

Collective
Conditions
Gezamenlijke
Omstandigheden
Conditions
Collectives

Constant @ Ateliers Mollen

Brussel / Bruxelles / Brussels 8-16.11.2019

STRUCTURES / SUPPORT /

Celine Condorelli, Markus Miessen (2010), *Support Participation*. In: *Kaleidoscope issue 7* (EN)

Jo Freeman (1970), *The Tyranny of Structurelessness* (EN)

Tunde Adefioye (2018), *Tienstappenplan voor de kunstensector* (NL)

Simon Yuill (2007), *Tous les problèmes de notation seront résolus par les masses (version abrégée)* (FR) [section]

Maggie Zhou, Alex Clemmer + Lindsey Kuper (2014), *A Code of Conduct Is Not Enough* (EN)

Benjamin Make Hill (2009), *Updating the Ubuntu Code of Conduct* (EN)

Mikko Rauhola (2007) *Censorship, IRC and the Ubuntu Code of Conduct v1.0* (EN)

ZAD (2018), *Dynamiques* (FR) [section]

Marie Bardet (2017), *Hacer frente con nuestras espaldas* (ES)

ECOLOGIES / POLITICS /

Martha Nussbaum (2008), *The social contract* (EN)

Jane Bennet (2008), *Political ecologies*. In: *Vibrant matter* (EN) [section]

Mariame Kabe (2019), *Everything Worthwhile Is Done With Other People* (EN) [section]

Tumult (2013), *Archipel: Affinité, organisation informelle et projets insurrectionnels* (FR) [section]

Edouard Glissant (1997), *Dictate, Decree*. In: *Poetics of relation* (EN) [section]

Chedia Leroij (2018), *Pour une écologie politique pragmatique* (FR)

ALLIES / ACCOMPLICES /

Wretched of the earth (2019), *An open letter to Extinction Rebellion* (EN) + *Una Carta Abierta a Extinction Rebellion* (ES)

Sara Ahmed (2016), *An affinity of Hammers* (EN) [section]

Sunaura Taylor (2017), *L'entraide inter-espèces au delà du validisme*. In: *Braves Bêtes* (FR) [section]

Sunaura Taylor (2016), *Beasts of Burden* (EN) [section]

Paul Gilroy (2004), *The negative dialectics of convivial culture*. In: *Postcolonial melancholia* (EN) [section]

Miriyam Aouragh (2018), *De beperkingen van Wit Privilege: Shortcuts in de antiracisme strijd* (NL) [section]

Indigenous Action Media (2019?), *Accomplices not allies - abolishing the ally industrial complex* (EN)

ACT UP (1990), *Queer Nation Manifesto* (EN) [section]

ASSEMBLAGES / INTERSECTIONS /

Jennifer C. Nash (2019), *Intersectionality: An Intellectual History*. In: *Black Feminism Reimagined after intersectionality* [section] (EN)

Aimi Hamraie, Kelly Fritsch (2011), *Crip Technoscience Manifesto* (EN) [section]

Jasbir Puar (2011), "I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess" *Intersectionality, Assemblage, and Affective Politics* (EN) [section]

Éléonore Lépinard (2014), *Impossible Intersectionality? French Feminists and the Struggle for Inclusion* (EN)

Collective Conditions

Collective Conditions is a worksession which experiments with the generative potential of codes of conduct, complaints procedures, bug reports and copyleft licenses. We understand these socio-technical protocols as artistic and activist media and are curious about the role they can play in the (different) imagination of complex collectivities.

By 'complex collectivity' we mean, for example, non-normative human constellations, or collectives where participants with radically different needs, backgrounds and agencies come together. 'Complex collectivity' can be self-chosen, or be the result of structural forces such as laws, racism, technology, wars, austerity, queerphobia and ecological conditions.

We will work with different modes of 'writing' that go beyond typing protocols on a keyboard. We invite you to experiment with codes, rhythms, frequencies, scripts, scores and non-verbal agreements that regulate, challenge, stumble and collide; that pose questions and problems. We articulate conditions using time, material, bodies, spaces, machines, habits, repetition and chance.

The worksession is inspired by trans*feminist collective practices, anti-harassment and allyship-work, non-violent communication, score-making, decolonial and intersectional activism, but also by ways of doing developed within Free Culture and Free, Libre and Open Source software. Collective Conditions focuses on a-polarizing methods, affirmative habits that can stretch and reorient frameworks, that represent new vocabulary, gestures and forms of expression:

- Making room for support, sympathy, misunderstanding and difference in network protocols?
- Codes of conduct for servers, collectives, networks, rooms, authors, data, software ... that accommodate intra-collective alliances, or multi-species participants from different zones and eras?
- Considering material circumstances in the formulation of collectivity?
- Articulating togetherness but not avoiding problems and conflicts, or re-affirming existing boundaries and barriers?
- Interpreting techno-social protocols as changing infrastructures?
- Temporary, polyphonic, generative procedures?
- ... ?

Conditions Collectives

Conditions Collectives est une session de travail qui examine le potentiel générateur des codes de conduite, des procédures de réclamation, des rapports de bugs et des licences copyleft. Nous comprenons ces protocoles socio-techniques comme des médias artistiques et activistes et sommes curieux.ses de savoir quel rôle ils peuvent jouer dans l'imagination (différente) de collectivités complexes.

