarato 1996, Hardt and Negri 2000, Holmes 2004). While it would be erroneous to deny that immaterial labour has become largely hegemonic, and subsequently that the distinctions between social and creative labour have become more malleable, such acknowledgement cannot lead to an implicit equivocation of all labour production with the category of creative labour (Neilson and Rossiter 2005: 2). What can be inferred by such equivocation is a collapsing of the myriad forms of labour into the creative disciplines and fields. This is deeply problematic because when such collapse occurs it can eclipse the struggles of those doing unpaid or poorly paid, corporeal and often service based, industrial or agricultural work with the struggles of highly socialized skilled creative or cognitive workers (information experts and technicians, artists, students, academics). While not neglecting the acceleration of cognitive or immaterial labour, the blanket reduction of these to post-Fordist working conditions brutally obfuscates the labour conditions of those working in economically developing industries and regions (De Angelis 2007: 4).

This argument has been used to support claims that class has been neglected in precarity debates, seguing into allegations of Eurocentrism. Such claims indicate a second point of contention, one that objects to racist and classist inferences in the assumption of Fordist structures as

globally innate and the disregard of work most predominantly associated with women and migrant populations. A point taken up within this has been a tendency in activist circles to discuss the compositions of new European identities without analyzing the historical precedence of white nationalism: the concepts of 'Europe', the 'nation', 'citizenship', and what they imply (Home 2007: 4, Hage 1998, Balibar 2005). By neglecting such analysis, activist discourses reinforce the myth of the 'diverse creative class', one that has in actuality been primarily made up of white, middle class artists, students, activists and academics. Furthermore such discourses often exaggerate the kinships between activist, working class and migrant communities (Home 2007). What has been missing is a critical awareness around classist and racist assumptions underpinning many of the concepts or narratives invoked in political debates around precarity.

A third criticism arises in relation to what has been referred to as the 'ahistorical' tendencies within the precarity discourses; historicity is absent in these discourses in that they often fail to address historical and non-Western precarious labour conditions including the insecure state of employment experienced by the majority of the European 'working classes' prior to the Second World War (Home 2007: 5). Necessarily extending this trajectory of argumentation beyond European borders, suggestions have been made that precarious labour has not only been historical, but also a continual condition of capitalism (Mitropoulos 2005, Neilson and Rossiter 2005, The Frassanito Network 2006).

What follows from this is a reconsideration of Fordist labour production as a mode *most particular* to Western states and markets during the twentieth century. In this sense it must be understood as a mode of global exception, rather than as rule, and thus used to define the rationale for tracing out certain shifts in global working conditions. As Mitropoulos points out,

> on a global scale and in its privatised and/or unpaid versions, precarity is and has always been the standard experience of work in capitalism. When one has no other means to live then the ability to labour … life becomes contingent on capital and

therefore precarious (2005: 3).

The fluctuations of capitalism itself as a system, then, as Mitropoulos (2005) and Neilson and Rossiter (2005) propose, means that the very basis for labour under capitalism is essentially prone to vacillation, and thus itself prone to precariousness. The insinuation of precarity into labour conditions more generally (and not post-Fordism specifically) under capitalist economic systems is also linked by Mitropoulos to an omission of feminized labour and industry in discourses of worker exploitation and insecurity. Mitropoulos argues that this ignores the large numbers of women and migrant workers involved in the production of affective labour and/or poorly or unpaid work (Della Costa 1971, Del Re 2000). This includes care work, cleaning, domestic work, reproductive and biopolitical labour, child rearing, sex work, hospitality, and retail work amongst others.[11] The struggles of workers in these kinds of production is not new because workers in such industries have been contending with precarious working and living conditions well before the emergence of theorizations around post-Fordist systems (Mitropoulos 2005: 3).

Concomitant to this, the ongoing hyper-exploited labour of workers in colonized, postcolonial or economically developing regions has also been ignored by claims that precarity in working and social life is a new phenomenon.[12] As Mitropoulos observes, what is registered in the current conceptual escalation of precarity is

> in many respects … actually its discovery among those who had not expected it by virtue of the apparently inherent and eternal (perhaps biological) relation between the characteristics of their bodies and their possible monetary valuation a sense of worth verified by the demarcations of the wage (paid and unpaid) and in the stratification of wage levels (2005: 3–4).

While these criticisms must inform ongoing examination and consideration of the debates around precarity, what has also been noted is that it would be detrimental to neglect the potentially productive aspects of precarious and deregulated states (Neilson and Rossiter 2005, Raunig

2007c). This is because it is the ambivalent character of precarity that mobilizes circumstances functioning at one and the same time as constraints and as conditions for emergent possibility. In recognizing this position, it is specifically the complex nature of those constraints that underpin the conditions in which initiatives such as EuroMayDay and Umsonst thrive; it is this friction that indicates a site for subversion in which hope and opportunity can be constructively deployed. To be sure, for creative projects such as EuroMayDay and Umsonst the conditions of precarity furnished the content of the radical work, and allowed for temporal shifts and spaces (irregular working hours and flexible geographies) that made the organization of such projects and networks possible. The ability of these initiatives to operate, in many instances successfully, under such constraints by turning them into conditions is what allows us to consider the scope for reassessing subjectivation and the collective production of political subjectivity within precarious conditions. This is what Umsonst demonstrates in the form of collective exodus and insurgency, self-valorization and intervention in the apparatuses and spaces of capitalism. Through such exodus, instances of temporary space-time commons conducive to the transformation of subjectivities, relations and worlds emerge.

For a Pleasant Life Now! Reclaiming 'Commons' through Collective Appropriation

> Appropriation is the strike of the precarious (Hamburg Umsonst 2006. Personal communication. Translation mine).

The form used by Umsonst to articulate this state was a performative encounter based on a practice derived from the earlier movements of the Autonomia and Autonomen in the 1970s and 1980s. This form however predated this application, being seen to reference an even earlier heritage in Marx's theorizations on 'collective appropriation', or the collective seizure of all means of production by the working classes; a collective

seizure that for Marx acted as the precondition for the emancipation of the proletariat, the abolishment of class rule and a revolutionary crisis (Gorz 1982: 24–26, Chattopadhyay 2005). The utilization of collective appropriation by Umsonst to open up temporary space-time commons was less informed by Marx's ideological legacy than that of tactical and affirmative action. The objective behind this action shared points of commonality with the wider EuroMayDay campaign, which, as the Chainworkers wrote, acted to combine

> radical practices and political traditions around a proactive project, rather than simple resistance, in order to transcend the various fissures and obsolescences in autonomist and anarchist squatting cultures, not to speak of the inability of traditional leftism of reaching the ever-wider dissenting and mobilizing crowds in Europe and America (2005a).

The aim outlined by the Chainworkers was doubly explicit in the performative encounters of Umsonst: firstly, in the drive to create or experiment with forms and strategies that were proactive rather than simply reactive – that responded to conditions of precarity through self-determined and self-valorizing activity. And secondly, in the need to open transversal paths to those currents of dissatisfaction and imagination situated beyond the boundaries of the activist 'ghetto' – thus creating temporary space-time commons and potentially new subject groups predicated on collective desire. The strategic reinvigoration of collective appropriation was considered to fulfill both of these objectives and attract attention to the struggles of precarious peoples, the process of which could spark new forms of living and relating. This was not unique to the campaigns of Umsonst, indeed it was also a key strategy used in the actions of other groups such as the Italian movements of autonomy, the post-1968 'jobber' movements, and more contemporaneous to Umsonst, Yomango (who were also involved in EuroMayDay and collaborated with Hamburg Umsonst) to name but a few.

Historical Movements of Autonomy and the Colonization of Everyday Life

Acts of collective appropriation featured heavily in various Italian political movements throughout the 1960s to 1980s. At that time, such practices were profoundly influenced by developing ideas around the relationships between capital and everyday life, parallel to the shifts in labour regimes from Fordist to the later named post-Fordist systems and workers struggles. These shifts were linked to what Operaists like Mario Tronti referred to as 'fabbrica diffusa' – the diffusion of the factory into all spheres of social and private life, all public spaces and all registers of biological life and subjectivation (1992). For Tronti and his comrades such as Sergio Bologna (1977), this saturation of the social by capital was a way for capital to resecure its control over defiant workers. This led to what he understood as the 'social factory', or the social as a general plane of production in which social relations become relations of production and exchange. In this state, the social plane is colonized by the logic of capital, driven toward the dissemination and consumption of the reified commodity. What Tronti's observation described was the way in which the production of surplus value moves beyond the confines of the factory. As such, the social is seen to be reconfigured as a sphere of labour, in which power and productive capacities emanate in and from everyday life: from all intersubjective relationships, cultural and social practices and the construction and regulation of subjectivities and desires (Guattari 2008: 35–179).

It is the control of these spaces, relationships and practices that collective appropriation was proposed to reclaim. Especially in Italy, autonomist politics were informed by what they saw as co-constitutive changes in labour, production and subjectivation (Tronti 1964, 1972a). What Tronti and his comrades anticipated during that historical period was a reconfiguration of the paradigms of struggle, shifts in class composition that saw workers refusing to negotiate with bosses, and the replacement of union and party vanguards with self-managed working class protest (Alquati 1975, Wright 2002). Foregrounded in this was an argument for the capacity of the workers to resist capital, rather than being wholly determined by and vulnerable to it. What this leveraged was

a parallax perspective, which recognized that the 'fabbrica diffusa' was actually driven by autonomous workers struggle rather than by capital (Cleaver 1992b). This unsettled previous conceptions of power and production, for in repositioning class before capital Tronti's analysis brought to light the impact of workers struggles (independent of the organization of trade unions and political parties) on the reorganization of production. While Marx himself was vague about who precisely performed the operation of collective appropriation, and what it would consist of – collective appropriation by workers was seen in actions of self-valorization such as 'refusals', or what Virno called 'the right to nonwork' (1996: 20, Tronti 1980).[13]

Self-valorization was proposed by Negri following from his reading of Marx's *Grundrisse*, in light of the conjectures of Tronti and others. For Marx, valorization designated the different ways in which human productivity and capabilities are put to use and transformed by capital for its own regeneration (Cleaver 1992a: 116). While Marx tended on occasion to conflate valorization and self-valorization, 'autovalorizzazione' or self/auto-valorization as Negri employed it developed directly from the 'refusals' of capitalist modes and apparatuses as a means to negate its dominance. According to Negri, self-valorization is equal to such refusal, which as he made clear is imperative to the conception of autonomy within capitalism (1984: 134).[14] Self-valorization in this way is understood as a means to intensify crisis, to embrace and accentuate the uncontrollable desires of the working classes. As Tronti had proposed, if the living labour of the working class was to be conceived in its potential as an antagonistic force, then it needed only to examine itself to comprehend capital (1972b). A strategy of refusal was seen as a way for the living labour of the working class to do so; a refusal to present demands to capital, a refusal to allow the co-option of all creative activity into productive labour and a refusal to engage in meaningless or undesirable work.

As a group of German autonomists explained in the early 1980s, the 'aspiration of autonomy' through refusal signifies a rejection of alienated

life and labour, a reclamation of one's own and collective life and social reproduction, a sabotage of oppressive structures, seen in actions such as housing occupations and squatting, and refusing to yield to degrading working conditions (Katsiaficas 2006: 189). This for Virno signifies a kind of exodus, a flight from the bonds of the state, waged work and consumer capitalism (in Costa 2004). But this is not a passive or negative act. What is axial to such exodus through refusal is its application to emancipatory and proactive ends. Negri's theorization strove toward an expression of how refusal can be at the same time a recomposition. Hence, this refusal is more than a negative resistance; it is the affirmative creation of something new, a constitutive process that, unlike capitalist valorization, is autonomous and self-determined (Negri 1984: 162).

Informed by numerous struggles, this concept was shaped through those already existing practices of social cooperation that resisted the dictates of capital, such as workers' practices of 'self-reduction' and a refusal to participate in the rise in rental prices, public transportation and electricity costs (Ramirez 1975: 144). Such practices were widespread, especially in Italy amongst the working classes and also, later, in the actions of the 1977 Autonomist movements. One specific tactic of faking and self-reduction, demonstrated in an intervention that took place in August of 1974 in the industrial town of Pinerolo, Italy was to be taken up by those collectives of 1977 and later by Umsonst. The intervention took place when workers, on being presented with a thirty percent price increase in their daily bus fares decided that they would not comply. Refusing to pay the increased price they substituted the new tickets with ones they printed themselves, which they then sold to commuters at the original price. This activity eventually led to an official reduction in fares.[15] Indeed, such gestures inspired an eruption of factory and locally-organized groups seeking the reduction of utility bills, supported by electricians and workers who in turn declined to cut off electricity supplies (Thoburn 2003: 131). In such struggles for the redistribution of wealth, collective encounters of appropriation were perceived to resituate the strategic sites of power beyond representative democracies and back

into the publics themselves.

Similar practices of affirmative self-determination were evidenced historically in social, cultural and political projects. Archetypal of these were the appropriation of resources for creative uses such as free radio, the development of spaces exclusively for women and marginalized groups and other self-managed projects by counter-cultures (Cleaver 1992a: 129). Such projects and activities were mainly associated with diffuse configurations of the autonomist movements, such as the Italian Autonomia Operaia and Autonomia Creativa, and the German Autonomen, which were especially visible throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Unlike traditional workers movements, these movements encompassed vectors of political subjectivities, geographies and ideologies and included women, students, migrants, the socially marginalized, youth, anti-nuclear activists, anarchists and punks. In an attempt to inspire revolutionary flights beyond capital, common across these counter-cultural movements was a rejection of capitalism, the state, and established leftist institutions and ideologies (Wright 2002).

What Tronti's thesis played part in recognizing across these social demographics was the collective self-organization in labour and everyday practices as a technique of resistance to capital. Thus the autonomous movements presented an iconoclastic departure from communist and socialist models of organizing by refusing the party form and vanguardist ideologies while retaining a focus on class struggle and analysis; experimented with instead were methods for decentralized organization and politics.

Not only were the spaces and sites of capital challenged, so were the dominant narratives of subjectivity. Refusals acted on the mode of labour and its organization as well as on its principles of subjectivation by constantly questioning fixed notions of the subject-worker (Thoburn 2003: 111). Through this ongoing antagonism, the refusal of work was to be considered a means for destabilizing the laboring identity toward a process of reinvention that challenged the operations of the social factory. As such, the refusals were seen as more than a cluster of

practices or gestures, they spelt out a new mode of class composition. Central to this, and to the politics of the counter-culture, was the displacement of a unified subject of history, a messianic subject of struggle: the 'worker'. Tellingly, a politics of the everyday appeared that celebrated micropolitical sites and activities of resistance. When subjectivation, power and productivity were understood as being as intimately present in everyday life as in factory labour, the potential for insurrection multiplied. Now recognized were those transversal struggles outside of the terrain of the factory: struggles, such as those of women, which had previously remained auxiliary (Dalla-Costa 1971). Daily gestures of dissent were incorporated into discourses of struggle and composition.

It was here that the reappropriations of common resources and the reclamations of social energies by movements were no longer seen as resistance separated from class struggle. Thus this concept of self-valorization embraced variegation. The projects of self-valorization were seen as manifold instead of unified; proliferations of autonomous practices undertaken by plural and irreducible collectives. Akin to Deleuze and Guattari, this meant that instead of working on the level of an individual synthesized subject, self-valorization was more directed toward a nonidentical class subject: what has been referred to as the 'multitude' (Hardt and Negri 2000, Virno 2004). It was also amenable to the kinds of practices and struggles of individual autonomy described by Guattari as 'molecular'. Such vectorial understandings of subjectivity and class translated directly into a reconfiguration of the relations between people through capital; self-valorizing strategies and practices were seen as being able to instantiate new kinds of subjectivities through collaborations that sought to create alternative forms of life and work in a proactive way.

It was unsurprising then that these strategies were found in abundance during the mass outbreak of spontaneous and creative forms and movements of rebellion against the Christian Democrats and the Communist Party in 1977 (Red Notes 1978). For these later movements

however, while still retaining the same serious political intentions, strategies of self-valorization and refusal were injected with a sense of humour. This humour and irony was crucial to the self-identification of the movement, and helped to signify its rupture from political and cultural traditions typified by the institutional left and the vanguards of 1968 (Cuninghame 2007: 154). In this milieu, groups such as the Metropolitan Indians – theatrical demonstrators that dressed up in face paint and headdresses and used predominantly nonviolent tactics – flourished. Taking influence from workers practices of auto-reduction and collective appropriation, the Metropolitan Indians, along with other radical 'youth groups', stole into cinemas and restaurants in acts of collective reappropriation (Berardi 1980: 154–155). Along with the Metropolitan Indians were movements of Mao-Dadaism who, using language anarchically in the style of Dada, politicized irony and play in the construction of autonomous spaces (Grindon 2007).

The most interesting tendency to emerge, however, was that of transversalism – associated with the Bologna based publication A/Traverso – which deconstructed and ridiculed all forms of political organization, including Autonomia and Operaismo. Recalling the Situationists before them, in transversalism the everyday context was seen as a possibility to enact revolutionary moments through subversive tactics and actions, both on the level of language games, and through the appropriations of cultural and social services and goods (Cuninghame 2007: 165). Sentiments such as these, and notions such as transversalism, were to importantly reappear in the stratagems of the Umsonst, who were not only to share common tactics and demands, but also a rejection of even the most radical of Autonomist ideologies.

Collective Appropriation in Umsonst

Such commonalities noted, the central question still remained: how, three decades later and in the context of contemporary Berlin, did Umsonst translate collective appropriation into antagonistic performative encounters? How was the encounter used as a way to speak to collective

desire and transform subjectivities, relations and worlds through self-determination and self-valorization? What was obvious from the outset was that, while taking on practical and strategic aspects of autonomist methods, Umsonst did not take on their ideological or organizational persuasions. As one constituent made clear, 'many of the Umsonst campaigns did not see themselves as being part of the recent autonomous movements, because they still had this dialectical "anti" politics and ways of working' (2006. Personal communication. Translation mine); a position that confirmed Lazzarato's (2004) observation on the growing articulation in contemporary movements of difference rather than the archetypal contradiction (seen in socialist and communist organizing). In their praxis, however, the Umsonst campaigns were directly influenced by historical models of collective refusal and self-reduction, which they 'recovered and reinvented' in the contemporary context, specifically in the struggles against precarious conditions (Eshelman 2005).

For Umsonst, precariousness was found in all aspects of life, including housing, public transport, services and spaces, and access to cultural resources. As Hamburg Umsonst declared, their campaign opposed 'the logic of the state and capital' and its corollaries

> with the breadth of our subjective requirements: right to mobility, housing, health, education, enjoyment … appropriation also infers for us the appropriation of space. In a society, which is entirely subordinated to capital, appropriation is possible in every place (2004: 31. Translation mine).

What Umsonst apprehended, like the autonomists before them, was the permeation of capital into every social interaction and relation, constituting all forms of life as instances of production and consumption. This was why it was again not simply the participation of a singular 'working class' that was solicited. Rather it was anyone that struggled with widening gaps in economic accumulation and privilege: whether student, creative worker, casual worker, domestic worker, service worker or care worker. As constituents of Dresden and Hamburg Umsonst confirmed, 'we address whoever is there and sees what we do, and we invite people to re-think and join us' (2004).