Par "collectivité complexe", nous entendons, par exemple, des constellations humaines non normatives ou des collectifs où se rencontrent des participant.e.s ayant des besoins, des origines et des organismes radicalement différents. La "collectivité complexe" peut être auto-choisie ou résulter de forces structurelles telles que les lois, le racisme, la technologie, les guerres, l'austérité, la queerphobie et les conditions écologiques.

Nous travaillerons avec différents modes d'écriture qui vont au-delà de taper des protocoles sur un clavier. Nous vous invitons à expérimenter avec des codes, des rythmes, des fréquences, des scripts, des partitions et des accords non verbaux qui régulent, défient, trébuchent et entrent en collision ; qui posent des questions et des problèmes. Nous articulons les conditions en utilisant le temps, la matière, les corps, les espaces, les machines, les habitudes, la répétition et le hasard.

La session de travail s'inspire des pratiques collectives trans*féministes, de la lutte contre le harcèlement et le travail d'alliance, de la communication non-violente, de la notation, de l'activisme décolonial et intersectionnel, mais aussi des "façons de faire" développées au sein de la culture libre et des logiciels libres, et Open Source.

Conditions Collectives met l'accent sur des méthodes a-polarisantes, des habitudes affirmatives qui peuvent étirer et réorienter les cadres, qui représentent un nouveau vocabulaire, des gestes et des formes d'expression :

- Faire place au soutien, à la sympathie, à l'incompréhension et à la différence dans les protocoles réseau ?
- Codes de conduite pour les serveurs, collectifs, réseaux, salles, auteur.rice.s, données, logiciels... qui accueillent des alliances intra-collectives, ou des participant.e.s multi-espèces en provenance de différentes zones et périodes ?
- Tenir compte des circonstances matérielles dans la formulation de la collectivité ? Articuler la cohabitation mais ne pas éviter les problèmes et les conflits, ou réaffirmer les frontières et les barrières existantes ?
- Interpréter les protocoles techno-sociaux comme des infrastructures changeantes ?
- Procédures temporaires, polyphoniques, génératives ?
... ?

Gezamenlijke Omstandigheden

Gezamenlijke Omstandigheden is een werksessie die de generatieve potentie van gedragscodes, klachtenprocedures, bugrapporten en copyleft-licenties onderzoekt. We vatten deze socio-technologische protocollen op als artistieke en activistische media en zijn nieuwsgierig naar de rol die ze kunnen spelen bij het (anders) voorstellen van complexe collectiviteit.

Met 'complexe collectiviteit' bedoelen we bijvoorbeeld niet-normatieve menselijke constellaties, of collectieven waar deelnemers met radicaal verschillende behoeftes, achtergronden en agentschappen bijelkaar komen. 'Complexe collectiviteit' kan zelfgekozen zijn, of het gevolg zijn van structurele krachten zoals wetten, racisme, technologie, queerphobia, oorlog, bezuinigingen en ecologische condities.

We gaan aan de slag met manieren van 'schrijven' die verder gaan dan het typen op een toetsenbord. We nodigen je uit om te experimenteren met codes, ritmes, frequenties, scripts, scores en non-verbale overeenkomsten die regelen, uitdagen, struikelen en botsen; die vragen en problemen stellen. We articuleren condities met behulp van tijd, materiaal, lichamen, ruimtes, machines, gewoontes, herhaling en toeval.

De werksessie is geïnspireerd op trans*feministisch collectieve praktijken, anti-harassment werk en alliantie-schap ('allyship'), geweldloze communicatie, score-making, dekoloniaal en intersectioneel activisme, maar ook door manieren van doen die voortkomen uit Vrije Cultuur en Free, Libre and Open Source software.

Gezamenlijke Omstandigheden zet in op a-polariserende methodes, affirmatieve gewoontes die kaders kunnen oprekken en heroriënteren, die nieuwe woordenschatten, gestes en uitdrukkingsvormen voorstellen:

- Ruimte maken voor steun, sympathie, onbegrip en verschil in netwerk-protocollen?
- Gedragscodes voor servers, collectieven, netwerken, ruimtes, auteurs, data, software ... die plaats bieden aan intra-collectieve allianties, of multi-species deelnemers uit verschillende zones en tijdperken?
- Materiële omstandigheden betrekken bij het formuleren van collectiviteit?
- Samen-zijn articuleren zonder problemen en conflicten uit de weg te gaan, en zonder bestaande grenzen en barrières te herbevestigen?
- Techno-sociale protocollen opvatten als veranderlijke infrastructuren?
- Tijdelijke, meerstemmige, generatieve procedures?
- ... ?

STRUCTURES / SUPPORT /

Celine Condorelli, Markus Miessen (2010), *Support Participation*. In: *Kaleidoscope issue 7* (EN)

Jo Freeman (1970), *The Tyranny of Structurelessness* (EN)

Tunde Adefioye (2018), *Tienstappenplan voor de kunstensector* (NL)

Simon Yuill (2007), *Tous les problèmes de notation seront résolus par les masses (version abrégée)* (FR)

Maggie Zhou, Alex Clemmer + Lindsey Kuper (2014), *A Code of Conduct Is Not Enough* (EN)

Benjamin Mako Hill (2009), *Updating the Ubuntu Code of Conduct* (EN)

Mikko Rauhola (2007) *Censorship, IRC and the Ubuntu Code of Conduct v1.0* (EN)

ZAD (2018), *Dynamiques* (FR) [section]

Marie Bardet (2017), *Hacer frente con nuestras espaldas* (ES)



IT'S INTERESTING AND SURPRISING—WE ARE BOTH SIMULTANEOUSLY ENDING A SPECIFIC PART OF OUR LIFE IN PRACTICE: YOU ARE PRESENTING THE LAST PHASE OF THE “SUPPORT STRUCTURE” PROJECT WITH GAVIN WADE, WHILE I AM LAUNCHING THE THIRD AND FINAL PART OF MY PARTICIPATION TRILOGY. WHY ARE THINGS COMING TO AN END, AND—AS AN END IS ALWAYS ALSO A BEGINNING OF SOMETHING ELSE—WHAT’S NEXT?

Perhaps it is a question of duration of practice: we have been doing what we are doing for about ten years now, and this may amount to the completion of a particular project and its corresponding set of practices. This completion doesn't need to be followed by a drastic break, but perhaps ten years is enough time dedicated to making a point and should allow for something to occur beyond that. We can take a certain amount of knowledge of experience in our luggage, but in a lighter way. I feel very strongly that my work will probably always be inscribed within notions of supporting structures, but that I may not need to state that or explain why that is the case as much as I have done until now. I can start proceeding beyond all the efforts involved in establishing a particular idea or position.

I AGREE ENTIRELY. IT WON'T BE A BREAK, BUT IT WILL ALLOW FOR A PRODUCTIVE DISTANCE OF REFLECTION THAT GENERATES CORRESPONDING SETS OF PROJECTS, PRACTICES AND KNOWLEDGE. IF “SUPPORT” AND “PARTICIPATION” ARE ALREADY PRESENT IN OUR PRACTICES, COULD IT BE USEFUL TO START THINKING THROUGH TERMS OF *NON-SUPPORT* AND *NON-PARTICIPATION* AND WHAT THEIR CONSEQUENCES MAY BE?

Defining things through their opposite is a useful exercise, especially when faced with such malleable and fuzzy concepts as support and participation. Have you found yourself saturated with ideas of participation or do you feel you've reached the end of its possibilities, at least conceptually?

FOR ME, DEALING WITH AND THINKING THROUGH AND BEYOND ROMANTIC NOTIONS OF PARTICIPA-

TION AS A PLURALISTIC NOTION WAS IN MANY WAYS LIKE DEALING WITH AND OVERCOMING A FATHER COMPLEX. MAYBE IT HAS TO DO WITH THE SPECIFIC TIME THAT I GREW UP IN ARCHITECTURE— THE LATE '90S AND EARLY '00S—, YEARS THAT WERE OVERWHELMED BY A DISCOURSE AROUND TWO BUZZWORDS: PARTICIPATION AND SUSTAINABILITY. BY NOW, I HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF THE PARTICIPATION NOSTALGIA, REALLY. I HAVE RARELY SEEN IT WORK. I THINK WE LIKE TO SEE OURSELVES IN THE CONTEXT OF SEEMINGLY SMART SYSTEMS AND POLITICAL THEORIES, BUT—HONESTLY—WHEN DO THEY WORK OUT IN A PRODUCTIVE AND SELF-REFLEXIVE MANNER? I STRONGLY SUGGEST TO ANY MARXIST THEORIST THAT HE OR SHE SHOULD WALK ACROSS THE DMZ INTO NORTH KOREA OR SPEND SOME TIME AS A JOURNALIST IN CUBA. HE OR SHE MAY START TO THINK OTHERWISE. THIS IS NOT TO ARGUE AGAINST PARTICIPATORY STRUCTURES PER SE, BUT RATHER TO SUGGEST THAT THEY MAY HAVE TO BE RETHOUGHT IN TERMS OF A REALISTIC RENDERING OF A PRO-ACTIVE AND TARGETED INDIVIDUAL INVOLVEMENT INSTEAD OF SIMPLY INVITING OTHER AUTHORS TO THE TABLE. COULD IT BE PRODUCTIVE TO THINK THROUGH THE OPPOSITES FOR A CHANGE?

I have been toying with the idea that the opposite of support may be resistance. Both movements may be directed toward similar aims, but they go about it in very different ways: while in support, the emphasis is put on the positive and therefore constructive direction towards change over everything else, resistance is an act of force-in-defense. They are both important political actions, yet driven by polar opposites. But of course, I state this as a provocation.

WHAT, MORE PRECISELY, CONSTITUTES YOUR PRACTICE OF SUPPORT?

Support, I think, allows us to think through an equalizing movement, and this is perhaps its most important aspect. What I mean by this is that support is a carrier for inter-dependency as a form of re-equalization. The proposition of support, therefore, is to transform

what we produce by revisiting the way we do things, our modes of production, and by rethinking the very processes through which we operate, through the practice of supporting. Defining a relationship such as support aims at a different category for action; it is concerned with how the political is staged and performed, the inherent ideology of frames and display, organizational forms, appropriation, dependency and temporariness. I work, broadly speaking, with art and architecture, and combine a number of approaches, from developing possibilities for “supporting” (the work of others, forms of political imaginary, existing and fictional realities) to leading broader inquiries into forms of commonality and discursive sites, resulting in projects merging exhibitions, politics, fiction, public space and whatever else feels urgent at the time. I think perhaps my book is a good example of what you mean: *Support Structures* is a manual, but in truth, it is also a compendium. It gathers together a broad variety of essays, images and small works that address the notion of support in relationship to what we do in cultural practice. The book as a whole is also the culmination of the collaborative project entitled “Support Structure,” undertaken by myself with Gavin Wade between 2003 and 2009.