By beginning with a shared condition instead of a shared ideology, the collective praxes of Umsonst managed to mobilize instances of temporary space-time commons. 'Posing endless discussions about a master plan is not our starting point, which is rather experimental praxis', explained a Hamburg Umsonst constituent, 'we emerge from diverse and varying political experiences and conceptualizations, we want to develop a new language together' (2004). In taking up this stance there was a strict departure from both a vertical 'party' or 'union' organizational or ideological format, and political self-identification: inflections of which were still found in some of the historical and later autonomist practices. In the case of Hamburg Umsonst, this was managed by keeping meetings open and mostly transparent. As one constituent commented,

> at the beginning the meetings of Hamburg Umsonst were extremely open, everybody knew what time they were on and where, and the idea was that new people could come along at any time; this openness was extremely important. It also meant that, over time, fluctuations in participation were very strong: sometimes there were a lot of new people and it was more like a big plenary, and at other times it was very empty (2006. Personal communication. Translation mine).

Despite such fluctuations there were always, added another,

> around fifteen of us in the core group that were there all the time but … there needed to be an openness to the campaigns. This was also important to counteract repression: it should be impossible to recognize who it is that initiates, who participates or who spectates. That was meant to be blurred (2006. Personal communication. Translation mine).

Partially for this reason of safety, to which we will come back, there was considerable emphasis placed on encouraging as many people as possible to get involved in the planning and execution of most of the encounters through wide publicity and calls for participation. For the articulation of the encounters this required the creation of a polycentred format: networks of working groups that were unaffiliated with any ideology or party, flexible to some extent in the unfolding of the encounters and plural in their population.

Neither Berlin nor Hamburg Umsonst operated as a definitive

collective; they came together instead on the basis of campaigns that were for the most part welcoming of participation, debate and further reappropriation. In order to engender this transparency and as a means to communicate with wider desires, several of the encounters were prefigured by attempts at facilitating spaces for exchange. These incorporated workshops, research groups and conversations between the initiators and members of the public including students, artists, unpaid interns and minimum wage earners such as those in the casualized service industries. As one constituent recounted, 'we always approached other groups that were working on these specific conflicts, we ran workshops with them and tried to develop an appropriation focused perspective together' (Hamburg Umsonst 2006. Personal communication. Translation mine). What this format hoped for was the mobilization of dialogic spaces, in which transversal relationships between the initiators and the potential constituents of the resulting encounters could grow. These arose in one sense as a means to move beyond prescriptive or abstracted political assemblages by concentrating on issues relevant to a population wider than that of the established activist milieu. Constituents of both Berlin and Hamburg Umsonst placed considerable energy into talking to people about the implications of structural reform in their everyday lives, inviting them to express their dissatisfaction in performative and collective ways. For Umsonst, unified direct action was seen as a tactical way to make this dissent visible, a corollary of which could be the genesis of appropriative self-organization beyond the parameters of conventional activist spheres.

While these calls for inclusivity flourished on a rhetorical level, several fairly significant constraints were encountered in their practical realization. Some of the actions were difficult to access by people with physical disabilities, such as Berlin Umsonst's *Badeschiff Umsonst* (2004) in which a group of people hijacked a swimming pool, or *Was ist cool? – Reclaim the pool* (2003), which required particular kinds of mobility to scale fences, travel over considerable distances between swimming pools and circumvent security guards. Additionally, despite

circulating propaganda advertising the workshops, stronger and more sustainable alliances with those affected by the conditions Umsonst were targeting could have been made. This, admitted one constituent, was a problem that revealed itself to Hamburg Umsonst during a day of protest against state threats to unemployment insurance in 2004. As she explained,

> there was a day of action at the employment office, which served as a meeting point: there was no direct co-ordination of the protest itself, though many different groups were there. Afterwards there was also a meeting where we were going to figure out how to negotiate certain rules, regulations and those sorts of things at the office. There was meant to be a knowledge exchange around this, possibly the making of collective plans. There was also the idea to form an organization of unemployed people. The first meeting that took place after the action day was very sobering because there was really quite a clear delineation. It turned out that at that time the majority of activists were students, I don't think anyone at that time was actually unemployed, and the reality was that many of the unemployed people there were a lot older than us … it was very hard to communicate and it came out that many of the unemployed people found the project arrogant and confronting (2006. Personal communication. Translation mine).

What this reflection illustrates were some of the difficulties faced by Umsonst in trying to advocate across unfamiliar social groupings. This was a sentiment echoed by another constituent when he admitted that because of the unconventional nature of the campaign, 'during the protests in 2004 around social reforms some people felt we were mocking them because they felt like we didn't take them seriously' (2006. Personal communication. Translation mine). These difficulties had ramifications for the modes of organization and politics Umsonst were practicing. Despite intentions otherwise, what this showed was the danger of an unchecked reproduction of the power dynamic between the vanguardist 'intellectual' and the fetishized 'worker' inherent to representative politics: precisely the kind of politics that Umsonst saw themselves in contradistinction to.

The obvious illegality of the actions and the deterrence this might have caused for potential constituents was also an issue, specifically for those in legally vulnerable positions who could not afford to get caught

for fear of deportation or loss of work. Such issues made it necessary to acknowledge the contradictions underlying a rhetoric of immanent inclusivity, and as these tensions were not reconcilable, emphasis was placed on making the encounters as accessible as possible despite their evident limitations. For instance, certain issues tied up with illegality – concerns about resulting legal and physical risk – were addressed through the collective model of action. As a constituent stressed, 'we thought that this format could help to alleviate some of the guilt and anxiety that people feel when they do them alone' (2006. Personal communication. Translation mine). To this end, care was taken to provide a collective platform whereby constituents could feel more comfortable with their participation, and preemptive practices, such as writing up and distributing educational pamphlets and stickers and being informed about the German legal system, were endorsed.

This commitment to dissuading anxiety and promoting participation was, the constituent continued, important to 'the *Pinker Punkt* (Pink Point – Ride for Free) offensive in 2005 where we encouraged people to travel on city transport without tickets' (ibid.). Such action had already become associated with Umsonst after their organization of several ride-for-free campaigns, the most notable being *Nulltarif* (2003) where campaigners handed out forged train tickets to commuters.

The later encounter of *Pinker Punkt* (2005) was a response to the restructuration of student discount cards and a general increase in fares. The name 'pinker punkt' was strategically conceived as a way to disassociate the practice of 'schwarzfahren' (riding black) from its racist and criminal undertones. The encounter had as its intention the reappropriation of public transport systems by those that felt locked out by the price hike. In this way, it functioned not only as a protest against costs, but also as a reconfiguration of the public transport system. On the advertised days, commuters arriving at various train platforms around Berlin were greeted by pink circular signs indicating gathering spots where constituents of the encounter aggregated before travelling together. In Berlin participation numbers fluctuated from around three to over fifty

people travelling together for free. Each group included people who had been versed in practical strategies to deal with any legal problems, and constituents were repeatedly reminded of their legal rights and given instructions on what to do in the case of possible harassment. Guests on the trains were also informed from the outset that the encounter was taking place, and were explained what was being done and why.

By establishing these links through open communication, Umsonst tried to ensure that there was not only space for dialogue but also that, in the event of confrontation, all commuters and constituents of the encounter would not be alarmed. This commitment to care infused every aspect of the encounter, to the extent that even the resulting fines – of which only three were incurred for trespass – were paid for through the proceeds of a fundraising party, which took place after the encounter's conclusion (Eshelman 2005).

The convivial and affective gestures seen in *Pinker Punkt* were pivotal to the Umsonst encounters generally. As one constituent stated, what Berlin Umsonst wanted to do was 'create situations that were friendly and participatory, and through these to do something illegal' (2006. Personal communication. Translation mine). These kinds of gestures – the care given over to the emotional and relational dimensions of such illegal or novel activities – in combination with the shared desires of participants to reject the neoliberal imperative underlying the price hikes, saw the instantiation of temporary space-time commons. As transitory as they were, these moments signalled new class compositions: transversing demographics and spheres that were private and public, singular and collective. Critical to the formation of these compositions were the methods used to invite them, which were paradigmatic of the Umsonst campaigns more generally.

The Performative Encounter of Collective Appropriation: Playful Interventions in Everyday Spaces

For Umsonst the objective of composing collective encounters in public

realms to subvert the regulation of life by capital was correlative to the disruption of the role of the activist as specialist. This disruption came about through an understanding of the public as the requisite constituents of the encounter. The method by which this objective was realized relied upon experimental creative political forms which took place in public spaces and places, as seen in the examples of Hamburg Umsonst's *Kino Umsonst* (2003), and Berlin Umsonst's *Pinker Punkt* (2005). To recapitulate a key point, this was because these spaces of the social and the 'shared' – the arenas of daily public life – are spaces through which the relations of capital are reproduced. The task of Umsonst was to make transparent, and directly intervene in, the mostly inconspicuous operations of subjectivation and alienation. To do so, the campaigns targeted the recognizable outcomes of economic inaccessibility: the everyday exclusion of precarious people from public services and spaces, from cultural and social resources, through processes of privatization and gentrification. Given that their aim – to make such often ignored sites of struggle visible – was one typical of many political campaigns, why was creativity so important? How did creativity influence an experimental everyday praxis of collective self-valorization through mass appropriation? And how did the dispositions and techniques present through the performative encounter – play, fun, jokes, laughter and desire – help to make the encounter significant to this objective?

In what is to come, we will see how these five dispositions and techniques led to positive responses around collective appropriation, which included the participation of people that would not necessarily identify as activists. The unique benefits these afforded, such as confusion, ambiguity and transversality (across identities, geographies, spaces and contexts) were twofold. Firstly, they were what allowed these encounters to establish new relations between people. And secondly, they strategically helped those involved to elude state repression and thus extend the duration of the encounter as temporary space-time commons. When looking at these dispositions and techniques what becomes apparent is how Umsonst set transversals between the constituents of the

encounter into motion. In this way, the encounter acted as a dispositif for the transformation of subjectivities, relations and worlds by creating dialogic spaces for collective enunciation.

Play

> Play often invites people into the game of social change (Shepard 2010: 272–273).

> The play impulse does not aim at playing "with" something; rather it is the play of life itself, beyond want and external compulsion – the manifestation of an existence without fear and anxiety, and thus the manifestation of freedom itself (Marcuse 1955: 171).

An ethos of accessibility and mutual aid characterized the social orientation of many of the Umsonst encounters, of which *Pinker Punkt* was but one example. What sustained this interaction of collective appropriation was the affective composition of the encounter. By constructing insurrections that were both pleasurable and socially relevant, the political resistance of appropriation became more interesting to a wider body; play invited people into the 'game of social change' to look toward manifestations of 'what could be', as the comments by Ben Shepard and Herbert Marcuse so aptly illustrate. The transversal nature of play allowed the encounter the possibility of addressing people inhabiting various racial, gendered, classed, educational and cultural subject positions (Gadamer 1986: 130). Prefiguring this address were the creative, mischievous elements, which were used to cultivate an atmosphere of festivity. These elements were paramount for they largely made up the conditions through which all the other objectives and techniques of the encounter could proliferate.[16] Needless to say, it was by framing the act of collective appropriation through these elements that Umsonst encouraged the constituency of their encounters, and sustained the fascination that they did. As one constituent affirmed,

one of the main reasons we chose appropriation was because we saw that traditional political forms like demonstrations and petitions had become very defensive forms of politics that seemed less and less attractive, especially to young people … we wanted to make them like parties and have fun [and] break from the traditional inventory of protest … In our actions it was always important that people could spontaneously join in (2006. Personal communication. Translation mine).

Before examining how play influenced transversals between activist and nonactivist identities, it is useful to look at 'play' itself. Extending upon Johan Huizinga's (1955) classic definition of play, Roger Caillois observed some of its formal qualities, such as being 'free' that is to say not forced; 'separate' in the sense of having its own somehow marked off space and time; 'uncertain' or open in its process, with unforeseeable results and flexibility in the ways in which people can engage; 'unproductive' as in not productive of goods or wealth aside from within the parameters of the gaming situation; 'rule based', moving beyond everyday laws into novel and game laws; and 'make believe', or inhabiting other realities to the dominant one (1962: 8–10).[17] When this definition is applied to encounters such as *Pinker Punkt* or *Kino Umsonst*, we can see some of these qualities as essential to the development of the actions. However, the types of play created by Umsonst also marked out a substantive departure from those recognized by Caillois, with many aspects refusing to be easily classified. These ambiguous aspects were symptomatic of the more general ambiguity of identity within the Umsonst campaigns, which operated positively to address a number of issues primarily of accessibility and illegality.

To reiterate, the most strategic quality of play to these encounters was its ambiguity: its uncertain and disruptive nature. This has been widely charted as one of the most confounding characteristics of play, especially to those attempts at definition and function (Turner 1969, Schechner 1988, Spariosu 1989, Sutton-Smith 1997). In these encounters what took place was the continual transversal between 'real' and 'not-real' that play accommodates: incorporating 'real' words, gestures, hopes and intentions, that are framed as 'unreal' through the playful context. This

transversal aspect is how play can be mistaken for not-play, which leads to the paradox of a 'metaphor that is meant' wherein play can signify something more than simply a fantastic and temporary realm (Bateson 2004). The signification of an excess that unsettles the spatio-temporal conditions of play is a double movement within which events can be true and false simultaneously (Bateson 2004: 124–125).

The dual movement identified here was one that was undoubtedly present in the encounters of Umsonst. While, like *Kino Umsonst*, they were saturated with these fantasy elements they also opened up aleatory moments in which it became distinctly possible to conceive the play world as an emerging reality. This was in part achieved by a slippage between the times and spaces of play, taking place in contexts where it was unexpected, and constantly moving between the theatrical and nontheatrical. Such breaches of spatio-temporal and creative parameters helped to leverage the potential of Umsonst's play as an affirmative gesture of self-valorization. By constantly weaving in and out of playful contexts and terrains it became possible to imagine the states of play as contributing to the virtual becomings of different ways of living in the present.

This style of play, in this case a play in which serious content is embedded in humour, illustrates how play demands 'risks and promises rewards that may have consequences for our everyday lives' (Bial 2004: 115). A politicized consideration of play was not unique to Umsonst of course; it was also vital to the Italian movements of 1977, and to the S.I. For the Situationists, play, as a collective creation of 'ludic ambiences', could penetrate and transform everyday life. The Situationist's conception of play was removed from issues of terminus, capitalistic production and spectacularization, making the only goal left of play to be the provocation of a life directly lived (S.I. 1958d). Influential upon the later activities of transversalism and Umsonst, the Situationists wanted to develop strategies to reclaim everyday experiences from the alienation inherent to the logic of capitalism. For the Situationists, play was a means by which to achieve this revolt, as it could unfetter desires and

arouse dynamic new ways of relating to the world. In both the praxes of the S.I. and Umsonst, play was thus considered a mechanism for furthering the imaginings of alternative ways of interacting with the present: for mobilizing transformations of subjectivities, relations and worlds through tracing out escape routes from capitalist regimes. As members of Hamburg Umsonst affirmed, the use of techniques incorporating play, such as irritation, performance and carnival made 'it possible, for a brief moment, to break through the normality of consumption and make the unthinkable thinkable: everything could be for free' (2004).

At the same time as opening up imaginings of concomitant subjectivities, relations and worlds, the slippage of context afforded through play also had more practical consequences. Encounters like Berlin Umsonst's *MoMA/Museum of Modern Art Umsonst* (2004), where risk was high due to the antagonistic and popular nature of the action, utilized the uncertainty of a playful anti-identification as a tactic to avoid enclosure. In *MoMA Umsonst*, which took place in Berlin in April 2004, it was the ambiguity of the encounter, rife with semiotic confusions, that allowed a degree of freedom and visibility usually not associated with direct action protests.

The encounter, recalled one constituent, was originally planned 'because MoMA was really expensive and there were massive queues all the time, so it was really hard to get into' (2006. Personal communication. Translation mine). Compounding this inaccessibility 'they had a special VIP pass that was more expensive but which meant that those people got in while others had to wait' (ibid.). The campaign began well before the encounter itself took place. As the constituent explained, Umsonst campaigners had already 'dressed extra well and distributed "free cards" that looked like the entry cards for MoMA, and through this realized that it was actually possible to get in for free' (ibid.). Two weeks before the action, Berlin Umsonst disseminated two thousand posters closely resembling the official MoMA advertisements, upon which was written: 'The MoMA in Berlin. 200 pictures that many

are talking about but only a few can afford to see'. Under this was a byline in German, Turkish and English, which stated that on 17 April at 4pm the MoMA exhibition would be open for free to the public.

The broad dissemination of this multilingual propaganda ensured that the encounter received citywide media coverage, and on the day between four to five hundred people turned up, along with a large police contingent. Because those who had called the event blended into the crowd, a media furore erupted as reporters rushed around trying to locate the instigators for interviews and commentary. At the same time 'some members came in suits and gave statements to the media. They totally confused everyone by making radical, leftist statements in suits' (Peter quoted in Eshelman 2005). Along with confusing the media, this destabilization of identity also lessened the brunt of state response, for police, while confiscating flyers and banners, were also unable to distinguish the encounter's instigators. As an Umsonst campaigner explained,

> in Berlin at these large rallies, somehow the police are always managing to beat people up … fun makes it more difficult for them. You dance around and confuse the police, who can never be quite sure: is this a political action or a cultural action? It's good to break down these clear divisions (quoted in Eshelman 2005).

While a constituent later criticized the MoMA encounter on the grounds that they 'didn't get in for free', he did appreciate that it had 'a very strong public effect: there were many people and it was in the newspapers and on television' (2006. Personal communication. Translation mine). The positive elements engendered through the playful and ambiguous nature of the encounter thus reverberated on numerous levels. Most crucially, by intervening in and overturning the expected relations and geographies of 'everyday' and public realms, the encounter maintained a mobility through which to forge new affective connections.

Fun and Laughter, Jokes and Hoaxes

> Uncertainty … is the fulcrum of *all* jokes (Virno 2008a: 252).

Along with play, fun and laughter were vital to the Umsonst campaigns (Huizinga 2004: 118). In the encounters of Umsonst, these elements – play, fun and laughter – came together through a grammar of jokes, hoaxes and irony, seen through tactics of anti-identification, forgeries and wordplay such as *Kino Umsonst's* appropriation of the Cinemaxx slogan 'Life plays here'. In these encounters, and the ones still to come, jokes and hoaxes, as components of play, were key to evoking the unexpected through uncertainty – their most essential feature, as Paolo Virno points out (2008a: 252). This uncertainty was symptomatic of what Virno calls a 'crisis of signification' (ibid.) brought about through the joke's unsettling qualities. This is attributed by Virno to the way that jokes impose a suspension between what he defines as 'a rule' or norm and its 'application' by illuminating the multiple ways and avenues that a rule can be applied (ibid.: 302). What this means is that jokes can make evident a variety of different transgressions and queerings. The act of digression from expected pathways is for Virno a highly innovative act.[18] By virtue of its transversal character the joke shows us that what we take as given is actually open to transformation. The productive quality of the joke thus lies in its capacity to throw into relief the incommensurability of language, showing that the application of a norm to a given situation could always be otherwise.

While it is not difficult to connect these more abstracted qualities to the encounters of Umsonst, indeed to all of the encounters in this book, there are also specific linguistic properties that Virno sees as fundamental to the joke. To qualify as a joke, he writes following Freud, three people are necessary: the author, the object and the audience who comprehends the meaning of, and derives pleasure from, the joke (2008b). With this elementary condition in place the joke is able to effect the status quo in one of two ways: either by putting together pre-existing elements in novel or conflicting combinations that challenge factual givens, or by opening spaces for that which is not given, for instance asking for an orange when offered an apple or a pear (Bove 2007). For

Virno, as for Freud (from whose 1905 study on wit and jokes Virno draws heavily), the joke as wit must be seen as a performative, linguistic and public utterance, which must have the ability to recognize when the best course of action is an inappropriate one. At the same time the joke can be an instinctive response to an antagonistic situation (Bove 2007).

These elements of the joke were crucial to encounters such as *Badeschiff Umsonst*, which was organized by Berlin Umsonst in late July 2003. The encounter of *Badeschiff Umsonst* was a response to the privatization and associated fee increases of public swimming pools in Berlin. Working in collaboration with numerous bike demonstrations and picket protests, Berlin Umsonst decided to collectively appropriate a public pool, their chosen target being the exclusive Kreuzberg Badeschiff renowned for its location directly upon the Berlin Spree. Dressed as pirates, the group, recalled a constituent, 'went over the Spree in rubber boats singing pirate songs and then … entered the pool from the water side' (2006. Personal communication. Translation mine). Jubilant chants of 'alles für alle, wir wollen alles für alle' accompanied the boarding of the pool. Constituents of the encounter proceeded to hand out flyers and ice cream while explaining to pool guests why they were illegally entering the venue before merging into the crowd. According to a constituent, the group 'stayed in the pool for about half an hour' (ibid.). 'It was' he later enthused, 'a really nice action'. He continued:

> it was incredibly fun, I mean fundamentally because anything that has to do with swimming and water in the summer is fun, but it was also one of the actions that really provoked applause from the other people there … and that was very encouraging for us, when we saw that it connected … when you see that people find the action important, and react positively when they speak about it … that showed us that something like this functioned well (ibid.).

From various accounts the responses elicited from the pool visitors were overwhelmingly positive and it was clear that the encounter not only sparked amusement, it also inspired generosity toward the interlopers with other pool guests even giving the pirates a hand over the pool wall and in other cases, defending and safeguarding them from pool

authorities.

Following Virno's account, *Badeschiff Umsonst* was a joke. The event of the encounter provided an unexpected, disjunctive interruption, the novel aspect of which engendered spaces for communication and exchange, both sympathetic and conflictive. Space was also opened out on the discursive register: in the wordplay on the name of the pool, its identification as a 'ship' and its 'hijacking'. This worked furthermore on a semiotic level with the 'pirates' hijacking a vessel, and on a political-economic level by virtue of being an appropriation of a public resource that had through privatization become accessible only through theft for those who could not or would not pay. Because Umsonst considered the exclusion from pleasurable activities due to neoliberal precariousness an injurious act, collective appropriation was their tactic of response to a perceived matter of conflict: self-valorization through seizure. The innovative quality of *Badeschiff Umsonst* lay in its interjection between a norm and its application, the digressive aspect of which was engendered through its affective resonances. As one constituent commented on the significance of such digression,

> rule breaking is fun. A collective visible breaking of social rules is even more fun. This is a situation that shows that it's possible … and also that it's emancipatory. It's important for the situation but also important mentally because it inspires people to question if things actually have to stay the way that they are – you get the feeling that things could be different (2006. Personal communication. Translation mine).

Principally the hijacking and the response to it altered the normal course or rule of repressive action by suspending what Maria Hynes, Scott Sharpe and Bob Fagen referred to as 'their target's capacity to act' (2007: 115). Although all present were cognizant of the illegality of the hijacking, this was of less significance than the feelings of pleasure, surprise and joy that the breaking of rules gave rise to. As a constituent emphasized 'people were laughing and cheering, helping us and talking to us' (2006. Personal communication. Translation mine). Through this sharing of laughter and pleasure, through the creation of new social relations, the encounter invited those present into action. This is where a

different interpretation of the encounter as a joke might go beyond that of Virno and Freud: in this encounter the figure of the 'neutral spectator' was transformed into a constituent through common laughter. The affective economy generated through the joke in *Badeschiff Umsonst* meant that little space was left for neutrality, one way or another.

It is this affective sensibility that was the crucial measure of the encounter both as an instance of temporary space-time commons and as a politically antagonistic act. The laughter invited by the hijacking of the *Badeschiff* – the joy and fun implied by the laughter of the pirates and the laughter from the already present pool guests – behaved as a contagion for invigorating instances of shared ways of being. This shared laughter animated transversal movements between the hijacking pirates and the pool guests, implicating all in the development of the encounter. In this sense, the affective resonance of which this laughter was an expression suggested a momentary synchronicity, seen in a mutual apprehension of the other's laughter through the laughter of the self that, through its very mutuality, formed transitory social bonds.

As well as being a connective force, these paroxysms of laughter also fuelled, and were fuelled by, transgression – they responded to the encounter's ambiguity, which unsettled conventions of how and where dissent should take place. Because of its playful nature the encounter tied pleasurable associations to transgressive and illegal actions. The laughter that arose from this novel transgression created further digressions by questioning assumed meanings, opening reimaginings of how the world could be. It also unleashed a desire for these possibilities. The laughter born from the comic supersession of exclusionary laws, the playful yet very strategic breaking of rules for social and political commentary, is as Cuninghame notes, one of the most powerful tools of social movements (2007: 168). For Umsonst, as for their predecessors this was because such laughter allowed for a moment of living 'otherwise', a moment in which the potential of what may be began to give way to a heightened capacity for action (Hynes et al. 2007: 115).

Through its emancipatory qualities, through this shared release,

laughter in the encounters of Umsonst was a means for multiplication and movement. Here lies the transversal aspect of laughter: a mobility through collective action, setting up accumulative identities through affective participation. Laughter in this sense performs a proactive rather than a simply reactive operation; it negates the negative by revealing an affirmation for the present excessive moment (Davis 2000). This is where the explicitly political aspect of laughter can be found, because to partake in its excessiveness, its irrationality, is to participate in an exodus from the oppression of seemingly permanent meaning making processes. This is a hopeful political act, which is sensitive to the possibilities of flow and chaos without crystallizing into tendencies toward categorization (Davis 2000: 67–68). The laughter of *Badeschiff Umsonst* helped to illuminate the reiterative processes of which the present is made up. As such, it posed questions to underlying rules and expectations of living, opening out a horizon of virtual potential; a digressive application of the norm.

It was the way that laughter worked through Umsonst's encounters that made these attempts disruptive of normative power relations: of the state and law, of systems of meaning and acting.[19] At the same time, when such seemingly reified regimes became questionable, the possibility for transversal modes of identification and engagement emerged: between individual and collective action, between the activist and the nonactivist, between the initiator and her public. It was no surprise then that, as one constituent surmised, 'fun and collective rule breaking was the most important thing for us in the end' (2006. Personal communication. Translation mine).

Desire

The affective resonances generated through the encounter, and generative of its enunciation as temporary space-time commons was predicated on its fun and playful aspects. But for these fun and playful aspects to even take hold collective desire had to be present. Here we return to the worlds of Deleuze and Guattari, where we can see that desire in these encounters

were less a question of lack than of excess, capable of enabling and altering the compositions of bodies and states. The encounters of Umsonst acted as what might be referred to through such terminologies as 'desiring machines'. For Deleuze and Guattari, desiring machines are ambivalent forces essential to all processes of production. They are a formative part of the social body; it is desire that produces reality (1995b: 137–138). To look at these encounters as desiring machines means to examine the ways that they created connections, transitions and dislocations that had the potential for producing myriad effects that extended new ways of interacting. As desiring machines, and as enunciations of collective desire, the encounters of Umsonst engendered the transformation of subjectivities, relations and worlds through their capacity to speak to already present currents of public dissatisfaction. One site in which this transformation was seen to play out was in the transversals the encounters mapped out between constituents, and at some points even between spectators of the encounter's documentation.

Perhaps the most compelling example of this was the *Superhelden* (precarious superheroes) action, initiated by a handful of people involved with Hamburg Umsonst for the EuroMayDay protest in 2006. This action deviated sharply from the more transparent Umsonst encounters due to its clandestine nature, more reminiscent of a performance or spectacle. Unlike many of the earlier actions it was not the encounter's solicitation of a wider public that gave rise to temporary space-time commons, but rather the strategic displacement and multiplication of agency. In featuring protagonists that were anonymous and mythological – the superheroes – what was created was a common semiotic, so to speak, of desire. That is to say that the figure of the superhero provided an identifiable and relatable agent that acted to bring people together, one that was diffuse enough to be adaptable across social spectrums, but singular in its claim.

The encounter was inspired by the numerous discussions about the precariousness and economic exploitation of interns and immigrant workers in Europe; issues at the forefront of the larger EuroMayDay

demonstration. On the morning of 28 April 2006 around thirty Hamburg Umsonst campaigners decided to address this situation within their own locales. Dressed as precarious superheroes, the campaigners plundered a neighbourhood 'Frische Paradies' gourmet supermarket, escaping with around 1500 Euros worth of stolen champagne, luxury meats and other delicacies. After posing for victory shots, the superheroes proceeded to redistribute the food, like modern day Robin Hoods, among local poorly paid or unpaid interns and low income workers.[20] As discussed with relation to *Pinker Punkt*, an ethos of care typified the encounter. This was not only in the later dissemination of the goods, but also during the encounter itself. During the act of theft, the superheroes presented shop employees with flowers and gifts. Flyers were also used to explain the intervention to those drawn into the action, reading,

> whether as a well-connected permanent internee, a call-center [sic] angel, migrant cleaner or a college drop-out with no clear job prospects: without the mutant skills of the Precarious Superheros survival in the city of millionaires is impossible. Even though it's us who produce the wealth of Hamburg City, we get none of it. That needn't remain the case. From the gourmet breakfasts at the Süllberg to boar's neck and champagne from "Frische Paradies": the locations of wealth are as numerous as are the methods of reclaiming that wealth. Just one question remains: where will you be using your super powers?

When describing the public response to the action, a few of the constituents explained 'there was massive media coverage and it was totally positive. The reaction was basically "we'd all like to do that". So there seemed to be understanding and sympathy for it' (2006. Personal communication. Translation mine). Within the left, the action garnered notable support. National and international mainstream media covering the encounter were also indeed largely supportive, as well as, at times, perplexed and derisive: both calling the action 'one of the most inventive – and possibly the funniest … raids in German criminal history' (Harding 2006) and criticizing it for intimidating workers. As a conservative German tabloid commented: 'to just walk into the most expensive shop in the area and take what you want: this is something that everyone dreams about, but one small group of people actually did it as well (Kbr 2006.

Translation mine).

The oscillation between derision and applause accentuated the potential that such encounters have to stimulate and in some ways articulate collective and rogue articulations of desire. This desire was not homogenous but ambivalent and full of discord: coming from a shared dissatisfaction. It is in the sweeping affectivity of the superhero's embrace of such dissatisfaction that we find again the encounter's social-political potential, for it is on this register that collectivity is born. Guattari posited that in order for a desiring machine to be emancipatory and not recuperative or affirmative of structures of domination, it must be collective; it must spread throughout the entire social strata, from the schools to the prisons and the streets. For Guattari, liberated desire is seen in an exodus from individual fantasy, in a way that connects with the social body (1995b: 62).

The effective quality of the *Superhelden* encounter was conditional on its connecting into already existing social desires. What made the encounter innovative, though, was the way it mirrored the contours of this desire through its temporality. In other words, through the attention given over to the limitations of its own articulation and to the limitations embedded in those collective desires by socialization. The encounter was innovative in Virno's sense in its process of crisis and return. While it affected a sense of exhilaration through its defiant suspension of the law, the encounter also allowed for a return. This was, as Virno argues, essential to its transformative capacity because it is through the recourse to regulated, socially legitimated activity that creativity and innovation is triggered (2008a: 302). As such, it was the transitoriness in this articulation of collective desire that actually served to make possible its proliferation. By stressing both its impermanence and its ubiquity what was doubly communicated was a nonspecialization: that this defiance lay within anyone's grasp, that the potential for self-determination underpinned each and every moment of daily life.

The particular operation of the encounter here was in some ways, however, more the exception than the rule. While it did transgress

conventional activist platforms to illustrate more everyday oriented tactics for collective resistance, it nonetheless fell back to specialized roles. For reasons of security it was a very closed action and as a Hamburg Umsonst campaigner reflected,

> we later decided that it would have been better if the action had been more collective. In the case of *Superhelden,* the action itself was very specifically avant-garde, something that a few people did and that others could only access through the media. In the future we'd like to focus less on spectacle and include more people (2006. Personal communication. Translation mine).

This specialization was also present in the figure of the superhero herself. The return to popularized images of the exceptional figure tended to paradoxically recode resistance as something undertaken only by specialists in social change. This was furthered by the overt risk of the encounter, which alienated the more conservative public and blocked visible participation by people in vulnerable positions. The difficulty of translating such practices into spheres that might view them as strange or threatening was significant. Nonetheless, while these connections may have failed, the effort to move beyond the confines of the usual activist tropes and semiotics marked out an innovative trajectory. As transversal encounters, the actions of Umsonst created self-valorizing links, promoting a process of disjunctive synthesis through posing the question 'what more could there be?' For Deleuze and Guattari this disjunctive aspect directly illustrates the potential for aesthetic acts to use desiring machines as apparatuses for social intervention, for it is this very crisis that makes them productive. The encounters of Umsonst in which the processes of capitalism were interrupted point to a discordance induced by the creative act.

By being sensitive to collective desires, Berlin and Hamburg Umsonst opened up terrains for participation, exchange, conviviality, disagreement and reinvention; for transversals through, and accumulations of, identities and discourses. As one constituent concluded,

> I would say that to get out of your subculture or leftist ghetto, these forms are

necessary to be provocative or to activate people or to break through habitual schemas. Only because there are so many assumptions about left activism that are immediately present and that are reproduced when you stand around with a picket … and distribute leaflets. At the same time we need to ask: do we actually know what other people want? Is there even a common perspective? Where do these common points lie? And if, when you find these points, you push a text onto people saying how shit capitalism is then you won't open space for discussion. And I think that there is an important moment there (2006).

By discovering channels of desire in fun and creative ways, it was this important moment that Umsonst were, more often than not, able to mobilize.

Conclusion

The necessity for substantially rethinking modes of political praxis beyond the conventional marches, strikes and demonstrations has sparked numerous experimental activities over the past decade, to which the Umsonst encounters have contributed. In rejecting expected modes of political protest, issues such as the delineations of activists from nonactivists, organizational formats and the relationship of political work to everyday life have been reimagined. This has occurred on both macro and micro levels, from the establishment of transnational precarity networks (such as EuroMayDay) to the creation of smaller, encounter oriented cells such as the Umsonst campaigns. A major concern of such movements has been the development of unconventional, creative techniques. These have been employed to negotiate and invent different ways of collaborating, alternative to those ghettoized structures of conventional leftist organization. With the precariousness of life and labour as its impetus, the Umsonst campaigns specifically cultivated moments of temporary space-time commons that registered already existent dissatisfactions and desires for alternative ways of being and relating. Finding articulations of these desires in clandestine and individualized acts of theft and appropriation, Umsonst politicized them by making them collective and visible. What brought together this

commons was a concentration on the exclusion of precarious people from public spaces, resources and services as well as cultural experiences. By inviting those implicated to act and organize themselves in convivial and playful ways, Umsonst generated lines of exodus not confined to the usual subcultures of political labour.

Where Umsonst reached limitations was in a proliferation of collective action disassociated from activist networks. While the encounters flourished when called for from within the ranks of the radical left, they were rarely wholly organized outside of these communities. That said, because their appeal went beyond the usual activist realms the lack of 'non-activist' instantiation did not negate the value of such encounters to particular articulations of resistance. The encounters of Umsonst were furthermore specific techniques making very specific claims and proposing very specific demands. As Berlin Umsonst acknowledged from the outset,

> it is already quite clear to us that this is not a transferable political demand. With it, we want to express our protest against a politics of shortage that doesn't get trapped in the logic of compulsive saving, but that can take place in people's everyday lives (2003. Personal communication. Translation mine).

Thus the encounters composed by Umsonst never sought to replace or devalue different, more sustained modes of political organizing, but were, on the contrary, aware of their relevance as but one tactic for action amongst many others.[21] It is this self-reflexivity and specificity that signals the reason why, when speaking about performative encounters such as those of Umsonst – as well as those of the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net, to which we now turn – we must be mindful to ensure that the vocabularies and methods we employ are able to explore moments in their unfolding, as mutable, temporary and affective rather than getting stuck on an end point. What we need are creative understandings of politics as imperfect, messy and disjunctive processes, the facets of which must be continuously reevaluated. The Umsonst campaigns bring to these imaginings some ways that socially focused politics, materialized through creative and performative techniques, can

set up affective exchanges through which transversals of identities and contexts occur. And it is in this movement of the transversal that margins of manoeuvrability and different forms of life can be enacted within the regimes of capital.

1 Similar methods and tactics have been associated with the creative Italian movements of 1977, such as the Metropolitan Indians, the movement of Mao-Dadaism and Transversalism, an excellent account of which is given by Cuninghame (2007). Groups such as King Mob in the UK, Black Mask and Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers in New York, the Provos in Amsterdam, and countless German groups also provide compelling examples. See Grindon (2007) and Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A. Gruppe et al. (1997). For an excellent account of the more recent Italian movements around precarity see Vanni and Tari (2005).

2 This however, does not mark the political movement of the term outside of the radical left. Pierre Bourdieu used the French 'précarité' in the 1960s to describe the condition that divided permanent from intermittent workers in Algeria, which left traces on all aspects of social life. The term has also gained legitimacy since the late 1970s and has been circulating in common usage by governments, union representatives and the media (Barbier 2004: 9).

3 Cities in which Umsonst was taken up included Berlin, Dresden, Freiburg, Cologne, Mannheim, Kiel, Munich, Kassel, Dusseldorf, Lübeck, Göttigen and Jena amongst others.

4 Collective appropriation indicates the collective claiming of spaces, resources, goods and services (through stealing, occupying, squatting, borrowing etc) from the state or private corporations. A politics of collective appropriation is marked by a state critical stance (even anti-statist) and involves the subversion of a capital-oriented exchange logic in favour of a concept of seizure predicated on desire and unhindered by financial constraint. Common to these gestures is a highly libertarian attitude, an exuberant and playful negation of the exclusion provoked through consumer wealth disparities, and a very clear social orientation that attempts to move beyond the paradigms of traditional political structures in both theory and practice.

5 'Flex Workers: a good contemporary-English equivalent to the everyday-Italian *precari* or every-day Spanish *precarios*. Flex Worker is an expression that one finds in the daily press to loosely describe to the social reality of millions of service and information workers working under non-standard daily, weekly and monthly schedules, without secure tenure or social benefits. The call *"Flex Workers of Europe Let's Unite! There's a World of Rights to Fight For"* was used to open the declaration for EuroMayDay 2004' (Foti 2004).

6 The focus here on only Berlin and Hamburg arises from their higher and more sustained frequency of interventions and campaigns.

7 The promotional slogan used by the Dammtor Cinemaxx.

8 A neologism coined to provide the English version of the French 'précarité' (Neilson and Rossiter 2005: 1).

9 As the Chainworkers (2005b) explain, 'Mayday Parade is the first European self-organized demonstration against precarization. Traditionally Mayday represented ageing unions and the traditional left, both too stale and backward looking to see what the social mobilizations are that society is asking from us. We think that the future lies in developing forms of self-mobilization and production of conflict across wider political spaces, in expressing political and social claims independently – working with existing radical parties and existing radical unions and associations – but as an autonomous force and with new imagery'.

10 Although perhaps more indicative of the participation and interest of the left intellectual and creative spheres in these discourses, multiple journals and publications have devoted entire issues to the theme over the past decade. For instance, see the web journal *Transversal*

'Precaria' (2004), the 'Melano-Barcelona EuroMayDay 004' newspaper (2004), the Dutch *Greenpepper* magazine 'Precarity' (2004), the British *Mute* 'Precarity Reader' (2004/05), the Australian *Fibreculture* 'Precarious Labour' (2005), and the Berlin *NGBK* 'Prekare Perspective' reader (2006) amongst others.

11 Affective labour is that which relies on the production and manipulation of relations, emotional connections and human contact (Hardt and Negri 2000: 292).