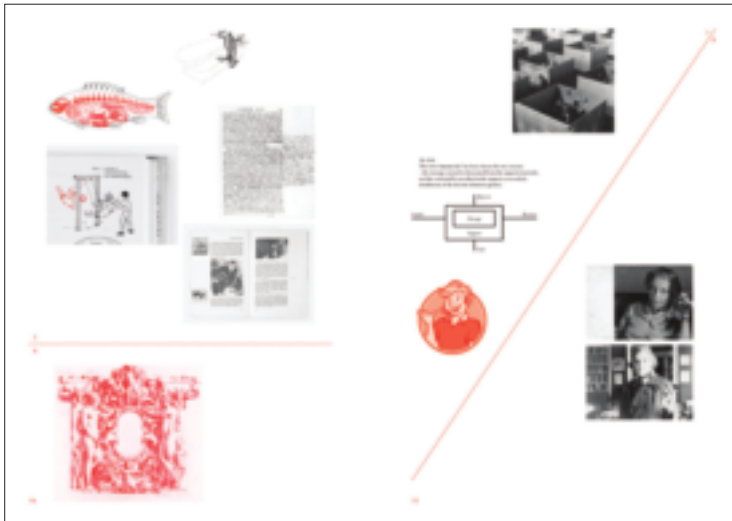
DO YOU UNDERSTAND SUPPORT AS SIMILAR TO THE NOTION OF A HELPING HAND, AND THEREFORE ALWAYS “SUPPORTIVE” OR HARMONIC?

I think support appears to do that, but it might not always help you achieve your own ends—so the first question that needs to be asked is: supportive of what? Part of this project on support seeks to open up *how* practices of support take place, and to focus our attention on what is often considered a subaltern, insignificant or simply positive set of actions. The deployment of support is an operation, and as such is politics-specific, whether these politics are desirable, dangerous or utopian.

DOES SUPPORT NEED TO CONSENT TO WHAT IT SUPPORTS?

Let me respond by asking you a question: do you consider that participation is the condition for any democratic organization to occur? Is participation in the ways that you have witnessed and analyzed an actual process of involvement of those who were previously excluded? Or can it also be used as a form of manipulation, or as a distraction from the reality of a decision-making process?

PARTICIPATION CAN BUT NEEDN'T NECESSARILY BE A MANIFESTATION OF DEMOCRATIC INVOLVEMENT. WHAT I HAVE ATTEMPTED IN MY LATEST BOOK IS TO TURN THE NOTION OF PARTICIPATION ON ITS HEAD, AWAY FROM CONCEPTS OF ALL-INCLUSIVE DECISION-MAKING AND ROUND-TABLE-LIKE



All images from Céline Condorelli (ed.), *Support Structures*, Berlin-New York, Sternberg Press, 2009

INVITATIONS AND TOWARD A MORE PRO-ACTIVE AND SELF-INITIATED MEANS OF INVOLVEMENT BY WHICH INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS FORCE THEMSELVES INTO CONTEXTS, FRAMEWORKS AND COURSES THAT THEY HAVE NOT NECESSARILY BEEN INVITED TO TAKE PART IN. IT IS A MEANS OF UNDERSTANDING PRACTICE AS PRAXIS, A PRO-ACTIVE ENDEAVOR IN WHICH THERE IS A DIRECT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH, POLITICAL AMBITION, FORCEFUL BELIEF AND PROPOSITIONAL THINKING, ALL OF WHICH ARE DIRECTED TOWARDS ACTUALIZING CHANGE. DOES YOUR BOOK SEEK TO ACCUMULATE AND ILLUSTRATE SOME KIND OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE?

Support Structures was produced by and constitutes the last phase of the “Support Structure” project, and includes its corresponding sets of works, actions and manifestations. Therefore, the ten phases of “Support Structure” do constitute a process of investigation, and as you say, an accumulation of practice-based research into the methodologies and conceptual devices offered by thinking through what a support structure could or might be. The cumulative parts of this project form a research archive with a set of terms and possibilities for thinking through support outside the traditional terms that are assigned to it. “Support Structure” is presented in this book as an art project as well as the primary means of research towards developing the argument that support, though often unrecognized or belittled, is important, productive and qualitative work.

IN THE CONTEXT OF YOUR VARIOUS SUPPORT PROJECTS, “SUPPORT” IS UNDERSTOOD AS A PRO-ACTIVE AND SELF-DRIVEN FORMAT, SIMILAR TO MY RENDERING OF PARTICIPATION AS “FIRST-PERSON-SINGULAR.” YOUR BOOK OPENS UP ITS CONTENTS IN THE FORM AND FORMAT OF A DISCURSIVE SITE. WHY A BOOK?

This is indeed how I felt it needed to be set up: a discursive site in the shape of a book, in order to create the first reader; a compendium, a supporting structure for the creation of support’s discourse, which I feel had been missing until now. It had to be a book because through the process of developing a project like “Support Structure,” what we were lacking most acutely was background material—texts or essays that would open theoretically what we were doing and what was emerging around us practically. I thought a book would allow us to revive, not a subject in the taxonomic sense, but a particular way of engaging in and with subjects in a desire towards emancipation—in total seriousness, earnestness, even. But you have produced more books than I have. Can you tell me how working in and on books has shaped your practice, and what you think it allows?