12 However, as Mitropoulos argues, this has done little to encourage a reassessment of the claim that precarity is a recent condition but has rather led to calls for the reconstitution of the terrain of visibility. What this has consolidated, for Mitropoulos, is the elevation of the cultural-cognitive worker as the paradigm of precarious labour conditions so that which was once considered as exodus or a refusal of participation is now embedded in the conversations around inclusivity and recognition (2005: 3).

13 As witnessed in the latter half of the century in the workers uprisings and revolutionary appropriations in France (1968), Chile (1972–1973), Portugal (1974–1975), Iran (1979), and Poland (1980–1981).

14 See also the comments by George Caffentzis on the functioning of self-valorization through the transformation of wages and use value (1987: 189).

15 See also Dario Fo's *Can't pay? Won't pay!* (1982) which is based upon the everyday political culture of North Italian factory workers.

16 For an excellent analysis of spassguerrilla or guerrilla fun in more historical German social movements refer to Teune (2007). For an extensive reading of play and queer political performance and protest see Shepard (2010).

17 Regarding the definition of play, Brian Sutton-Smith cautions heavily against attempting to impose definitive limitations and categories on the complexity of play. His caution here is instructive. He writes that the definition of play should not be enclosed and should be able to take into account both passive and active forms, including vicarious forms. This broadening out would include daydreaming, sports and festivals. He also argues that it should include animal and nonhuman actants, and not only be defined within Western-centric parameters and values, including being nonproductive, fun and voluntary. Furthermore, play needs to be seen as having its own performance and style, and not simply as fun or as a disposition. An important comment is also made on play's duration and spatiality, that it can be as fleeting as a joke or last as long as the cycles of festivals for instance, and that it can take place both in spaces as diffuse as individual consciousness and as defined as sporting arenas. Most importantly, he writes, play must be considered as a language, as a system of communication and articulation in itself (1997: 218–219).

18 For Virno and Raunig (2008b), the kind of affective, creative and innovative economy in which the joke and wit circulate is linked to capitalist regimes of production – a wider paradox embedded in the performative encounter.

19 This idea of performance being able to throw such structures into question through laughter was also associated with the encounters of the Dadaists. As Harriet Watt comments, even though the performances of the Dadaists were enacted with a deep seriousness, they were often provocative of such a freeing laughter that laughter itself became the focus, a laughter that challenged and destabilized authority and power (1988: 119–135).

20 This echoed an action undertaken by a member of British group King Mob, who on Christmas in 1968 dressed as Santa Claus and handed out items straight off department store shelves as presents for children. The presents were later confiscated by police (Grindon 2007).

21 This is also an essential acknowledgement of play as a disposition or technique for action. As Shepard has noted 'it is useful for organizers to be clear about what play can and cannot do. Play helps actors convey a counter-public message; it helps create situations; it engenders fun. It is not a substitute for a larger more coherent organizing strategy. Performative activism works best when linked with a well-researched, well-defined campaign. There are different kinds of policy stages for different kinds of performances' (2010: 273).

Chapter 4
Movements for Human Mobility: The Transnational Republic and the Bundesverband Schleppen und Schleusen

> Freedom of movement and settlement are basic human needs. Migration is a fact, its autonomy … cannot be regulated, as states and transnational organizations would want. Migration is a consequence of economic exploitation, political repression and war, but also of the legitimate interest of people to find better or different living conditions. Free movement for everyone must become a reality (No Borders 2002).

For Umsonst, the performative encounter was a device for arousing and articulating participatory responses to the precarious conditions of life and labour. For the Transnational Republic and the Bundesverband Schleppen und Schleusen (National Federation of Smugglers and Traffickers – or Schleuser.net), it is a means to respond to precariousness around human mobility. For all of these collectives and campaigns, the encounter has been used to engender the transformation of subjectivities, relations and worlds through interaction: through the determination of the public as constituents of an encounter that is a moment of temporary space-time commons. For the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net it is, moreover, an instrument for speaking and responding to collective desires around mobility calling for the 'freedom of movement and settlement' (No Borders 2002).

The necessity for focusing on border-crossing in both the projects of the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net came about through two quite ordinary stories. They were ordinary insofar as the situations they described, and the responses they garnered, had been echoed in countless, unnamed and invisible others. For Schleuser.net it was the 'woman in the glovebox'. On 24 and 25 March 2005 the Bavarian police publicized a

photograph in the Bavarian *Tageszeitung* that showed a woman hidden in the glove compartment of a car. Under the sensationalist headline 'The woman in the glovebox: This is how smugglers bring illegals into Bavaria!' the article described the image as depicting 'a young Asian woman, pent-up behind the dashboard of a small car. Travelling through Russia, Slovakia, and Chechnya, this is how the young woman wanted to enter Bavaria!' (Heuck et al. 2005: 64). The image shocked the German public and was swiftly taken up as further justification for more intensive border policing and immigration laws. Despite the largely unsubstantiated nature of the story accompanying the picture, racist speculation ran rife (Homann 2006). At the same time as the media smear campaign was gaining momentum, the Munich delegation of the Karawane: Für die Rechte der Flüchtlinge, Migrantinnen und Migranten (Caravan: For the rights of refugees and migrants) network were alerted to the fact that the image had been faked (Rahn 2005). While the Bavarian police insisted that they had obtained the image from the Slovakian police, the image had in actuality been taken from the September 2001 issue of *US Customs Today* (Heuck et al. 2005: 64). In its original incarnation, the photograph documented a failed border-crossing attempt thousands of miles away, at the Mexico/US border. Even though the Karawane brought these facts to light through their website and mainstream media press releases, it did little to affect media hype or dissuade anxiety around border controls.

Unlike the woman in the glove box whose image became fuel for anti-migration propaganda, the story that inspired the Transnational Republic was far less spectacular. The situation was that of a Russian migrant who had been a resident of Germany for a number of years. After realizing that her passport had expired she sought to renew it through her embassy. On presenting herself to the Russian consulate, however, she was informed that her citizenship had been revoked. As the consulate explained to her, because she had been living outside of Russia for several years and had let her passport lapse, her citizenship had also become void. Confiscating her passport the official then informed her

that she was now 'illegal', unable to claim either German or Russian citizenship (Transnational Republic 2006. Personal communication).

Depressingly, these were two reasonably commonplace stories in which the power of the nation-state to determine human mobility and settlement was in evidential force. The only thing out of the ordinary about these two situations was the instrumental role they played in the instantiation of the two different projects. For Schleuser.net, the 'woman in the glovebox' provided the impetus to begin using faking as an artistic tactic for pro-migration propaganda, and for the Transnational Republic the dependence on state bureaucracy to legitimize and legalize political subjects signalled the need to think about alternatives to the nation-state. Both campaigns were set up to criticize, and intervene in, conservative parliamentary and public discourses around undocumented migration, state power and human movement.

Between the Gallery and the Social Forum

Both Schleuser.net and the Transnational Republic found their inception at a specific time and place within the art world. This was an art world already fascinated with the intersections of art and politics.[1] Schleuser.net was founded as a 'communications team' in Munich in 1998 by three artists and media activists involved in the European-wide 'Kein Mensch Ist Illegal' (No One is Illegal – NOII) and No Borders network.[2] The anti-racist NOII network was set up in 1997 in response to the acceleration of deportations authorized by the German government throughout the 1990s. This precipitated a jump in deportations from three thousand in 1988, to approximately fifty thousand over the period of 1993/1994 and a subsequent plateau at around thirty five thousand (No One is Illegal 2000). The sharp rise in deportations was but one expression of the German state's campaign to impede the flow of undocumented migrants and asylum seekers that had begun subsequent to the dismantling of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of Soviet communism. The unprecedented stream of reuniting 'foreigner' families,

returning ethnic German and Jewish peoples from Eastern Europe, settlers from the GDR and asylum seekers from civil wars was used to justify public and parliamentary xenophobia (Marshall 2000: 1). This migratory influx was unfairly branded by the state as a catalyst for the dramatic escalation of anti-foreigner sentiment, which, further agitated by media rhetoric, resulted in the tenfold increase in attacks on immigrants in the early half of the 1990s (Human Rights Watch 1995). Consequent to this, state apparatuses set strategies in motion for inhibiting cross border mobility and residence through mass illegalization. These strategies included the rejection or 'loss' of asylum applications, and severe restrictions on the Basic Asylum Law were implemented that limited the right to asylum (initial propositions of which included the abolishment of all constitutional rights to asylum) (Oezcan 2004: 4).[3] Under such oppressive measures, undocumented migration proliferated with estimates suggesting up to one and a half million undocumented migrants living in Germany around the turn of the century (No One is Illegal 2000).

Coming out of this context with the motto 'mobility is our goal!' Schleuser.net was conceived of as

> a performative location where it is possible to reflect upon migration and – in order to develop a concrete practice which intervenes in the semiotic system – to scrutinize the symbolic content of fundamental and current developments (Heuck et al. 2005: 64).

Adopting the form of a lobby organization, Schleuser.net set as their objective the interrogation and subversion of racist semiotic and ideological narratives around a very specific phenomenon of migration, that of people smuggling and trafficking. To meet this objective, they took up the performative encounter as a device for intervention. The collective established themselves in retaliation to new policy introduced in Germany after the fall of the wall, which saw the legal and social status of those aiding migration change from 'fluchthilfe' (flight help) to 'schleppen und schleusen' (smuggling and trafficking) (Homann 2006. Personal communication). Opposing the criminalization and defamatory

media portrayal of those aiding migrants by providing the means for passage, Schleuser.net saw themselves as 'represent[ing] the interests of companies which are engaged in the market segment of undocumented border transgression and passenger transportation' (Heuck et al. 2005: 64). At the same time, the group presented 'the public with systematic background information regarding migrant mobility' and sought 'to work on improving the image of the so called "smugglers and traffickers"' (ibid.).

To act effectively as an informational interface, the group decided to adopt the structure of a lobby organization. 'We didn't want to start a political group or an art group', Ralf Homann explained, 'so instead we built an economic group, a lobby organization, because this is what seemed to be the most successful at the time' (2006. Personal communication). This platform, however, was subverted by Schleuser.net through their criticism of state institutions and processes, which jettisoned the conventional work of the lobby as an apparatus for reform. Like all lobby organizations the group aims to 'influence public debates on their specific subject', in this instance 'national boundaries and immigration' (Lind 2004: 17), by liaising with those involved in smuggling and trafficking activities, conducting information sharing and educational sessions, and representing their 'members before state institutions and the media' in order to 'promote the rectification of state-sponsored public relations' (Heuck et al. 2005: 64). In this sense, the group understands its role as a campaign oriented one, to be terminated once the decriminalization of those engendering border transport had been achieved (Homann 2006. Personal communication). By taking matters into their own hands in this way, the group maintains an anti-reformist stance, as Homann clarifies 'we didn't want to say "hey state, you have to do something for refugees or migrants", we wanted to appeal to the responsibility of individuals themselves instead, because you know that the state won't do it anyway' (ibid.).

Parallel to Schleuser.net, the Transnational Republic also conducts information sharing and education sessions, with a focus on issues around

democracy, citizenship and the state. The project was formed contemporaneously to the NOII network in 1996 in Munich, but officially emerged in 2001. The group came together to interrogate the problems of global individual representation vis-à-vis the dominance of transnational corporations in determining global and national standards of living and labour production. Under the motto 'globalization needs democracy' the collective took the proliferation of those globally acting corporations, and their effects on the functioning and power of the traditional nation-state, as its basis for reflection and praxis (Rist and Zoche 2006. Personal communication). This reflection prompted questions, such as:

> who is still defending our global civil rights? Can nation-states act transnationally, or do they merely block one another? Is the traditional idea of the separation of powers rendered obsolete? Shouldn't we take money (and the media) into consideration as the "fourth power"? Does the geopolitical division of people into nation-states reflect the spirit of modern times? Could we learn from Coca-Cola, Shell and Microsoft how interests can be realised at a global level? (Transnational Republic website).

As a way to explore such questions, the collective began working with the form of an autonomous micronation.[4]

While taking the nation-state as a point of reference the Transnational Republic micronation – the 'First Transnational Republic' – also marks out a definitive and critical tendency toward something ontologically different.[5] Unlike the conventional nation-state, citizenship or admission to the Transnational Republic is based on ideological, affectively connected communities and collective desires instead of laws of *jus soli* (right of soil) or *jus sanguinis* (right of blood). These different principles for participation are reflected in the rights charter, which includes 'human rights, transnational principles of justice, the protection of our environment as well as the democratic rights of the individual' (Transnational Republic website). Furthermore, unlike a nation-state, the Transnational Republic micronation is not officially recognized and has no legal, economic, territorial or political power as such. Whereas for nation-states these legal, economic and political powers are hierarchically organized, the rogue character of the micronation is

exemplified by its rejection of statist forms, with an emphasis on collective decision-making. A verisimilitude to the nation-state can be found in the micronation's mimicry of bureaucratic semiotics. The Transnational Republic have their own passports, a system of currency – the payola, with which you can purchase goods – a national anthem, a flag and a public presence, both online and in the form of encounters. The public encounters facilitated through the project variously reflect and theorize local and global economic, democratic and state conditions, especially around mobility, the environment and law. These events often include citizenship induction sessions and documentary exhibits. Through such performative devices, these encounters fundamentally enact imaginings of the micronation itself.

By prefiguratively enacting the conditions they desire, these two initiatives can be understood as complementary to one another: a complementarity strengthened through their adaptation of the performative encounter. Through using the encounter as a primary communicational technique, in concurrence with an open basis for participation, both collectives have managed to generate temporary space-time commons that were conducive to information exchange in a variety of settings, from the gallery and the social forum, to art workers meetings and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) conferences. Both collectives maintain a critical position toward the nation-state, which is spatially enacted through the groups' autonomy and mobility. This autonomy and mobility is part of a critical strategy of experimentation; a strategy that, they contend, must be able to address the different issues around migration including the immaterial and the geopolitical. Furthermore, it has been integral to both groups that their strategies are capable of rethinking the proliferation of the border into all spaces of the everyday, both in the productions of subjectivity and identity and, as Sandro Mezzadra puts it, in those

"geopolitical borders" that articulate their "transnational character, legal borders that curtail migrants" mobility and rights, cultural and social borders produced by processes of ethnicization, borders of production, temporal borders that separate

different historical times and make their translation into the unitary language of value possible (2007: 11).

Crossing Borders: Debates on Globalization and Migration

Like the networks of NOII and No Borders, the discursive contexts for the arguments made around migration and cross border movement by the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net have paralleled, intersected, been contested and influenced by academic literature and scholarship. This has occurred especially around axes such as recent causes and effects in labour production, the tensions between the nation-state and global entities, geopolitical borderlines and cultural displacements. The significance of migratory trajectories is clear – as Saskia Sassen points out 'international and inter-regional labor migrations have been both a widespread and a strategic component of Europe's urbanization and industrialization history over the last three centuries' (1999: ix). The eminent role that migration has played in the historical, economic, cultural and political lives of nations cannot be underscored enough.

While a central component of migratory movement has been labour opportunity, it is certainly not the only motivation – migration cannot be limited to economic and labour interest alone (Castles and Miller 1993). Political and religious factors such as civil war, persecution, and an antipathy to the political climate at the place of origin, increasingly environmental crisis from natural disaster and climate change, social, familial, and cultural influences as well as personal desire and lifestyle all play a highly determinate role in singular and mass acts of flight (ibid.: 1–5). But even these motivations do not encompass the myriad reasons driving human movement. Entertainment migration has also been cited as a substantial factor, of which international leisure tourism heavily outweighs all other entertainment related movement (Morawska and Spohn 1997: 41–42). This however is more prevalent within economically and politically stable regions, a fact that challenges its classification alongside the kinds of migration outlined above.

Nonetheless it must be acknowledged as a motivation for the crossing of borders.

While numerous debates have arisen in the social sciences around how to classify these multivalent motivations, as Castles and Miller observe the distinctions between the different desires and necessities that underpin migration are often difficult to discern.[6] As they propose,

> it is important to realise that the distinctions between the various types of migrations, however important for the people concerned, are only relative. Labour migrants, permanent settlers and refugees have varying motivations and move under different conditions. Yet all these types of population movement are symptomatic of modernisation and globalisation. Colonialism, industrialisation and integration into the world economy destroy traditional forms of production and social relations, which lead to reshaping of nations and states. Such fundamental societal changes lead both to economically motivated migration and to politically motivated flight. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between the two (1993: 26).

What Castles and Miller usefully draw attention to are the complexities and contingencies underscoring the motivations behind human movement that are taken up by the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net. Their assertion that the segregations between the multiple categories of migration and exodus are 'only' relative, however, is problematic – a point to which I will return later. What may be taken from this position more generally is the conjugal relationship between diverse kinds of migration and globalization.

The overlaps between human movement and globalization cannot be wholly attributed to recent times, for the development of globalization has been a long-term, deeply constellated and nonlinear process. An intensification in the mechanisms of globalization has been noted since at least the 1980s (Harvey 1989, 2006), linked to unprecedented developments and innovations in information, (tele)communications and transportation technologies. Such developments have influenced substantive shifts in labour production including expanding the sites of (material and immaterial) production from the national to the transnational, and transforming the tenor of labour and working life. These shifts, along with the effects of international corporate and state

partnerships, and the velocity of global mobility have become endemic of neoliberal economic capitalism. The advances in mobile technological production and services have also impacted upon local and national economic and social-cultural systems (Morawska and Spohn 1997).

In combination with the diffusion of cultural landscapes via actual and virtual technologies, this reshaping has exerted significant influence on the possibilities for movement and containment, as the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net recognize. New biometric security and military information technologies have meant that the reach of nation-states now extends well beyond geopolitical borderlines (Amoore 2006). This reach operates in a manner that Foucault (1978, 1982) describes as biopolitical: exercising power upon all aspects of social, personal and biological life. But information technologies serve not only as instruments of oppression and surveillance, they also allow for the immediate communication across territories and time zones, which are becoming more participatory with greater access to resources. Of course the dynamics linked to technological progression mentioned here do little more than indicate some of the most visible and prolific changes over the past decades. Yet even from this brief description it becomes possible to imagine how current paradigms of industrial and technological development have played a part in expediting the processes of globalization. Such processes have fundamentally affected the ways in which the capacities for mobility and settlement have been addressed in legal, cultural, social-political, economic and biopolitical realms. And these are the changes that are specifically looked at by the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net.

The Nation-State, Borders and Mobility

By introducing the conceptual terrain of globalization and migration, it is instructive to address the dynamics of globalization in relation to the nation-state and citizenship as the Transnational Republic does. This is because it allows for enquiry on border transitions and the production of included and excluded identities. As Sassen affirms,

the drama of people in motion in Europe shows with great clarity the intimate connection between the formation of independent nation-states and the creation of the refugee, the displaced person, the asylum seeker. Nation-states in Europe contributed to the production of the refugee through their aspiration to administrative sovereignty, particularly in their assertion of the right to determine entitlement to citizenship (1999: 1).

Modern classifications of citizenship (and in part, nationality) have been congruent to, and formalized through, the emergence of the nation-state as a sovereign entity (Balibar 2004, 2006). In its most basic definition, citizenship signifies the legal membership, including the allocation of rights and obligations, in a polity. Legal membership is conferred by the nation-state, which has the power to determine the basis for inclusion across different levels of social, cultural and political systems of classification. The power to determine inclusion finds its corollary in migration policy, to the extent that migration policy has become a prime illustration of state sovereignty: the power of the state as the sole agency to allow or disallow movements across borders (Kleinschmidt 2006: 6).[7] While these mechanisms are certainly vulnerable to subaltern acts of negotiation and evasion, and while they are always incomplete and performative, the nation-state is commonly held as the singular authority to legally determine freedom of movement. This is predicated on differential processes of legitimation and delegitimation: the decision of who or what is allowed to cross the borderline and under what circumstances and conditions. The material and imaginary border zones of territories demarcate the geographical parameters of individual nation-states, in which the movement of objects and citizen-subjects is regulated based on their official status.