YES, I HAVE BEEN INTERESTED AND—TO A CERTAIN EXTENT—OBSESSED WITH BOOKS FOR A LONG TIME. I UNDERSTAND THE DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCTION OF BOOKS AS A VITAL AND PARALLEL PRACTICE OF INVESTIGATION AND INQUIRY, WHICH CONSTANTLY FEEDS INTO AND SOMETIMES GENERATES OTHER PROJECTS. ON ONE HAND, BOOKS CAN BE UNDERSTOOD AS CARRIERS, MACHINES AND DISTRIBUTORS OF KNOWLEDGE. ON THE OTHER, THEY GENERATE ENTRY POINTS, BACKDROPS AND NEW LINEAGES FOR SOMETHING THAT IS YET TO COME; THEY OPEN DOORS AND OFTEN INDICATE THAT—AS HANS ULRICH WOULD SAY WHEN HE QUOTES DOUGLAS GOR-

DON—“IT HAS ONLY JUST BEGUN.” I DO NOT THINK OF BOOKS AS SOMETHING PRECIOUS AND FINAL, BUT AS SOMETHING THAT NEEDS TO BE SCRUTINIZED, WORKED WITH AND LEARNED FROM. BOOKS WERE ALSO THE STARTING POINT FOR MY INTEREST IN ARCHIVES AS PRODUCTIVE SPACES OF KNOWLEDGE, ZONES OF CONFLICT FROM WHICH NEW REALITIES CAN EMERGE. I AM WORKING WITH MY ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN FIRM OFFICE ON A SERIES OF PROJECTS CONCENTRATING ON AND, IN A WAY, BUILDING UP AN EXPERTISE REGARDING THE SPATIAL TYPOLOGIES OF ARCHIVES, LIBRARIES AND HUBS AS CULTURAL CENTERS, WHICH CAN BE BASTARDIZED INTO NEW SPATIAL AND PRODUCTIVE CONFIGURATIONS. DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE PHYSICAL FORMAT OF THE BOOK WILL REMAIN AS IS, OR WILL IT HAVE TO DEAL WITH AN INCREASINGLY WIDESPREAD SHIFT FROM PHYSICAL TO VIRTUAL STORAGE? WHERE ARE WE IN TERMS OF OTHER FORMATS OF INTEREST?

I remember asking someone that question a few years ago, when Skype was booming and Google was like the oracle, and I just couldn’t leave Wikipedia alone. He replied by pointing out that one of the most successful Internet sites had been the steadily growing Amazon.com, used to, well, buy and sell books. I just love how reality always exceeds our expectations of it, and how clueless we are in predicting the consequences of any technological advance. What do you think the future of books is?

BOOKS WILL ALWAYS BE BOOKS. AND YES, SURE, OTHER FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER HAVE ALWAYS EXISTED, WILL CONTINUE TO EMERGE, AND WILL PROBABLY CHANGE THE WAY AND SPEED IN WHICH WE COMMUNICATE. THERE IS SOMETHING REALLY HANDY ABOUT TOOLS SUCH AS SMARTPHONES AS WELL AS APPLICATIONS THAT ALLOW YOU TO READ AND WORK VIRTUALLY. BUT THESE NEW TECHNOLOGIES ARE HEAVILY CONNECTED TO ISSUES OF ANTICIPATED DURATION, SPEED OF READING AND CONTENT: NEWS APPLICATIONS WORK BRILLIANTLY IN THIS WAY. NEVERTHELESS, THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT THE PHYSICALITY OF BOOKS THAT CANNOT BE NEGATED, BOTH IN TERMS OF HOW ONE CAN WORK WITH THEM AND THE WAY IN WHICH THEY CREATE A PHYSICAL ARCHIVE THAT ONE CAN ENGAGE WITH IN SPACE.

BIO

CÉLINE CONDORELLI (b. 1974 in Paris) is an architect and curator at Eastside Projects, Birmingham and a Senior Lecturer at London Metropolitan University. One half of the collaboration Support Band and a doctoral candidate in Research Architecture at Goldsmiths in London, she published *Support Structures*, a co-production with Gavin Wade and James Langdon, with Sternberg Press in October 2009. www.supportstructures.org

AUTHOR

Markus Miessen is an architect, researcher and writer based in Berlin. He is the author of many books and articles and has written for *Artforum*, *032c*, *Bidoun*, and *Volume* amongst others. He is now an editor of *Archive Journal*. *The Nightmare of Participation*, published in 2010 by Sternberg Press (English), Merve (German), dpr editorial (Spanish) and Archive Books (Italian) is Markus Miessen’s third and final part of his participation trilogy. www.studiomiessen.com

'The Tyranny of Structurelessness'

by Jo Freeman

The 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness' of first published in 1970 to address the need for organisation in the US women's liberation movement as it sought to move from criticising society to changing society. As such the examples used are specific to that movement but anyone who has been involved in a 'Structureless' group will be able to draw parallels with their own experiences. Often the most frustrating thing about progressive struggles is that each generation must repeat the mistakes of the pervious struggles. Learning from the history of these struggles can save us having to make their mistakes ourselves. [AF, 2000]

See end for printing history and original introduction

Formal and Informal Structures

Contrary to what we would like to believe, there is no such thing as a 'structureless' group. Any group of people of whatever nature coming together for any length of time, for any purpose, will inevitably structure itself in some fashion. The structure may be flexible, it may vary over time, it may evenly or unevenly distribute tasks, power and resources over the members of the group. But it will be formed regardless of the abilities, personalities and intentions of the people involved. The very fact that we are individuals with different talents, predisposition's and backgrounds makes this inevitable. Only if we refused to relate or interact on any basis whatsoever could we approximate 'structurelessness' and that is not the nature of a human group.