One of the most widely agreed upon features of globalization as it has been manifest over the last thirty years is a rapidly growing hyper-mobility across these virtual and political geographies; the extranational free flow of information, services and capital through borders and state territories (Harvey 1989, Bauman 2000, Castells 1996). This mobility, however, has often been structurally theorized without sensitivity to the

unevenness and paradoxes of its flows. While these lines of division have become porous for fiscally productive phenomenon (including labour migrants that adhere to the regulations of entry conditioned by the receiving nation-state), the possibilities for those seen as undesirable or unproductive have been more limited and regulated than expanded and deregulated.

This limitation has had its most acute expression in relation to the transitions of undocumented migrants and asylum seekers, such as the two women mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. These asymmetrical mobilizations point out idiosyncrasies within discourses of mobility. This especially pertains to discourses that speak in terms of global movement but do not address the processes of differentiation that underpin them. For while such border zones are becoming less significant in the context of global economic systems that deregulate geopolitical vectors, border zones in their many articulations act as points of arbitration for those left out of such processes (Balibar 2003: 37). This is why it is important to note the distinctions between different types of migrations and why it is important to interrogate the reception and status of sanctioned and unsanctioned migratory movement.

As Schleuser.net seeks to make clear, when speaking about sanctioned migration that is more prone to assimilation (the controlled recruitment of skilled labour), and asylum seeking or undocumented migration, the unevenness of mobility becomes obvious. Etienne Balibar (2003) points out that differential citizenship in its most extreme forms pertains to the refugee or undocumented migrant, who repeatedly exceeds the parameters of legal, political and social legislation accorded to the citizen or resident and inhabits a state of precariousness on all levels of everyday life not faced by the sanctioned migrant.

It is on the level of the everyday that such differential inclusion becomes the most insidious and invisible. Alongside the incorporation of social relationships and reproduction into capital, and the velocity of information and network technologies, the permeation of the border zone beyond the geopolitical must be understood as typical. Taking up and

extending on earlier discussions of the uneven dynamics at work within conceptualizations of the border, and relating these to arguments on the colonization of daily life by capital, we can speak about the spread and integration of border policing into the various domains of daily life. What this means is that how the border is configured and what it signifies is in the process of tangible change. It is not enough to view the border as the peripheral demarcation between territories of land and/or sea. In these newer social-political configurations, the border is far more diffuse – controlling and orchestrating the mobility of information, people and objects across all scales (Balibar 2002: 71).

For campaigners and networks contemporaneous to the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net, such as No Borders and No One is Illegal this has been starkly illustrated by the composition of the European Union (EU) and its corresponding policy determinants on movement for citizens and noncitizens.[8] These developments inspired the idea of 'Fortress Europe', signalled by a greater ease of mobility for member state travellers and increased difficulty for unauthorized migrants and asylum seekers. For the No Border network it is of utmost importance that conceptualizations of the border are able to address the decline of material lines of fortification, such as barbed wires, fences and visible surveillance:

> Under the pressure of increasing mobility and in view of the autonomy of migration, the drawing up of borders is becoming virtual and its repressive character is hardly generalisable any more: it could happen here as well as there, for this reason or another, and with a series of different consequences. Borders fold and shift inwards or outwards, they are advanced into safe third states and expanded into the hinterland. Controls have long since stopped being limited to nation states but cover the inner cities' traffic junctions and supra-regional traffic routes to the same extent as they do half or non-public spheres (2004).

No longer confined to a physical demonstration of the outer frontiers of exclusion and inclusion, the border affects intimate trajectories in and across zones within the nation-state itself through the bureaucratic processes of movement management within daily life. In the European context, this has been further consolidated by the implementation of a

synthesized policing system in the Schengen regions (SIS, Eurodac, Schengen visa systems) leading to the communal management of borders and the territories in between them. By controlling the movement of undocumented migrants and asylum seekers through the simultaneous imposition of micro- and macro-borderlines, and transnational mechanisms of policing, the unerring violence of nation-state sovereignty has become reproductive in everyday spaces and not only those commonly understood as spaces of exception. These shifts have taken place in addition to the material manifestations of the border zone; zones of demarcation are increasingly encompassing and moving along actual and virtual planes.

As the campaigns of the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net acknowledge, a perspective that focuses on state power in the determination of actual and virtual borderlines must not obfuscate the significant force that migratory movements exert to affect the conditions for mobility and labour. This obfuscation effectively disables the capacity for autonomy or power to act that migrants have (Mitropoulos 2006). The current pervasive border regimes do not operate as isolated self-referential capitalist inventions (Mezzadra 2004). Rather, they are perpetually dismantled and reterritorialized by the transitions of migration, which they concurrently respond to. In this manner, the movements across border zones constitute both the substance of citizenship and the raison d'etre for the recomposition and reinstitutionalization of the border itself. Here the mutual production of the border, the migrant and the nation-state become evident. As Manuela Bojadzijev and Isabelle Saint-Saëns write,

> borders recompose themselves continuously, both at the exterior and in the interior of the European Union. Their function is not only one of control but also of inclusive selection. Their transformation is closely related to the development of European citizenship and the management of migration flows, and the border regime itself "produces" the foreigner. But at the same time this transformation is an effect of ongoing migration movements from and to Europe. In the context of European enlargement, the deterritorialisation results in a double movement: on the one hand, the European border regime produces relevant effects well beyond the line defining the edge of European territory and tends to retrace itself within the European polis

itself; on the other hand, it tries to track down and haunt the ongoing movements of migration, which transcends it (2006: 10).

It is from within this reciprocal production that spaces for action emerge. In the same way that precarious conditions, worker's resistance and labour are mutually productive, the border is also assembled through relationships between myriad actants, circumstances and pressures. This is why the impulsive and often unconscious seizure of border mobility in the passages of undocumented migrants acts to unsettle nation-state sovereignty and power. Such movement has been referred to as 'globalization from below' (Hardt and Negri 2000: 213) to take into account the political power asserted through exodus and refusal.[9]

From this perspective we might discern how the constraints of the border and the nation-state in some ways provide the conditions for resistance and vice versa. To think of the border in this way is to see it as performatively modulated, as reiterated and reproduced rather than innately given (Bialasiewicz et al. 2007). It is in this process of becoming that spaces for intervention and reconfiguration become possible. The capacity for migratory movements to act as a destabilizing and transformative force throws border regimes and the nation-state into crisis. As Mezzadra writes, we must consider borders and boundaries as

> constantly *in the making*, since they are confronted with a set of subjective practices, behaviours, and imaginaries that challenge them. It is this challenge that makes borders and boundaries social relations, crisscrossed by the multifarious tensions between "border reinforcing" and "border crossing" … movements and struggles that develop around them, particularly involving migrants and issues of mobility, are key to the possibility of imaging and producing … different kinds of articulation and translation capable of disrupting capital's domination (2007: 11–12).

This position raises many intricate questions and challenges that must be addressed in the translation from concept to political praxis. Given that movements and struggles around mobility pose a threat to the mechanisms of capital, how might creative encounters act as a means to tie into this dynamic? Moreover, how can collectives of predominantly nonmigrant, middle class artists and activists do so while taking care not

to reproduce the fetishization and 'gross misrepresentation' that critics see as underpinning discourses around 'globalization from below' (Sivetidis 2006)?

In order to explore these questions through the projects of Schleuser.net and the Transnational Republic it is instructive to closely examine their praxes, and the articulation of politics through them. As already noted, what is axial for these collectives is not the motivation for movement or a 'speaking on behalf of migrants' but the legitimacy of a desire for movement and settlement itself. This is illustrated through the expression of a politics wherein mobility, self-determination and choice of representation is univocally called for. By allowing this politics to saturate their praxis, the resulting performative encounters created through faking and semiotic subversion opened spaces for manifold narratives to resound.

Using Fakes to Establish Transversal Movements, Temporary Space-Time Commons and Subversive Media Narratives

> The most important border that has to be crossed is the border that constitutes the activist her or himself in a separation from the "rest" of society. We think that the praxis of the communication guerilla can contribute to this kind of border-crossing (Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A. Gruppe 2002).

In a 1986 collection of essays Umberto Eco argued for the tactical necessity of guerrilla manoeuvres to expose the artificial nature of signifying systems within the mass media. This exposure meant shifting the focus to the role of the receiver in her interpretation of media messages. Drawing inspiration from Eco's argument, the Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A. Gruppe coined the term 'communication guerilla' (2002) or 'guerrilla communication' to describe the multitude of 'principles, methods, techniques and practices, groups and actions, which intervene in social processes of communication' (1997: 6). For the group these

strategies are played out through diverse and often contiguous tactics informed by an avant-gardist legacy spanning the twentieth century including corporate faking, image distortion, usage of multiple names (neoism), adbusting, parody, pranks and performance encounters (ibid.). These tactics are used to appropriate and critically comment on the paradoxes and absurdities of power as the fulcrum for political intervention. The translation of these paradoxes and absurdities into communicational intervention is developed via guerrilla communications 'by playing with representations and identities, with alienation and over-identification' (Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A. Gruppe 2002).

For Schleuser.net and the Transnational Republic, who emerged from a milieu explicitly linked to the Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A. Gruppe through NOII, the significance of guerrilla communication is clear. Particularly striking in these initiatives are examples of subversive affirmation or over-affirmation. Over-affirmation, or 'subversive affirmation', is used to describe practices of insurrectionary hyper-mimicry. In this practice the characteristics of the object of mimicry, its signifiers and semiotic content, are taken and reapplied into critical assemblages. Critical because in the motion between affirmation and negation the 'giveness' of the sign is opened up for questioning through the illumination of its cracks and fractures – through the bringing to light of its performativity (Aronowitz 1989: 55). By turning the sign on its head, what is signified is its instability through its reverse. As Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A. Gruppe, Blissett and Brünzels have clarified,

> subversive affirmation manages to distance itself from the given forms or statements by exaggerating them. Through this, the foregrounded and established affirmations are metamorphosed into their opposition (2001: 80. Translation mine).

Two related tactics of subversive affirmation have stood out in the unfolding of the performative encounter: faking as repetition and faking as semiotic subversion. The political potential of these tactics lies in the ways that their incongruities create critical linguistic and discursive departures and breakdowns, acting to deterritorialize dominant languages

and cultures from within.

The Fake as Repetition

To visibly highlight the inadequacies and violences of the nation-state, the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net mimic and subvert the forms of bureaucratic entities. Simultaneously though, these fakes are fundamentally different from their 'models', both in their 'formalisation' (Kelly 2003), and in their organizational methods and objectives. Of central significance to the creative appropriation of the lobby organization and the nation-state is the capacity for playful modification and reconfiguration. This is demonstrated in the ability for the fake to act subversively to different ends but with similar means (at least on a superficial level). While on many levels seeming to re-present that which it is critical of, integral to the fakes here is an element crucial to the fake itself: namely that it is never simply a pure replica but something new in itself. This is because the process of repetition is imbued with difference and because this differentiation occurs through variables of time, space, circumstance and context. Thus repetition 'fragments identity itself' (Deleuze 1994: 271). Simply put, even though aspects of the fake play on the resemblance of the object or thing that it copies, it simultaneously differentiates itself through its style of repetition. This includes the relations and dynamics that underpin the meaning and identity the fake calls up, which is how it opens out new interpretive possibilities.

What the fake or hoax does, then, is make space to consider something that is both new and politically relevant, because its concern lies more in the assertion and generation of difference than a simple play on identity. For projects such as the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net the dynamic of repetition and difference has to be able to suspend itself between its reification as an object (art project, performance, political propaganda etc.), and its ephemerality. By setting up a suspension between reification and ephemerality, a critical tension is maintained in the projects' 'moment of formalisation' (Kelly 2003: 10). It is this tension that must be tracked, because it is the transversal

between different categories and states of becoming that define these fakes as effectively critical of capitalist and state regimes of power and racist media discourses. That is to say that such unrecognizability and transversality is what mark the fakes in these cases as singularities and not as simple reiterations. This difference between being a singularity and a reiteration comes about through shifts in the relationships between, and modes of, thinking, recognizing and knowing (Kelly 2003). But these shifts require specific catalysts and forms of enaction; one of which is seen in what Kelly calls 'a performed meeting and a collective mode of engagement that seeks not to repeat or to represent, but to run with' (ibid.). It is precisely this that the performative encounter facilitated by the micronation or the rogue lobby organization provides.

The taking up of the lobby organization form by Schleuser.net was a strategic one. Central to the function of a registered lobby organization is the appeal to legislative bodies to implement juridical change. In contradistinction, the task of Schleuser.net is not to directly appeal to state bodies but to (re)present those 'smugglers' vilified by state and media institutions for helping people cross borders without legal authority. This format was chosen by Schleuser.net as a means to directly refute criminalization laws with their own rhetoric: as Homann put it 'we use the apparatuses and vocabularies of neoliberalism and we turn them around … we use this economic apparatus in the way that other people use a foreign language and we use it to say things that it doesn't mean to say' (2006. Personal communication). What Schleuser.net connect into by reinventing the vocabularies of the state is the discursive performativity in the process of criminalization.

Prior to the implementation of the Budapest Trial in 1993, and crucially shaped by the events of the Second World War and the Cold War, the concept of aiding flight across borders was associated with humanitarianism. This understanding of 'escape aid' was ratified in 1977 in a Federal Court decision which accepted it and its payment as legitimate, declaring any person helping a refugee fulfill their right to freedom of movement as legally and morally sound. However, with

tensions already rising through the late 1980s, the legal redefinition of escape aid into organized crime through the Budapest documents acted to fuel growing concerns around border security. Responding to the normalization of such media scare campaigns, Schleuser.net use principles of guerrilla communication not to 'destroy the dominant channels of communication, but to detourn and subvert the messages transported' (Blissett and Brünzels 1998). Rather than focusing criticism on the cultural and media industries themselves, what is of more interest to the group is the accentuation of the ways in which discourses around migration delineate economically 'useful' and thus desirable migrants from economically 'un-useful' and thus undesirable migrants (Schleuser.net website).

As a fake lobby organization, Schleuser.net position themselves as participants in the extra-national 'travel market' to 'represent the interests of companies … engaged in the market segment of undocumented border transgression and passenger transportation' (Heuck et al. 2005: 64). By taking this stance they hope to make visible urgent issues around migration without falling into paternalistic modes of political representationalism.[10] Part of their campaign involves the performative reinvention of the roles of the 'smuggler' and the 'illegal'. For Schleuser.net such roles curiously become more critical when considered within the neoliberal paradigm of service provision. As they explain,

> Schleuser.net works for the peculiarities and needs of the undocumented travel market to be, free of any value, realized by a greater part of the public. The ideological justification of increased border security, and the administrative obstacles to free movement are, in our eyes, devoid of any good reasons based on facts; and, in normalizing the present conditions, they give way to a wide array of bad feelings. Reinforcing the outer borders of the EU, and over-regulating the cross border rail, road and sea traffic, creates a hard to estimate danger for travellers to be physically harmed (ibid.).

In order to draw attention to the hazards resulting from state intervention in clandestine travel Schleuser.net established what they called a *Seal of Approval 'White Sheep'* to be granted to individual taxi

drivers and other transporters. By conferring a 'standard of service' on different smuggling operations they replicate the 'quality control' regulations promised by official travel agencies. For Schleuser.net 'white sheep' are those transporters that do not engage in profiteering rackets or headhunting activities by deliberately transporting migrants for the purposes of labour exploitation (ibid.). The launch of the initiative as an 'entrepreneurial' organization replete with advertised 'future-oriented conditions for a responsible globalization' coincided with a series of events hosted by the collective entitled *Escape Aid: New Light on an Old Profession!* which included the *International Smugglers Conference* in Austria during November 2003. This featured cross-disciplinary and public think-tank debates around strategic and tactical movements vis-à-vis state controlled image management. While many of the invited participants were practicing artists, activists and scientists involved in satellite migration projects, the public interface of the event was typical of the collective's desire to extend dialogue beyond specialized circles.

To demonstrate the inner workings of the project as a lobby organization in its day-to-day operations, a temporary office was set up from July until August 2002 as a public point of contact in the Kunstverein München, a gallery space located in the Munich Hofgarten. The location of this space was crucial for its proximity to the city's governmental buildings and lobby organizations. The *Open House* day held on 10 August 2002 included discussions with lobbyists and activists around anti-deportation and detention campaigns, information stands with magazines and other visual materials (including statistics around refugees and undocumented migrants in various German territories), current publications, as well as question and answer sessions. To further inspire a community atmosphere, hot dogs and refreshments were provided, as were pennants, buttons and a free give-away (Homann 2006. Personal communication).

Hot dogs, pennants and talks on human trafficking: it is precisely this peculiar ambiguity and tension that Kelly (2003) emphasized as key to the fake. This tension in the instance of Schleuser.net is predicated on its

transversals between aesthetic project, autonomous organization, and social-political campaign. The performative platform of the lobby organization and the appropriation of its recognized organizational signifiers give it a particular density usually absent from artistic interventions. This is in part due to its durational nature, but moreover because of its commitment to creating a genuinely interactive and public dialogue that is not contingent on its status as an art event. While exhibitions and the creation of objects are part of this communicational activity, the encounters are not dependent on these as such. The interactive qualities already inherent to the performative formats chosen by the group provide a way to engage with those present over differential relational scales, making their constitution contingent on this participation.

It is here, in this composition, that Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming-minor can be discerned. Along with a 'de-territorialization of language' the becoming-minor is characterized by 'the connection of the individual with a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation' (1986: 16). Unlike the avant-garde events of the Berlin Dadaists and the S.I., the encounter of Schleuser.net, like that of Umsonst, does not exist prior to this participation; it cannot rely on the effects of spectacular value or provocation for its ontological fulfillment. Rather it is wholly contingent on the construction of feedback loops between its constituents. This unsettling of specialization renders all aspects of the information presented immediately vulnerable to contention through dialogue and exchange. Temporary space-time commons becomes activated in this moment because these encounters – and the stories and information presented through them – are always open to negotiation. As with Umsonst, commons here does not imply homogeneity, but a commitment to the preservation of heterogeneity with a focus on finding points of shared desire. What is common here is recognition of difference, which allows for a plurality of voices and affective exchanges. This is what Guattari saw as the transitivist dimension of affect, its ability to stick 'just as well to the one who is its

utterer as it does to the one who is its addressee; and in doing so it disqualifies the enunciative dichotomy between speaker and listener' (1996b: 158).

For the Transnational Republic the affective, interactive principle is just as important for unbalancing 'the enunciative dichotomy between speaker and listener'. As a performative platform, the micronation of the Transnational Republic is fundamentally dependent on participation and communication based on collective and common desire. As Tammo Rist and Jakob Zoche commented 'the performance aspect of it is less about performance than communication and talking to people … the reason why we did it in this way is because we are seeking discussion, really direct discussion between people, and participation' (2006. Personal communication). In this dedication to participation and direct discussion, the micronation marks out a central difference from the nation-state that acts as its model. Kelly suggests that this is because micronations

> experiment with "formalisation" and the ways in which they suggest an interruption of the formal process of constituting the multitude as state. *Why* people are brought into relation, *how* people are brought into relation and what is thereby produced, are remarkably inseparable movements here (2003: 9. My italics).

This bringing of people into relation illustrates why the micronation, like the fake lobby organization, can be considered an autonomous entity and not simply a repetition of the state itself; the modes of relation that are based on temporary space-time commons – here a criticism of the state and the imagination of a possibility for exodus – are essential to understanding the micronation as difference, and in that difference, as a potential subject group. The difference of the micronation from the nation-state is manifest in two ways: firstly, in its organization of constituents and the interaction between them. And secondly, in its maintenance of a friction associated with its transversal between categories. Activist and artist and participant and spectator: an additive not assimilative movement driven by a focus on the affective exchanges between people – how they produce their subjectivities, and are produced – that indicates an escape from a demarcation of roles and identities

based on their deficit. As a small-scale form of exodus, the performative platform of the Transnational Republic micronation maintains an ambivalent relationship to the artistic institution from within which it is predominantly claimed. This is key because if the micronation seeks to inhabit a state of critical suspension between reification and ephemerality it must avoid the trap of 'artification' (Kelly 2003: 11).

What is integral for the micronation, as for the rogue lobby organization of Schleuser.net, is an ability to manoeuvre around these enclosures. This means that the transversal ability to identify outside of the artistic realm is what keeps it from falling into purely subcultural paradigms. As Rist affirmed 'when you work in an art context then you will be received artistically. When art is seen as open … you can use such projects for consciousness raising and you will be taken seriously in a political realm' (2006. Personal communication). This is how the project can be simultaneously relevant to events such as the *Art and Alternative Politics Utopia Station* at the Venice Biennale (2003), the *European Social Forum* (2004) and the *UNESCO* conference (2006). Without this ability to escape the art market, its political message would be fatally undermined in these instances. This manoeuvrability is also seen in the micronation's status as a creative form of direct action; the Transnational Republic is a vehicle for prefiguration. The performative micronation acts, for the Transnational Republic, as a basis for state criticism that also includes the composition of communal spaces for the self-determined constitution of power. In this sense, the micronation acts as a location in which questions of exclusion and inclusion no longer hinge upon governmental authority and it becomes possible to counteract the polarization of legal vs. illegal, desirable vs. undesirable.

The micronation of the Transnational Republic was constructed to provide an arena contingent on the rules determined by its constituents, linked in commonality through a desire for an alternative to the nation-state. As Kelly points out, it is in this sense that 'micro-states share a lot in common with other activist and political groups that use the idea of autonomy as a way of building a self-valorising, self-sustaining'

community (2003: 8). Through being an ambivalent site both reminiscent of, and autonomous from, the state, the micronation imbues all of its permutations (and its constituents) with a political sensibility, compounded by its evocation of new powers to act within the *present* as well as imagining future destinations. For the Transnational Republic, the form of the micronation becomes productive when it operates as an apparatus for deconstructing and interrogating the mechanisms of the contemporary nation-state. As Rist underlined, at the crux of the Transnational Republic project is the assertion that 'the conventional nation-state is no longer best equipped to act as the representative of democracy' (2006. Personal communication).

The Transnational Republic sees itself as responding to the complex and symbiotic movements of state and global power by establishing a transnational body, which can act as a (re)presentative of global citizenry. This however does not entail the replacement of national and state power, rather power is to be reallocated: national issues are still to be 'dealt with within the various nation states and international matters within the United Nations' while transnational issues would 'fall into the responsibility of the UTNR/United Transnational Republic' (Transnational Republic website). By appropriating the mobility given over to corporations, the Transnational Republic understands their project as a way to address the problem of a *global* citizen's (re)presentation from below, from beyond the confines of national territory or politic. As an autonomous project, the Transnational Republic has no affiliation toward state, nongovernmental or market organizations and is not predicated on economic interest; its autonomy is further ameliorated through a prioritization of self-determination over the accumulation of capital. Organizationally this autonomy is manifest through the objective to establish a structure of federatively networked micronations, leaving the choice to participate, and how, up to their constituents.

As with Schleuser.net, the organization, methods and materialization of the Transnational Republic – while supported and sustained after the event by object art – are played out through playful and performative

sessions of information exchange. These sessions consist mainly of setting up spaces in which facilitated conversations about the project take place and include lectures and discussion forums, documentary exhibitions and passport stations where participants can register for immediate citizenship. What is thematized within all of the different augmentations of the project are issues of human mobility and civil rights, globalization and the juridical powers of states. Given the contentious stance taken by the group, as for Schleuser.net the spaces initiated through these performative sessions are open to contestation. It is precisely this vulnerability that signals the potential of the encounter for productions of subjectivity. The fledgling and experimental nature of the micronation means that participants don't need to be specialists to be involved, nor do they have to be affiliated with a particular subculture or social-economic sphere.[11] As for Umsonst, the lack of specialization required (in combination with a commitment to self-determination) helps to intensify and reconfigure relationships between the encounter's constituents.

The Fake as Semiotic Subversion

By creatively constructing interactive sites through subverted semiotic mediums: flags, anthems, passports, currency, fake bureaucratic bodies, a spatial platform or world is established in which people can come together to observe and discuss both state responses to migration and the responses of the Transnational Republic themselves. The semiotic devices used by the Transnational Republic to build the performative encounter: the passports, the payola, the flag, national anthem and even the micronation itself, all illustrate a concept of the fake as semiotic subversion. In the projects of Schleuser.net and the Transnational Republic, this tactic of guerrilla communication is unequivocal to their intervention in communicational processes of media making. As subversive media interventions both groups rely on an idea of receiver potential as heterogeneous. Put another way, what is explicit is the omnidirectional nature of communicational channels and reception, while

at the same time a recognition of the coercive forces working within dominant media narratives.

The ways that Schleuser.net and the Transnational Republic manipulate signs and icons to intervene in racist and xenophobic media discourses can be most effectively understood from a principle of semiotic contradiction. The authority of official codes and signs relies on contradictory forces that oscillate constantly between the heterogeneous and performative nature of the sign and its ability to uphold its representative claim. Herein lies the ambivalence – between maintaining a status as a fixed entity and being a mutable entity – that gets exploited in the subversive gesture. More specifically, this oscillation between fixed and mutable is tempered by the extent to which signs and icons are singularly and collectively invested with power and legitimated through their reproduction and institutionalization. That is to say that the more authority, reproducibility or recognizability the sign (or parts thereof) is imbued with, the more indexical significance it claims as official (i.e. state) iconography.

This is why the semiotic register, in this case of official indexical systems or organizational formats, is an easy platform for appropriative trickery. Rather than directly opposing the general meaning assigned to the official organizational mode or system, the mode or system itself is hijacked with all of its associative trajectories. These are simultaneously combined into new and often contrary associations. This process thoroughly destabilizes what Pierre Bourdieu (1991) refers to as the signs 'symbolic power'.[12] Through this interruption, the fake undermines the logic of repetition as reinstatement: the lobby organization that does not solicit policy makers, for instance, or the seal of approval for ethical smugglers. Equally, the nation-state that does not appeal to state bureaucracy, or the passport that legitimizes the owner as a citizen of an imaginary world.

The movement here between fixed and mutable is subtle and often ambiguous; ambiguous because in the case of the fake as semiotic subversion

a good fake owes its effect to the interaction of imitation, invention, distortion and exaggeration of existing linguistic forms. It mimics as perfectly as possible the voice of power in order to speak in its name and with its authority as undiscovered as possible for a limited period of time (Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A. Gruppe 1997: 65).

This overtly recalls the switching between ossification and invisibility that is negotiated within the structural and semiotic components of Schleuser.net and the Transnational Republic. By mimicking the voice of power and its official signifiers, the groups have to take care not to reproduce them without difference. They have to take care to hijack them properly, but also to reproduce them to the extent that this hijacking is not immediately exposed as such and thus rendered a failure. The tactic of subversive affirmation or over-affirmation is, by its very definition, inherently reminiscent of its antithesis: a performative iteration at once both reproductive and disorderly. It operates by performing a pulling toward, and a pulling away from; by distancing signifiers from what they signify through hyperbole, what culminates is the sign's unstable signification in verso. For this reason, subversive affirmation is both a strategic means to facilitate an environment of temporary space-time commons that gives rise to potential transitory subject groups through playful engagement, and an ironic visual recollection of the bureaucratic identity being denounced.

Such switching leads to a highly idiosyncratic predicament: for instance while they go unrecognized by state apparatuses, they have the capacity to be *mis*recognized depending on the reception of their presentation. This kind of misrecognition occurred in 2004 when the Transnational Republic was invited to host a stall at the European Social Forum in London. The invitation was predicated on the assumption that the group was an official NGO linked to the United Nations body, 'with the same capacity to be taken seriously as Amnesty International', rather than a creative political project (Rist and Zoche 2006. Personal communication). While this misrecognition was advantageous, it has not always been the case. Other instances have proved to be far more problematic, with unintentionally duplicitous connotations. One example

of this is the ongoing solicitation from predominantly Nigerian and Moroccan migrants who, seeking out less precarious living and working conditions, repeatedly apply to be citizens under the belief that participation in the project will facilitate official European visas. In these instances the Transnational Republic project is misunderstood to embody a permanent, legal geographical terrain.

Like the narratives and expectations that are subverted as Schleuser.net and the Transnational Republic hijack the voices of power, the images that are detourned and faked take on different properties through their conversion. The image is a compelling medium for such manipulation, because, as Bifo Berardi has observed,

> what is interesting is not the Image as a representation of reality, but its dynamic power, its ability to stir up and build projections, interactions and narrative frames structuring reality. What is interesting in the Image is its ability to select among infinite possible perceptual experiences, so that the imagination becomes imagin/action (2005a: 64).

Berardi's comment reveals the operation that is enacted by the semiotic deviance of Schleuser.net and the Transnational Republic. For both these collectives the images or icons they appropriate are not intended to represent a replacement reality. Rather they behave as active propositions for alternate imaginative states replete with more transversal flows of power. These flows of power deviate from those associated with vertical organizations, and thus move toward engendering subject groups. Through such insubordinate movements of power, authority is delegitimized via the exposure of its fallibilities. This delegitimation acts to imbue the subversion itself with a power that is vastly different from its 'original' as it does not attempt to reproduce a singular meaning. Because the meaning created by the appropriated signs do not exert a forceful truth claim, they jettison the autocracy of the state rather than reiterating it.

This is seen explicitly in the insignia of the Transnational Republic as a semiotic repetition of the United Nations logo. Undoubtedly, the entity draws notable authority from its direct forgery of the United Nations

symbol and what it signifies, to the extent that at the European Social Forum the group were mistaken for the UN on several occasions. In direct contradiction to the 'truth' of the image are the principles and activities that the Transnational Republic engage, which make the hijacking and reassociation apparent. This is how the Transnational Republic manages to demarcate its distance from the 'negative or hypocritical tendencies and interests' of the United Nations while stealing its authority, a process that emerges only through the interaction facilitated by the performative encounter.

Fakes and a Crisis of Ambiguity?

What is clear from these examples – the misrecognitions of organizational bodies and the semiotic deviance of images – is that the temporary space-time commons of these encounters are no less 'real' organizational and relational spaces despite their rogue nature. The mimicry engaged in during performative encounters reveals itself as self-conscious. At the same time as the encounters declare themselves as difference, they are neither pure mimesis nor impersonation. It is here that we see how, as Deleuze argues, 'difference inhabits repetition' (1994: 76). The spaces opened through such encounters are affective spaces that are able to intervene in the flow of information – in the messages themselves. This intervention shifts the informational flow through interrogation, actively reterritorializing it as another entity. The insurrectionary lobby organization and the micronation undertake the transformation of media codes through using them as a platform for critical analysis. Like Eco's active receiver, this illustrates the plenitude and diffusion of messages that can be extracted from the icon and that contribute to its construction. Here the icon is seen to morph, parallax-like, depending on the information and narratives emphasized. For both Schleuser.net and the Transnational Republic, this translates into an emphasis on marginalized experiences of migration and mobility that juxtapose and disclose dominant xenophobic currents in mass media representation.

Perhaps inevitably, a slippage occurs around a self-reflexivity within the form itself. This is not to insinuate a casual negligence but to indicate instead a certain illusionary tendency endemic to performative encounters that rely on faking and semiotic deviance. Indeed the misapprehension of the Transnational Republic as a territorial legal entity is a case in point. It is this ambiguity essential to the performative encounter – as to all guerrilla communication – that also simultaneously poses questions on how we might ethically substantiate such tactics. In order for the performative encounter to function it must be believable, it must actively create transitory imaginary worlds and not simply allude to them. It must be able to involve people in this creative process, and it must operate as a political alternative, regardless of its longevity or how immediately viable it seems. But for this to happen the performative encounter cannot simply understand itself as an aesthetic project with an investment in political struggle. It must also operate as an antagonistic gesture of political dissent. In committing to undertaking state and capitalist critique, the construction, dissemination and communication of insurrectionary 'minor' narratives is imperative. When these narratives are produced through platforms of guerrilla communication, they are invested with a particular power in that they 'mimic as perfectly as possible the voice of power in order to speak in its name and with its authority' (Autonome A.F.R.I.K.A. Gruppe 1997: 65).

While it can be argued that this pushes the encounter into categorical deception, it is more useful to look at how the encounter works and to what use it is put. The confusion caused by mimicking and subverting organizational and semiotic forms is key to its successful functioning. To be able to counteract media xenophobia through guerrilla communication, legitimacy must be attached to the entity that disseminates false information. Similarly, to simply assert that this ambiguity is ethically specious and therefore must not take place is also to neglect the obviously creative nature of these initiatives. While the fake might appear to be disingenuous, when coming into contact with it through the encounter it becomes evident that this semiotic copy is not a

replication. Furthermore, it is through this faking that the performative encounter *intervenes*. And this is paramount; as Maria Hynes, Scott Sharpe and Bob Fagen write,

> what is important is that something unpredictable happens and that we are able to think new possibilities as a result. For the duration of the hoax and the period of its becoming public, appearances and ideas are placed together, side by side, with equal flatness. The unusual co-existence of these virtual elements actualizes something new, as disjunction becomes a positive synthetic principle (2007: 116).

For both Schleuser.net and the Transnational Republic, the hoax or fake provides a means for thinking 'new possibilities' around human mobility. It does so by performatively critiquing state and media apparatuses, simultaneously inviting dialogue. As a tactic of disruption it helps to instantiate a point of contact into the event, an opening through which a temporary space-time commons emerges as a precondition for intensified reciprocity and co-constituency. Through this, the transformation of subjectivities, relations and worlds becomes possible. A pivotal aspect of this transformation is the dynamism of the encounter ensured by not delimiting too strictly the terms of its enunciation, and hence its ability to transverse contexts beyond the gallery into social and political domains. Because what is occurring through these transversals are direct breaches of dominant information flows, the subjectivities of the constituents as assertive interpreters of media messages are foregrounded. Through the conceptualization of the participants (individually and collectively) as active receivers, senders and co-creators of the encounter, the conflicts associated with both artistic and political tendencies toward subculturalism and ghettoization are recognized and addressed. By challenging the oft-ignored internal lines of inclusion and exclusion in both xenophobic media narratives and activist/artist networks, the encounter performs a deterritorializing function. In its offering of imaginative alternatives, spaces are freed for creative constitution. It is from within these spaces that processes of communication and representation are exposed as being reiterable and thus susceptible to sabotage and reconfiguration.

Conclusion

Writing about the media and its provocative role in the transmission of ideological discourse, Garcia and Lovink comment that

> to believe that issues of representation are now irrelevant is to believe that the very real life chances of groups and individuals are not still crucially affected by the available images circulating in any given society (1997: np).

If we understand the performative encounter as a dispositif for the intervention into these representations through tactics such as faking as repetition and as semiotic subversion, then we can see how such tactics have been taken up by the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net and other collectives to challenge racial and economic differentiation within state migration policies. Crucial to the adoption of the encounter for both groups is the profound shift it signals from classic leftist representative political practices. By constructing platforms from which to interrogate the processes (both semiotic and juridical) leading to anti-migrant and refugee sentiment, as well as the complex power apparatuses underpinning them, both collectives interrogate human movement across border zones while recognizing the pitfalls of relativism. This is because what is concentrated upon is the question of enabled mobility and right to stay in general, rather than a representation of the struggles of certain groups of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants.

Marking a distinct departure from the strategies of conventional democratic campaigning, an anti-reformist stance is taken up by these groups that emphasises individuals and collectives as protagonists of change, rather than simply victims of governmental decision-making. This compliments the work done by other networks such as Kein Mensch Ist Illegal, Karawane, Kanak Attack and No Borders more predisposed to political intervention in the physical manifestations of anti-migrant discrimination and theorization around intersectional politics. Diverging from positions that categorize and scale migrants in relation to country of origin or relation of struggle (political and bureaucratic), both

Schleuser.net and the Transnational Republic develop interventional objectives that attempt to speak across contexts, leveraged by a focus on shared desires for movement itself, rather than on motivation or necessity. Paradigmatic of these encounters is a vulnerability to contestation. Instead of confronting constituents with ideological imperatives opposed to those of dominant discourses, counter-narratives are proposed that through their unfolding reveal their own constructed nature. Gone are the consciousness raising and didactic lectures of conventional leftist engagement in favour of experimentation, playfulness, fake passports and give-aways.

While hot dogs and anthems may do little in terms of influencing governmental policy, their affects can be found in the realms of public exchange. As Guattari affirms, 'whether or not there was a real effectiveness hardly matters; certain kinds of action and concentration represent a break with the habitual social processes' (1984: 28–29). The performative encounters assembled by the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net offer precisely such a break; a break in which spaces emerge wherein participants are asked to explore their own perceptions toward migration and citizenship by acting out alternatives. And it is from within such spaces that, regardless of their transitory nature, transformative resonances are invited long after the events themselves have passed.

1 In 2005 the mainstream paper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* published an article entitled 'Hier kommen die Alternativen' (Here come the alternatives) which located both projects within a wider network of state critical autonomous initiatives (Vonlowtzow and Irle 2005: 19). They were also curated together in the 2005 'Subduktive Massnahmen' exhibition in Bonn, Germany. Furthermore, both the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net participated in the political and cultural 'Go Create Resistance' forums held at the Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg; the former on 24 January 2003 in an event entitled 'Globalisation for beginners – what we can learn from neoliberalism', and the latter in 'Globalisation from below? Migration and work' on 17 March 2004. Interestingly, Hamburg Umsonst also took part in this forum at a later date, on 4 December 2004, under the theme 'Welcome to the pleasure dome – religion and consumerism'

2 Kein Mensch Ist Illegal/NOII is a global network comprised of autonomous, anti-racist, church and asylum groups committed to 'the propagation, preparation and realization of practical and political support for people without regular papers' (Kopp and Schneider 2003). Deviating from contemporaneous state debates and criticisms, for NOII what was important was not the motivation behind undocumented migration, but rather the counteraction of the state's denial of basic civil rights. Foregrounded in this was the aiding and abetting of entry and residence. The network thus publicly called for 'the accommodation of illegal migrants and help with their entry into the country and their onward journeys, to call for work procurement and the organization of health care or facilitation for the school attendance of their children' (ibid.). For concise documentation of the network and its organization see Klopp and Schneider (2003).

3 This included the declaration of third 'safe' countries of origin and/or transit bordering Germany, which if a migrant had departed from or travelled through disallowed them asylum entry into Germany (Blay and Zimmermann, 1994: 361–378). This procedure functioned almost on the equivalent to refusing the right to asylum as 'it led to the possibility of rejected asylum seekers being moved from one country to another, which all considered each other as "safe", without a formal examination of the substance of the individual asylum claim' (Marshall 2000: 98). The implementation of the 'third safe country' rule functioned as a highly effective deterrent for asylum seekers, as it almost completely impeded the possibility for refugees to arrive in Germany legally over land. It also meant that the impetus to provide evidence of claim to asylum status lay fully with the individual asylum seeker and not with the federal government or its bodies.