This means that to strive for a 'structureless' group is as useful and as deceptive, as to aim at an 'objective' news story, 'value-free' social science or a 'free' economy. A 'laissez-faire' group is about as realistic as a 'laissez-faire' society; the idea becomes a smokescreen for the strong or the lucky to establish unquestioned hegemony over others. This hegemony can easily be established because the idea of 'structurelessness' does not prevent the formation of informal structures, but only formal ones. Similarly, 'laissez-faire' philosophy did not prevent the economically powerful from establishing control over wages, prices and distribution of goods; it only pre-

vented the government from doing so. Thus 'structurelessness' becomes a way of masking power, and within the women's movement it is usually most strongly advocated by those who are the most powerful (whether they are conscious of their power or not). The rules of how decisions are made are known only to a few and awareness of power is curtailed by those who know the rules, as long as the structure of the group is informal. Those who do not know the rules and are not chosen for initiation must remain in confusion, or suffer from paranoid delusions that something is happening of which they are not quite aware.

For everyone to have the opportunity to be involved in a given group and to participate in its activities the structure must be explicit, not implicit. The rules of decision-making must be open and available to everyone, and this can only happen if they are formalised. This is not to say that normalisation of a group structure will destroy the informal structure. It usually doesn't. But it does hinder the informal structure from having predominant control and makes available some means of attacking it. 'Structurelessness' is organisationally impossible. We cannot decide whether to have a structured or structureless group; only whether or not to have a **formally** structured one. Therefore, the word will not be used any longer except to refer to the idea which it represents. **Unstructured** will refer to those groups which



have not been deliberately structured in a particular manner. **Structured** will refer to those which have. A structured group always has a **formal** structure, and may also have an informal one. An unstructured group always has an **informal**, or covert, structure. It is this informal structure, particularly in unstructured groups, which forms the basis for elites.

The Nature of Elitism

'Elitist' is probably the most abused word in the women's liberation movement. It is used as frequently, and for the same reasons, as 'pinko' was in the '50s. It is never used correctly. Within the movement it commonly refers to individuals though the personal characteristics and activities of those to whom it is directed may differ widely. An individual, as an individual, can never be an 'elite' because the only proper application of the term 'elite' is to groups. Any individual, regardless

A PDF booklet from the Struggle site www.struggle.ws

of how well-known that person is, can never be an elite.

Correctly, an elite refers to a small group of people who have power over a larger group of which they are part, usually without direct responsibility to that larger group, and often without their knowledge or consent. A person becomes an elitist by being part of, or advocating, the rule by such a small group, whether or not that individual is well-known or not known at all. Notoriety is not a definition of an elitist. The most insidious elites are usually run by people not known to the larger public at all. Intelligent elitists are usually smart enough not to allow themselves to become well-known. When they become known, they are watched, and the mask over their power is no longer firmly lodged.

Because elites are informal does not mean they are invisible. At any small group meeting anyone with a sharp eye and an acute ear can tell who is influencing whom. The member of a friendship group will relate more to each other than to other people. They listen more attentively and interrupt less. They repeat each other's points and give in amiably. The 'outs' they tend to ignore or grapple with. The 'outs' approval is not necessary for making a decision; however it is necessary for the 'outs' to stay on good terms with the 'ins'. Of course, the lines are not as sharp as I have drawn them. They are nuances of interaction, not pre-written scripts. But they are discernible, and they do have their effect. Once one knows with whom it is important to check before a decision is made, and whose approval is the stamp of acceptance, one knows who is running things.

Elites are not conspiracies. Seldom does a small group of people get together and try to take over a larger group for its own ends. Elites are nothing more and nothing less than a group of friends who also happen to participate in the same political activities. They would probably maintain their friendship whether or not they were involved in political activities; they would probably be involved in political activities whether or not they maintained their friendships. It is the coincidence of these two phenomena which creates elites in any groups and makes them so difficult to break.

These friendship groups function as networks of communication outside any regular channels for such communication that may have been set up by a group. If no channels are set up, they function as the only networks of com-

munication. Because people are friends, usually sharing the same values and orientations, because they talk to each other socially and consult with each other when common decisions have to be made, the people involved in these networks have more power in the group than those who don't. And it is a rare group that does not establish some informal networks of communication through the friends that are made in it.

Some groups, depending on their size, may have more than one such informal communication network. Networks may even overlap. When only one such network exists, it is the elite of an otherwise unstructured group, whether the participants in it want to be elitists or not. If it is the only such network in a structured group it may or may not be an elite depending on its composition and the nature of the



formal structure. If there are two or more such networks of friends, they may compete for power within the group thus forming factions, or one may deliberately opt out of the competition leaving the other as the elite. In a structured group, two or more such friendship networks usually compete with each other for formal power. This is often the healthiest situation. The other members are in a position to arbitrate between the two competitors for power and thus are able to make demands of the group to whom they give their temporary allegiance.