4 This idea is taken from Virno who proposes that 'exodus means, more than taking power or subduing it, exiting. Exiting means constituting a distinct context, new experiences of non-representative democracy, new modes of production. It offers a third possibility, and I am not speaking – please! – of the "Third way" but rather of a politics of the extinction of the state being positively constructive, opposing the word republic to the word state. This means constructing a non-statal republic with a movement that emerges more from exodus and positive experiments than from revolutions in the classical sense. The latter were an intelligent activity for many generations, but lead to the idea of constructing a new state. The point is no longer a monopoly over decision, which is to say multitude: many, plurality' (in Pavón 2004).

5 The term 'micronation' has been in circulation since around the 1970s to describe small autonomous state-like entities. There are a few common criteria to micronations: they resemble molecular autonomous nation-states but go unrecognized by official bodies such as governments and international organizations, they are largely ephemeral and ambiguous; often existing predominantly on paper or virtually, however some (like the Transnational Republic)

have been extended into the actual realm through currency, passports, a flag, anthem and citizenship. Even fewer have managed to exist on physical terrain. These physical symbols of sovereign states are seen as a means to legitimize a micronation, however they still often work under the radar of the public and often remain relevant only to their communities of interest.

6 Papastergiadis (2000) offers a concise analysis of some of these models and their limitations, which he classifies into two positions: voluntarist (exemplified by the push-pull model) and structuralist (exemplified by models drawing from political economy). The push-pull model situates the individual choices of migrants as decisive, while the structuralist stresses migration patterns as embedded in global and local economic systems. Both have been criticized for valuing the economic over other factors, for negating gender and cultural difference (including situating class above race), and for producing understandings of the migrant as victim (31–37). Papastergiadis argues that both these monocausal (economically preoccupied) models presuppose a 'mechanistic understanding of social change' (ibid.: 35). What is required instead is a model that understands migration as a multivectorial process, that does not subordinate motivations aside from the economic, and that accommodates the influence of individual desire. He sees this as present in the 'postmodern frame' (drawing on Foucault's work on bio-politics) proposed by Ali Rattansi – a 'mode of analysis which demonstrates how the concepts of race, class and gender are intertwined in the complex operation of policy formation and social relations' (ibid.: 36).

7 It is important to recognize though that at the same time as the state is dominant in this process, such inclusionary/exclusionary mechanisms are always incomplete. This means that they can never fully account for the complex networks, relationships and events that emerge from within, and external to, the parameters defined by juridical frameworks (Sassen 2006).

8 These policy changes include (but are not limited to) the Schengen Agreements (1985-present) which ratify the abolition of systematic border controls within the Schengen territories, the Dublin Convention (1990) which prohibited the multiple application of asylum seeking by an individual arriving from a 'safe' country, and the Amsterdam Treaty (1997) which in part symbolizes the initiation of the homogenization of foreign and security policy across the member states and the harmonization of asylum policies.

9 Some major criticisms of the description of such movement and its contextualization have concentrically arisen. One of these has come from the Karawane: für die Rechte der Flüchtlinge, Migrantinnen und Migranten, which is worth quoting at length. They write: 'describing it as "globalisation from below" amounts to a celebration and glorification of these miseries, horrors and the endless gory tales that are the daily experiences of the majority of migrants in this process. This is even when you put aside the role and meaning of "globalisation" (which is now appropriated in this case) and its consequent devastating effect on the whole. While a handful of success stories (depending on what success means and how it is measured) here and there is acknowledged with its transmitting impact, it cannot in anyway justify the simplification and beautification which "globalisation from below" denotes. It is certainly a grievous mistake and in fact a disservice to the struggle for anyone to assume that appropriating "globalisation" in this manner can empower the same people it is brutally crushing beyond revival. From Latin America to Africa and Asia, lives of millions yet unborn are mortgaged to the aprons of globalisation and its operating apparatus. For most, lives have become ever more worthless thanks to globalisation. There is no amount of coloration that can conceal or take away the negative effects of globalisation and positivise it by attempting to turn it into an empowerment

strategy like in this debate (overt or covert). This is not a "derogatory word" or a "nickname" that could be turned around and used counter-offensively. It is a description of a brutal economic practice. It is therefore bizarre, laughable and ludicrous that it is so advocated. We cannot afford to "celebrate and jollificate" on the back of the uncountable thousands who die in this process by qualifying their irreparable loss and the process through which it occurs in such a debonair grandeur. Whether now or in the future, empowerment and encouragement of the migrants who need to cross these borders will not be achieved by mere glamorous theoretic and high-sounding words. But by understanding the situations in the home countries, real and practical solidarity devoid of paternalism and support for those, who in spite of their vicissitudes here take a principled stand against the continued destruction of their home countries and their vicious collaborators. They will be more encouraged and even motivated by visible practical results, which are possible to achieve even in single cases' (2004).

10 As Homann explicitly stated 'the problem of representation is that we ourselves are not migrants, we are German, privileged, we are middle class – part of this privileged whiteness – and when we as these privileged people do something *for* refugees and migrants then we have a problem of representation. Either it becomes paternalistic, and that would mean a speaking on behalf of, or it is implausible, or it would develop along the lines that we are the good ones because we are helping them as victims … As a lobby organization we move subversively through these problems because we don't try to organize migrants as a political group, migrants aren't our theme because we say that we are a social network of smugglers. It's an economic category without ethnic lines' (2006. Personal communication).

11 Although – and this is a point requiring significantly more attention – both projects appealed, more often than not, to individuals and groups associated with artistic, cultural and radical political networks than to specifically legal and social networks organized by and around undocumented migrants and asylum seekers. That said, while the projects were committed to working across diverse cultural and social terrains, there was no explicit objective of promoting participation to asylum seekers and refugees. This could be attributed to the very conscious decision that both of the collectives made to focus their interest on mobility and border crossing in general, regardless of *who* it is that is attempting to move. This is both problematic for its lack of direct engagement with the sites and occurrences of subaltern struggle, and commendable in its avoidance of relativist, paternalistic representational models. For an excellent critique of border activism and issues of activist identity refer to Neilson and Mitropoulos (2007).

12 For Bourdieu 'symbolic power – as a power of constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of confirming or transforming the vision of the world and, thereby, action on the world and thus the world itself, an almost magical power which enables one to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force (whether physical or economic), by virtue of the specific effect of mobilization – is a power that can be exercised only if it is *recognized*' (1991: 170).

Conclusion

A paradox runs through the performative encounters of Umsonst, the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net, one that is analogously captured by Félix Guattari when he writes,

> it's not at all clear how one can claim to hold creative singularity and potential social mutations together. Nonetheless it remains the case that the immense crisis sweeping the planet – chronic unemployment, ecological devastation, deregulation of modes of valorisation, uniquely based on profit or State assistance – open the field up to a different deployment of aesthetic components … it is the very productions of … social relations which will drift towards aesthetic paradigms (1995a: 132).

On the one hand Guattari is convinced of a movement in the productions of social relations toward 'aesthetic paradigms', on the other he is unable to definitively wed together those 'social mutations' with actual instances of 'creative singularities'. It is this same tension and paradox that has played out in this book, which asks: how is it possible to speak of a form whose very ontology rejects its naming? How is it possible to claim political potential for a dispositif whose appearance is virtually synonymous with its disappearance? And moreover, how is it possible to assert this potential when creativity and invention can hardly be disarticulated from the hegemonies of art schools and the new realms of the cultural industries: from beyond the acquisition of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1988)?

How Guattari addresses this paradox is significant, because he does not regard it as an impasse. This is because, he counters, 'it remains the case that the immense crisis sweeping the planet … open[s] the field up to a different deployment of aesthetic components' (ibid.). With this assertion Guattari indicates room for what might be an entry point, or just as likely an exit point; a passageway through which a space within the paradox is leveraged. In this book both the paradox and the space within

it has been found in a transversal form of creative political intervention, the performative encounter. The paradox is that it is a form whose modes and dispositions are both aesthetic and political, complicit with capitalism and antagonistic toward it, inclusionary and exclusionary; the encounter is neither one nor the other but both at different times, in different ways. The space within the paradox is evident in the encounter's capacity to engender transformations of subjectivities, relations and worlds.

One further instance of the encounter illuminates this vicissitude. This instance is compelling for a number of reasons. Firstly, it offers perhaps the starkest example of this movement encompassing visibility and invisibility, resistance and cooption, naming and anonymity. Secondly, it acts as a coda, sharing many of the characteristics and modes of both the historical and contemporary encounters already explored. As such, it provides a lens for reflection upon the shift from the active audience of Berlin Dada, to the participant of the S.I., to the constituent of the contemporary encounters. Thirdly, because the encounter takes place in the same institutional frame from within which this book itself emerged: the university.

'It's our academy and not Volkswagen's!' The Encounter of Meine Akademie

The encounter was a response to an event that occurred on 9 December 2004 in Berlin. It was the day that the German automobile company, Volkswagen, threw open the doors of its new university library, the words 'Volkswagen Bibliothek' (Volkswagen Library) proudly branded across the building's awning in high silver letters. This was a landmark event for, according to the local media, it was the first time in Berlin that the corporate investment in education had been undertaken so visibly (2000). Overtly, it was the reconstructed library of the Technische Universität (TU) (Polytechnical University) and the Universität der Künste (UDK) (University of Arts) housed in a Volkswagen building, awkwardly titled

'Volkswagen – Universitätsbibliothek – Technische Universität – Hochschule der Künste – Berlin'. More covertly, it was also in part the property of Volkswagen – the reconstruction was aided by their financial sponsorship, the result of a partnership deal between the two universities and the corporation. This partnership was not unequivocally supported; for some it was seen as cause for concern because for five million Euros, or one tenth of the construction costs, Volkswagen had insinuated themselves very aggressively into the university market. For five million Euros Volkswagen had, in effect, bought themselves the penultimate monument to education and knowledge: a university library.

Amongst those that had reservations about the partnership were a collective called Meine Akademie (My Academy), comprising a cross-section of students from various Berlin universities, art institutions and colleges, and members of the public. Meine Akademy was founded in concurrence with the opening of the building in 2004 as a 'platform opposed to the steady pace of privatisation of knowledge and education' (MyAcademy! 2004). They saw themselves as a campaign critical of the neoliberal reorganization and corporatization of university and knowledge institutions:

> Meine Akademie is our oppositional-model for neoliberal academic "reforms": it is our academy, it is our university, it is our college; in the face of any politicians, CEOs or any other efficiency-junkies (MyAcademy! 2004).

The antagonistic position taken up by Meine Akademie against the university/corporate partnership was based on information that the collective had uncovered, intimating a more extensive ingression of Volkswagen into the higher education sector. What they found was that the sponsorship of the library was not a philanthropic arrangement but an investment, which ultimately granted the business and their clients equal user status of the library and its resources. This status was to be essential to the foundation of Volkswagen's very own private institution in 2006: the Volkswagen AutoUni (Car University), housed at the Mobile Life Campus on Volkswagen's headquarters in Wolfsburg (a Nazi designed

city for Volkswagen workers, west of Berlin).

As a creatively-oriented collective, Meine Akademie decided to address the situation in a playful way. The most spectacular of their encounters, *Glückwünsche* (Happy Birthday), took place exactly one year after the library's inauguration. On 9 December 2005, students entering the Volkswagen Bibliothek were greeted by what appeared to be student relations representatives of Volkswagen. A stall was set up in the library foyer, festooned with streamers, glasses of champagne, flyers and badges, all embossed with an inverted Volkswagen symbol: the Meine Akademie logo. Smartly attired 'representatives' of the company invited students to join in the celebration, offering champagne and soliciting student opinion. Several representatives helped students to fill out a questionnaire. 'What societal benefits do you imagine from the cooperation of your university and the Volkswagen AutoUni', asked Volkswagen student relations representative Jesus Maria Lopez,

> firstly, a promising career at the mobility service provider Volkswagen and at least three company cars? More subsidization of the public sector by private interests? That my university will soon become the "Technical Volkswagen University" or "University of Volkswagen Arts"? Or: super powers that enhance my identity and virility, in brackets "You are Volkswagen"?

Lopez cocked his head and smiled at the student, who laughed with his friend as they considered his options. 'Ah well' said the student grinning, 'that's a little complicated'. The novel mood in the foyer was paralleled outside of the building where, timed to coincide with the celebration inside, a group of labourers clothed in work overalls and carrying ladders and buckets were scaling the facade of the library adorned with the Volkswagen Bibliothek logo. Once on the awning, they immediately began to mount a large-scale graphic installation outlining the relationship between the universities and Volkswagen. The comic featured the founding president of the AutoUni, Dr Walther Zimmerli holding a glass of champagne with a speech bubble exclaiming, 'Super cheap! Bought! Ahh…sponsored!' Posed opposite the Volkswagen president stood a university bureaucrat, with an adjacent sign reading:

Library at a discount price. For only 10 percent of the building costs you get: a fully functional uni library with your corporate identity, unfettered access to 2.7 million media documents for your customers, consultancy during the construction of your own customer library.

The installation did not go unnoticed by the clearly bemused security guards milling around the front entrance, and the far less sympathetic library director. The interaction that ensued between the group and the director unfolded as a classic, slapstick evasion strategy. 'We have a contract to decorate the façade', exclaimed one of the workers to the furious director, after being threatened with legal action. 'You do not have a contract … I said that you have to come down', the director retaliated. 'We have the contract here', the worker shot back. 'From whom?' The worker read off a page: 'Mai … mai … academy?' 'This is a building of the Technical University Berlin. The only one that can issue an order is the Technical University. So, you have to come down now!' the director retorted angrily. 'Then', shrugged the worker, 'I will have to call my boss … one moment.' He spoke into his phone: 'yes we are at the contract site, and they're now saying that there is no contract'. He looked at the director, 'no some guy …' 'My name is Zick', the director replied. 'What?' '*Zick*, the director of the University library'. The worker nodded, 'I'm talking to my boss, Mr Neumayer'. 'Yes I just spoke to him', fumed the director. 'Really?' the worker looked incredulous, 'to my boss? My boss said he hasn't spoken to anyone'. He turned back into the phone, 'yeah … well … yes … yes sure, alright, ok, thanks. Bye'. He looked to the director and the security guards 'Ok we'll finish this up and then we'll come down'. 'But you have to take this down!' protested the director. 'Take it down? We can't take it down! We have a CONTRACT', repeated the worker earnestly, waving the paper. 'You can't mount this without a permit'. 'But we have a CONTRACT', the worker jumped in again. 'Ok … well … then show it to me' the confused and irritated director finally conceded.

The deliberate miscommunication around contracts and chains of command in the exchange between the worker and the director

temporarily paralyzed the University from taking action to halt the encounter. The ambiguity regarding the status of the encounter as real or hoax served an important function: it extended its duration. After around half an hour had elapsed, the labourers proudly laid down the finishing touch with a large '1/10th' sign placed antecedent to the Volkswagen motif – a reference to the firm's investment costs. In the foyer the student relations representatives folded up their table and flag. As the collective left the building, amused onlookers lingered, watching and waiting well after the labourers and their corporate collaborators had packed up and disappeared out into the street.

Comparisons and Commonalities

So what then are the encounter's 'modes of expansion, propagation, occupation, contagion, peopling'? This book has presented two contingent arguments. Firstly, it has explored the performative encounter and argued for its political potential; and secondly, it has argued for an important shift in the relationship between activists/artists and their audiences/participants. Both of these claims are related to the movement of the transversal, which transfigures the identities, categories and fields it crosses. The transversal element of the performative encounter underpins its transformative potential. This potential is found when the encounter is considered as an act of creative civil disobedience, which provides a means to both address the separation between activism/art and the public, and reinvigorate practices of political dissidence. But the value of this transversal element depends on its degree, and the negotiation of this is in no way straightforward. Its degree includes the intensity with which collective desires have been allowed to guide the action, the extent to which common goals have provided the impetus for action, and the kinds of organizational structures employed in the construction of the temporary spaces of the encounter as alternatives to capitalism. Transversality, then, is the paradoxical heart of the encounter, and it can be found underlying the encounter's interlocking aesthetic,

spatial and political qualities.

We are well placed to reflect upon these qualities when employing Meine Akademie's encounter of *Glückwünsche* as a coda, to reflect back upon the encounters of Berlin and Hamburg Umsonst, the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net, and even on those of the Berlin Dadaists and the S.I. It is helpful to begin by reviewing some of their shared characteristics and modes. For Meine Akademie in *Glückwünsche*, the strategic use of ambiguity and playful techniques were crucial, protecting both the encounter's initiators and constituents from repression and, as already noted, prolonging the duration of the encounter.

As for Umsonst where playful techniques made it difficult for police to isolate the constituents of the encounter in *MoMA Umsonst* (2004), the irreverant tone made it difficult for the director to ascertain the authenticity of the labourers in *Glückwünsche*. This kind of ambiguity was typical of the encounters by the Berlin Dadaists almost a century earlier, especially those of Johannes Baader who orchestrated events that confused the Berlin public and furthered the Dadaist's anti-art agenda. By compelling curiosity and confusion in satirical ways, these playful elements attracted people to the encounter, generating affective relations through interactivity. The questionnaires employed by Meine Akademie to populate the encounter were formulated as jokes, to incite laughter and curiosity while engaging in direct action, much like the hijacking of the Badeschiff by Umsonst or the appropriation of the cinema. As a tool of direct action play opened up a serious political dialogue, harkening back to the S.I. who regarded playful dispositions as conducive to the overturning of capitalist structures, leading to new ways of experiencing the world.

Similar correspondences can be found when considering the semiotic subversion and subversive affirmation deployed in *Glückwünsche*. The inversion of the Volkswagen logo by Meine Akademie paralleled the appropriation of the United Nations insignia by the Transnational Republic. In the same way, role-play – pretending to be labourers and bureaucratic representatives – reminds us of Schleuser.net's role as

lobbyists and Umsonst's semiotic faking in the forgery of cinema and public transport tickets, and the MoMA publicity. Again, this is not unique to these contemporary campaigns. Clear precedents were set by Baader, with his role-play as Christ and his self-nomination for candidature in the Reichstag; fakery was also essential to the Lettrist's hijacking of the Notre-Dame and the détournement of the S.I. The fakery of Meine Akademie, Schleuser.net and the Transnational Republic were different to the fakes of the Berlin Dadaists, the S.I. and Umsonst. What these three collectives shared was the extension of fakery to the structural and spatial platform from which their encounters sprung: the micronation of Transnational Republic, the 'free' university of Meine Akademie and the lobby organization of Schleuser.net.[1] These platforms were more than simple replicas, they were an exodus of sorts; they used particular signifiers and associations to create alternative geographies, something recognizable but also radically other.

The aesthetic aspects mentioned here are vital because they turn encounters such as *Glückwünsche* into devices for opening up channels of communication and transmitting critical information in interactive and creative ways. Meine Akademie saw their project as a counter-information campaign. The use of conversation to disseminate information that challenged dominant state and contemporary media discourse was a strategy employed by all groups discussed in this book. For Meine Akademie it was information about the corporatization of the University library and the broader privatization of education; for Umsonst precariousness in social life and labour. The encounter was used by the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net to contravene racist narratives on the nation-state, citizenship, human mobility and border-crossings.

The operation of the encounter as a dispositif for dialogue and to disseminate information is also not without precedence. The S.I. manifested their capitalist critical sentiments through the constructed situation. Earlier still, the Berlin Dadaist used confrontational events to launch attacks on the war and German bourgeois culture. For all of these

movements, campaigns and networks, the aesthetic and creative register served to mobilize communicative channels and open up spaces in which political discussion could take place. The local encounters of these collectives and campaigns all spoke to larger paradigms, bringing into contact the situational, immediate consequences of particular economic trends and their wider conceptual frameworks. This movement between the local and the global was significant to the performative encounter; it was by working across these different levels that the encounter reflected a concern with internationalism, drawing attention to the political nature and implications of local struggles and contexts. The links between different territorial and conceptual frameworks and the everyday sites of activity gave the spaces taken over by the encounter of *Glückwünsche* – the library foyer, the footpath outside – new definitions as sites of radical engagement, tied to a larger political milieu.

Earlier we discussed how arenas were created, appropriated and imagined through the performative encounters of Umsonst, the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net using Massimo de Angelis' idea of temporary space-time commons. These encounters were catalysts, opening up spaces for the formation of transitory subject groups: groups from which, as Guattari suggested, new conversations and ways of being could emerge. Coming together on the basis of collective desire, the subject groups generated through the encounter enlivened new subjectivities, relations and worlds. The political potential of all of the encounters examined here played out through the dialogic and performative qualities of the spaces they opened up. This was seen in the occupation and reconfiguration of 'everyday' zones such as Umsonst's collective appropriation of pools, cinemas and trains, the Dadaist's invasion of Steglitz, and the S.I.'s dérives and détournements. For the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net it was made apparent in their invention of entirely new worlds: the micronation, and the subversive lobby organization. Whether through occupation or invention, what was clear was that these spaces were sites of self-valorizing activity.

The spatiality of the performative encounter must be emphasized

because it is the spatial aspect that gives shape to the encounter as a strategy and as a praxis form; it is here that its transformative possibilities are seen. The transversal is most clearly registered in the encounter's material, organizational and geographical planes. Fakery, semiotic subversion, play, and jokes are all contingent on transversals across spaces, identities and categories, as *Glückwünsche* demonstrates. In Meine Akademie's encounter the levels of transversality discussed throughout this book are on display. Like the Berlin Dadaists and the S.I., transversals are limited by particular techniques of the encounter: namely, in *Glückwünsche* the quite conventional delineations in the role of the audience and the instigators during the installation on the facade of the library. This is doubled by the adoption of fixed characters: the labourers and student representatives. But this cannot be immediately conflated with the vanguardist ethos of Berlin Dada and the S.I., for what is also evident is an astute consciousness of the importance of maintaining a transversal movement. In its organization and politics Meine Akademie is more in line with its contemporaries.

The organizational and political trajectories of transversality within the encounter can be seen through a notable shift from the historical to contemporary compositions, specifically in this instance in the conceived relationship of the activist/artist to her public. While transversality was apparent in all of the encounters found here by virtue of its travels across art, politics and the everyday, in the historical cases these were suspended by vanguardist tendencies found in the organizational processes. Thus while the Berlin Dadaists challenged the segregations of artist from audience by reframing the traditionally passive audience as active, and while the S.I. recast this active audience into participants, a verticality of command was nonetheless present in their organizational methods. The presence of this infrastructure in how they understood their creative encounters reflected the hierarchies implicit in their political ideologies and practices. In the contemporary instances, this was rejected in favour of a-centrism, which did not equate to a total rejection of organizational structures, as there were still initiators of the encounters. This also did

not rid the campaigns of other political tensions. As explored in , problems of accessibility and representationalism were present in the Umsonst campaigns, and issues around generalization and a lessened focus on the lived struggles associated with border crossing were dealt with by the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net.

These tensions do not detract from the argument that by extending a transversal method to the organization of the campaigns, fixed lines gave way to something more indefinite, negotiable and collaborative. As a member of Meine Akademie stated 'we saw the project or this form of activity as a kind of production of togetherness' (Raether 2006. Personal communication. Translation mine); it had to coincide with already existent currents of desire. In *Glückwünsche* this was evident in a refusal to take a polemical position, countering the economic imperative of the University with attentiveness to the range of student opinions and responses. An attention to difference was also important to Umsonst in the organization of their planning meetings; they were never consolidated as an official group or collective, and chose to remain defined on a campaign basis with a formative membership of whoever wanted to take part. Although this unfolded very differently for the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net they still foregrounded an anti-reformist and nonrepresentative politics, seen in their concentration on the curtailing of human mobility generally, and in their establishment of autonomous alternatives to bureaucratic apparatuses. As for Umsonst, these alternatives were underpinned by a desire for collaboration and dialogue; they saw their encounters as contingent on those constituents populating them.

In addition to underpinning the aesthetic, strategic and organizational components of the encounter, transversality was imperative to manoeuvring through the highly intricate conditions to which the encounters responded. These conditions were by no means clearly divisible. Spaces for insurrection could be found across different permutations of capitalism and the ambiguities of these made their transformation possible. These ambiguities played out in ambivalences

between autonomy and complicity. The precariousness of life and labour targeted by Umsonst allowed for flexible working hours that helped the logistical organization of the campaigns, and gave greater scope for the broad constituency of appropriative actions. Indeed, when historically viewed it was possible to see how the power of workers struggles and demands co-produced capitalist regimes of labour into the very paradigms targeted by Umsonst. Along related lines, it is the very performativity of borders and nation-states that make them vulnerable to the counter-power of human movement and subversion. This is a vulnerability that the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net used to their advantage. As for their contemporaries, such frictions were paramount to the project of Meine Akademie. Here the university provided both the subject of contention, and the means thereof: the University's networks and material resources being instrumental to the encounter's organization and dissemination.

Criticisms and Paradoxes: Finding Potential in Disjunctions and Failures

This tension also underpinned the aesthetic of *Glückwünsche* and the larger project of Meine Akademie; it was both the means of expression and its capitalization. This became especially apparent during the later exhibition of the campaign's documentation at the Palais de Glace in Buenos Aires. The themed exhibition titled *la normalidad* (normalization) was part of the *Ex Argentina* project, curated by European political artists and writers who were investigating the social-political context of Argentina in the aftermath of the 2001 economic crisis. The offer to include the campaign in the exhibition was met with enthusiasm by only a handful of those involved in Meine Akademie (Raether 2006. Personal communication). Amongst those wanting to participate, questions of political strategy were raised around whether it would be better to take the offer seriously or to use the money to pursue their own interests. After much debate, it was finally decided to take the

offer as an opportunity to introduce Meine Akademie's ideas to an unfamiliar audience through discussion and debate: to learn and contribute to the sharing of political tactics and skills. Those participating hoped that by presenting the project in a radically different setting another kind of energy could be fostered. They considered the change in the site of reception – from (semi)public space to art space – as a way to question the representational elements associated with gallery exhibition.

On their arrival in Argentina however, they realized that their objectives did not coincide with those of the curators. Despite the explicit political direction and commitment of the *Ex Argentina* project, the curators had envisaged a far more traditional exhibition infrastructure, and were largely unwilling to accommodate the more interactive objectives of the group (ibid.). As a result, the plans that the contingent from Meine Akademie had made for the exhibition went unrealized, and the campaign was reified through its artistic display. Even though, as Johannes Raether pointed out, Meine Akademie was, from the outset, 'a piece of cultural capital' (2006. Personal communication. Translation mine), the ambivalences associated with the transversal performative encounter remain. These tensions have been most evident around the encounter's creative techniques, which have extended to questions of social-political strategy and public responsibility. 'We had to ask ourselves', recalled Raether, 'what it means for us to play the role of the corporate motherfucker, and what it is in us that finds this so interesting?' (2006. Personal communication. Translation mine).

The Transnational Republic also faced problems of accountability – the repeated misunderstanding of the project as a legal, geopolitical entity being one such example. By taking up platforms or modes of communication and action that recall bureaucratic and institutional apparatuses, there is a danger in the assumption of jurisdiction and responsibility. In the case of the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net, the argument can be made that what was promised was something far more substantial than what could be delivered. Speaking

about autonomous micronations, Mika Hannula commented during the Summit of Micronations:

> it is much more difficult to find out and articulate what the long-span and long-term function of micronations' everyday is or should be. We can talk about process-like and performative transformation of a community but its range and sphere of influence is and will be on a personal level (2003: 20).

Hannula's observation brings to light this issue around the ethical-political nature of such projects more extensively, and their restrictions to act beyond the parameters of institutional and subcultural frameworks. This invites us to question what effects creative and artistic modalities such as over-identification and over-affirmation might have on resistance that is critical of capitalism. Such challenges were present across all of the campaigns and collectives explored here, regardless of their involvement (or lack thereof) in artistic communities. When asked about the future of such interventions one constituent of Hamburg Umsonst stated:

> I find it very interesting that you always see marketing and advertising forms using very similar strategies, that, for example there are texts and fonts that actually refer to a product but that use very classic activist forms of expression or even mini spectacles that happen on the street. There's this film, "The Educators" and there are parallels drawn quite automatically to what we do. There's hardly anything that you can do without the parallels being drawn to these kinds of films or whatever, there's even a Coca Cola advertisement where people travel without tickets (2006. Personal communication. Translation mine).

This is where the crossovers of new regimes of capitalism and its counteraction, asserted by Virno (2004) and his cohort, become urgent. When the forms and methods of resistance: creativity, communication, language and affect are recast as modes of labour production, what does that mean for our strategies of refusal? In other words, how can we construct our routes for escape when capital turns our tactics of dissent, our images, vocabularies and styles to its own advantage? Such conflicts have underpinned this discussion, which has acceded that because autonomy, self-organization and innovation are all features of the

contemporary systems of capital, they cannot in themselves be immediately and uncritically celebrated as instances of political insurrection. As detractors from within the radical left have contended, this applies particularly to affirmative gestures of dissent, which directly engage with and instrumentalize capitalism to their own ends, however anti-capitalist those ends may be.

Perhaps this ambivalence is inherent to transversal gestures of creative political resistance, such as the performative encounter, because they are always in a process of becoming. Writing about these processes Deleuze and Guattari (1987) warn that when molecular deterritorializations of social arrangements such as the encounter fail to connect with other lines and practices, such experiments can do more damage than good. These deterritorializations, caution Deleuze and Guattari, must always work within specific social and historical contexts to be truly productive of new forms of life in which capacities can be intensified. 'Molecular escapes and movements', they write, 'would be nothing if they did not return to the molar organizations to reshuffle their segments, their binary distributions of sexes, classes and parties' (1987: 213). For Deleuze and Guattari, there is no creation without experimentation. These experiments, though, must be strategic and reflexive. Due to the resemblances of capitalism and its discontents, and because of the overlaps between local and global, molecular and molar, a 'relationship to conflict has to be there, otherwise it's just one creative strategy alongside so many others that aren't in any way antagonistic' (Hamburg Umsonst 2006. Personal communication. Translation mine).

At the same time, while these aesthetic experiments must be antagonistic a danger lies in their becoming purely reactionary. In their September 1995 manifesto, the Malgré Tout Collective wrote that the 'anti' position is a common trap fallen into by those holding onto a postmodernist dystopic vision (1995: 3). The barbarism associated with the so-called end of history has culminated in a perception of political action as 'no longer justified by a future good but by an evil always ready to come back' (ibid.). Political action then does not create its own

initiative, but becomes 'pure reaction in the face of the worse' (ibid.). This is where the lines of abolition and death that Deleuze and Guattari speak about can be found, where desire coagulates as oppression, impotency or *ressentiment*, as Nietzsche might name it: a convergence of resentment, self-subjugation and moralism.

What is essential, then, is a negotiation around resentful politics toward a transversal politics that retains a productive antagonism – the refusals that the autonomists practised as exodus, for instance. As Deleuze and Guattari maintain, it is necessary to link molecular struggles into molar assemblages. These do not need to be state or institutional assemblages; they do not need to end in reform or party politics (indeed such an ending would be detrimental) but they must be social. This is why for Deleuze and Guattari, as for the autonomists, collaborative and polyvocal struggles are paramount: the building of millions upon millions of points of desire and insurrection that crisscross one another, in moments of temporary collaboration rather than assimilation. In their plural forms, autonomous and innovative praxes such as the encounter become politically potentiate. In such forms, the ambivalences that Virno and others raise do not disappear. But it would not be desirable for them to do so, for these self-same asymmetries are what constitute the productive force of such forms; through these a manoeuvrability is activated, a space for movement and for finding constraints within conditions and conditions within constraints.

Escape, Invention and Hope

> The creation of a different life must involve, fundamentally, the creation of alternatives, of ways of life, of ways of desiring (Network of Alternative Resistance 1999: 2).

Conditions and constraints: we are given a parallax view. From point A the impression is that of an obstruction. From point B several meters to the side of point A, we find foot-holes and hand-holes, a series of tunnels

leading further in, maybe even through, we can't be sure. From vantage point A we see a definitive constraint upon any future movement, from B a condition thereof. A simple analogy perhaps, but one that is pivotal to understanding how the tensions endemic to the performative encounter can be both restrictive and emancipatory. This analogy helps us to register how the exclusions of Umsonst motivated concerted strategies for taking care of one another; how problems of representation led to more collaborative practices that in turn enabled new relationships and avenues for communication. Similarly, we can understand why play and affirmation were criticized by sections of the left for reproducing capitalist regimes, at the same time as being acknowledged as vital to evading repression. In much the same way, a parallax view sheds light on how the ubiquity of the politics professed by the Transnational Republic and Schleuser.net precluded a concrete engagement with sites of migrant struggle, but overturned paternalistic modes of engagement. This perspective shows us how the ambiguity of the fake led to a false promise, but also how this resemblance gave a relevance to the projects that allowed them to engage across variegated social, aesthetic, cultural and political spheres.

Here, we see conditions segue into constraints and constraints turn into conditions. At stake in this parallax of conditions and constraints, in the paradoxical heart of the transversal performative encounter, is hope, hope for what the Network of Alternative Resistance call a 'different life' (1999: 2). 'New resistances' remarked Isabelle Stengers '[are] a matter of hope … the very fact that we can be transformed by what we encounter, or what we participate in, is a matter of hope. It does not promise anything, but no-one has the right to say "I know how things are, they are hopeless"' (2002: 247, 254). What is needed is a different kind of sensibility to discover the hope that the encounter can engender, one that never closes down lines of questioning and reinvention. This sensibility must be amenable to what Massumi describes as 'a politics of *belonging* instead of a politics of identity, of correlated emergence instead of separate domains of interest attracting each other or colliding in

predictable ways … a pragmatic politics of the in-between' (2002b: 223). The potential of the performative encounter becomes clear when we view it through the lens of this kind of sensibility. It lies in how the encounter draws people together in new relationships through common desires and imaginings.

The dialogic spaces facilitated by encounters are enlivened in the process of bringing people into collective action, and these spaces in turn continue to mobilize these processes. In the spaces and processes of the encounter, affective exchanges, debate, conversation and solidarity take place. It is through this activity that methods and ideas for resisting the logics of capitalism are reinvented and given new life. Here we return to Massumi's 'correlated emergences', because these spaces and activities generate subjectivities and worlds through the constituency of the encounter. That is to say that political subjectivities are self-generated through being active in collective self-valorization. In the shared actions of fare-dodging and appropriation, of constructing alternatives to the nation-state, to lobby organizations and to pedagogical institutions, 'the idea as power, or constraint as power *over*' is replaced with 'a power *to*' (Massumi 2002b: 223). This is what underlies the politics Massumi is calling for, a recognition of 'the power we have to shape alternatives, at every level in society, that sets forth from the simple fact that, contrarily to common belief, alternatives do *exist, are* everywhere and plural' (de Angelis 2003: 2).

By refusing capitalist valorization collectively, 'alternative autonomous projects which constitute the only possible source of a self-constituting alternative to capitalism' are enacted (Cleaver 1992a: 131). In the moment that the commuter takes a fake train ticket in her hand or rides without a ticket because she can't afford, or doesn't want, to pay for one; when someone signs up to become a citizen of the Transnational Republic; in the event that a student answers a Meine Akademie questionnaire and laughingly agrees that the new library does resemble a factory – in all of these instances they become part of a collective and common alternative.

This shared action, arising from a meeting of singular and collective circuits of desire in the social fabric, makes the encounter as a device for insurrection interesting. It is one that can support subject groups and commons in ways that a-transversal models of political and social organization cannot. Through self-valorizing activity the encounter troubles the exclusive realms of specialization: the artist, activist or politician as specialist in social change. In this movement, unanticipated new subject positions and subject groups are temporarily enabled. By venturing beyond (but not forgetting about) the activist enclaves, and linking into multiple sites of desire beyond the territories already inhabited by self-identifying activists, political potential is exercised. This is where transversality becomes key, in its implication as

> a precondition for evolving new forms of collectivity, or rather: for dissolving the oppositions between the individual and the collective. There is no longer any artificially produced subject of articulation; it becomes clear that every name, every linkage, every label has always already been collective and must be newly constructed over and over again. In particular, to the same extent to which transversal collectives are only to be understood as polyvocal groups, transversality is linked with a critique of representation, with a refusal to speak for others, in the name of others, with abandoning identity, with a loss of a unified face, with the subversion of the social pressure to produce faces (Raunig 2002a: 7).

The transversal is part of a politics of the in-between that Massumi calls for, a politics that does not speak in the name of others and that is not about identity so much as sympathy. The artist, activist, nonartist, nonactivist: these categories no longer determine participation and discourse because they are recognized as accumulative and contingent. Encounters such as the ones investigated here – interactive, energized by collective desire, nonrepresentative, that compel autopoetic commons, and most importantly that are transversal – help to consolidate the kinds of affective politics Massumi imagines. Because these affective politics are attuned to relations of subjectivation, they can contribute to the facilitation of new forms of emancipatory organization and discourse.[2]

Like the encounter itself, these sensibilities only work when they are performative: when they live out the processual and experimental

vocabularies and actions that they envisage. When we follow Elizabeth Grosz to read performativity as 'an actualisation, a series of practices' which does not 'provide blueprints, models, ideals or goals', we see that it 'experiments; it makes; it is fundamentally aleatory; it is bricolage' (1994: 195–196). This sensibility and its sustained, everyday political strategies must be born through trial and error, with hope and with critical reflection. 'The creation of affective spaces and possibilities, the common spaces and moments that underlie and make possible intensive forms of politics' Shukaitis reminds us,

> is not (and never can be) something that happens once and is finished, but is an ongoing task of the self-institution of the radical imagination. As an ever-renewing process, moving and intensifying from the public sphere to constituent spirals of possibility, focusing on the affective composition of these moments means focusing on the possibilities for collective self-creation drawing from the relations that come out of shared creation (2007: 5).

Through ongoing developments and inventions that question, create and communicate, bringing people together in dialogue, the performative encounter constitutes affective, common political spaces. In the temporary space-time commons of the encounter, 'beyond material and political demands', is what Guattari sees as 'an aspiration for individual and collective reappropriation of the production of subjectivity' from the regimes of capital (1995a: 133). This is where the transformation of subjectivities, relations and worlds becomes both imaginable and possible. It is here, in the spaces of the performative encounter, that forms of life alternative to capital can be traced out in the present as much as in the future.

1 For a description and analysis of contemporary autonomous universities and classes such as Meine Akademie refer to Kanngieser (2008).

2 For instance see the recent conversations around infrastructures as a desirable framework instead of networks or institutions. In the sense outlined by Angela Mitropoulos, the infrastructural 'is a question not of who … but of how affinities take shape, or not … As an answer to the question of movement and relation, infrastructure is the "promiscuous infrastructures" that have sustained the occupations and encampments of Tahrir Square, Wall Street, and Oakland. The infra-political builds toilets in homeless encampments in Sacramento; by-passes pre-paid water meters, trickler systems and privatised water piping in Durban; formulates vocabularies of reconfiguration rather than foreclosure and standardisation; delivers health care to noborder protests and undocumented migrants; creates phone apps for evading kettling by police in London; digs tunnels under national boundaries; and more – the infra-political, in other words, revisions activism not as representation but as the provisioning of infrastructure for movement, generating nomadic inventiveness rather than a royal expertise' (2012: 117).

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