Since movement groups have made no concrete decisions about who shall exercise power within them, many different criteria are used around the country. As the movement has changed through time, marriage has

become a less universal criterion for effective participation, although all informal elites still establish standards by which only women who possess certain material or personal characteristics may join. The standards frequently include: middle-class background (despite all the rhetoric about relating to the working-class), being married, not being married but living with someone, being or pretending to be a lesbian, being between the age of 20 and 30, being college-educated or at least having some college background, being 'hip', not being too 'hip', holding a certain political line or identification as a 'radical', having certain 'feminine' personality characteristics such as being 'nice', dressing right (whether in the traditional style or the anti-traditional style), etc. There are also some characteristics which will almost always tag one as a 'deviant' who should not be related to. They include: being too old, working full-time (particularly if one is actively committed to a 'career'), not being 'nice', and being avowedly single (i.e. neither heterosexual nor homosexual).

Other criteria could be included, but they all have common themes. The characteristic prerequisite for participating in all the informal elites of the movement, and thus for exercising power, concern one's background, personality or allocation of time. They do not include one's competence, dedication to feminism, talents or potential contribution to the movement. The former are the criteria one usually uses in determining one's friends. The latter are what any movement or organisation has to use if it is going to be politically effective.

Although this dissection of the process of elite formation within small groups has been critical in its perspectives, it is not made in the belief that these informal structures are inevitably bad - merely that they are inevitable. All groups create informal structures as a result of the interaction patterns among the members. Such informal structures can do very useful things. But only unstructured groups are totally governed by them. When informal elites are combined with a myth of 'structurelessness', there can be no attempt to put limits on the use of power. It becomes capricious.

This has two potentially negative consequences of which we should be aware. The first is that the informal structure of decision-making will be like a sorority: one in which people listen to others because they like them, not because they say significant things. As long as the movement does

not do significant things this does not much matter. But if its development is not to be arrested at this preliminary stage, it will have to alter this trend. The second is that informal structures have no obligation to be responsible to the group at large. Their power was not given to them; it cannot be taken away. Their influence is not based on what they do for the group; therefore they cannot be directly influenced by the group. This does not necessarily make informal structures irresponsible. Those who are concerned with maintaining their influence will usually try to be responsible. The group simply cannot compel such responsibility; it is dependent on the interests of the elite.

The 'Star' System

The 'idea' of 'structurelessness' has created the 'star' system. We live in a society which expects political groups to make decisions and to select people to articulate those decisions to the public at large. The press and the public do not know how to listen seriously to individual women as women; they want to know how the group feels. Only three techniques have ever been developed for establishing mass group opinion: the vote or referendum, the public opinion survey questionnaire and the selection of group spokespeople at an appropriate meeting. The women's liberation movement has used none of these to communicate with the public. Neither the movement as a whole nor most of the multitudinous groups within it have established a means of explaining their position on various issues. But the public is conditioned to look for spokespeople.

While it has consciously not chosen spokespeople, the movement has thrown up many women who have caught the public eye for varying reasons. These women represent no particular group or established opinion; they know this and usually say so. But because there are no official spokespeople nor any decision-making body the press can interview when it wants to know the movement's position on a subject, these women are perceived as the spokespeople. Thus, whether they want to or not, whether the movement likes it or not, women of public note are put in the role of spokespeople by default.

This is one source of the tie that is often felt towards the women who are labelled 'stars'. Because they were not selected by the women in the movement to represent the movement's views, they are resented when the

press presumes they speak for the movement. Thus the backlash of the 'star' system, in effect, encourages the very kind of individual non responsibility that the movement condemns. By purging a sister as a 'star', the movement loses whatever control it may have had over the person, who becomes free to commit all of the individualistic sins of which she had been accused.

Political Impotence

Unstructured groups may be very effective in getting women to talk about their lives; they aren't very good for getting things done. Unless their mode of operation changes, groups flounder at the point where people tire of 'just talking' and want to do something more. Because the larger movement in most cities is as unstructured as individual rap groups, it is not much more effective than the separate groups at specific tasks. The informal structure is rarely together enough or in touch enough with the people to be able to operate effectively. So the movement generates much emotion and few results. Unfortunately, the consequences of all this motion are not as innocuous as the results, and their victim is the movement itself.

Some groups have turned themselves into local action projects, if they do not involve too many people, and work on a small scale. But this form restricts movement activity to the local level. Also, to function well the groups must usually pare themselves down to that informal group of friends who were running things in the first place. This excludes many women from participating. As long as the only way women can participate in the movement is through membership of a small group, the non-gregarious are at a distinct disadvantage. As long as friendship groups are the main means of organisational activity, elitism becomes institutionalised.

For those groups which cannot find a local project to devote themselves to, the mere act of staying together becomes the reason for their staying together. When a group has no specific task (and consciousness-raising is a task), the people in it turn their energies to controlling others in the group. This is not done so much out of a malicious desire to manipulate others (though sometimes it is) as out of lack of anything better to do with their talents. Able people with time on their hands and a need to justify their coming together put their efforts into personal control, and spend their time criticising the personalities of the

other members in the group. Infighting and personal power games rule the day. When a group is involved in a task, people learn to get along with others as they are and to subsume dislikes for the sake of the larger goals. There are limits placed on the compulsion to remould every person into our image of what they should be.

The end of consciousness-raising leaves people with no place to go and the lack of structure leaves them with no way of getting there. The women in the movement either turn in on themselves and their sisters or seek other alternatives of action. There are few alternatives available. Some women just 'do their own thing'. This can lead to a great deal of individual creativity, much of which is useful for the movement, but it is not a viable alternative for most women and certainly does not foster a spirit of co-operative group effort. Other women drift out of the movement entirely because they don't want to develop an individual project and have found no way of discovering, joining or starting group projects that interest them.

Many turn to other political organisations to give them the kind of structured, effective activity that they have not been able to find in the women's movement. Thus, those political organisations which view women's liberation as only one issue among many find the women's liberation movement a vast recruiting ground for new members. There is no need for such organisations to 'infiltrate' (though this is not precluded). The desire for meaningful political activity generated by women by becoming part of the women's liberation movement is sufficient to make them eager to join other organisations. The movement itself provides no outlets for their new ideas and energies.

Those women who join other political organisations while remaining within the women's liberation movement, or who join women's liberation while remaining in other political organisations, in turn become the framework for new informal structures. These friendship networks are based upon their common non-feminist politics rather than the characteristics discussed earlier; however, the network operates in much the same way. Because these women share common values, ideas and political orientations, they too become informal, unplanned, unselected, irresponsible elites - whether they intend to be so or not.

These new informal elites are often perceived as threats by the old informal elites previously developed within

different movement groups. This is a correct perception. Such politically orientated networks are rarely willing to be merely 'sororities' as many of the old ones were, and want to proselytise their political as well as their feminist ideas. This is only natural, but its implications for women's liberation have never been adequately discussed. The old elites are rarely willing to bring such differences of opinion out into the open because it would involve exposing the nature of the informal structure of the group. Many of these informal elites have been hiding under the banner of 'anti-elitism' and 'structurelessness'. To counter effectively the competition from another informal structure, they would have to become 'public' and this possibility is fraught with many dangerous implications. Thus, to maintain its own power, it is easier to rationalise the exclusion of the members of the other informal structure by such means as 'red-baiting', 'lesbian-baiting' or 'straight-baiting'. The only other alternative is formally to structure the group in such a way that the original power is institutionalised. This is not always possible. If the informal elites have been well structured and have exercised a fair amount of power in the past, such a task is feasible. These groups have a history of being somewhat politically effective in the past, as the tightness of the informal structure has proven an adequate substitute for a formal structure. Becoming structured does not alter their operation much, though the institutionalisation of the power structure does not open it to formal challenge. It is those groups which are in greatest need of structure that are often least capable of creating it. Their informal structures have not been too well formed and adherence to the ideology of 'structurelessness' makes them reluctant to change tactics. The more unstructured a group it is, the more lacking it is in informal structures; the more it adheres to an ideology of 'structurelessness', the more vulnerable it is to being taken over by a group of political comrades.

Since the movement at large is just as unstructured as most of its constituent groups, it is similarly susceptible to indirect influence. But the phenomenon manifests itself differently. On a local level most groups can operate autonomously, but only the groups that can organise a national activity are nationally organised groups. Thus, it is often the structured feminist organisations that provide national directions for feminist activities, and this direction is determined by the priori-

ties of these organisations. Such groups as National Organisation of Women and Women's Equality Action League and some Left women's caucuses are simply the only organisations capable of mounting a national campaign. The multitude of unstructured women's liberation groups can choose to support or not support the national campaigns, but are incapable of mounting their own. Thus their members become the troops under the leadership of the structured organisations. They don't even have a way of deciding what the priorities are.

The more unstructured a movement is, the less control it has over the directions in which it develops and the political actions in which it engages. This does not mean that its ideas do not spread. Given a certain amount of interest by the media and the appropriateness of social conditions, the ideas will still be diffused widely. But diffusion of ideas does not mean they are implemented; it only means they are talked about. Insofar as they can be applied individually they may be acted upon; insofar as they require co-ordinated political power to be implemented, they will not be.

As long as the women's liberation movement stays dedicated to a form of organisation which stresses small, inactive discussion groups among friends, the worst problems of unstructuredness will not be felt. But this style of organisation has its limits; it is politically inefficacious, exclusive and discriminatory against those women who are not or cannot be tied into the friendship networks. Those who do not fit into what already exists because of class, race, occupation, parental or marital status, or personality will inevitably be discouraged from trying to participate. Those who do not fit in will develop vested interests in maintaining things as they are.

The informal groups' vested interests will be sustained by the informal structures that exist, and the movement will have no way of determining who shall exercise power within it. If the movement continues deliberately not to select who shall exercise power, it does not thereby abolish power. All it does is abdicate the right to demand that those who do exercise power and influence be responsible for it. If the movement continues to keep power as diffuse as possible because it knows it cannot demand responsibility from those who have it, it does prevent any group or person from totally dominating. But it simultaneously ensures that the movement is as ineffective as possible. Some middle ground between

domination and ineffectiveness can and must be found.

These problems are coming to a head at this time because the nature of the movement is necessarily changing. Consciousness-raising, as the main function of the women's liberation movement, is becoming obsolete. Due to the intense press publicity of the last two years and the numerous overground books and articles now being circulated, women's liberation has become a household word. Its issues are discussed and informal rap groups are formed by people who have no explicit connection with any movement group. Purely educational work is no longer such an overwhelming need. The movement must go on to other tasks. It now needs to establish its priorities, articulate its goals and pursue its objectives in a co-ordinated way. To do this it must be organised locally, regionally and nationally.

Principles of Democratic Structuring

Once the movement no longer clings tenaciously to the ideology of 'structurelessness', it will be free to develop those forms of organisation best suited to its healthy functioning. This does not mean that we should go to the other extreme and blindly imitate the traditional forms of organisation. But neither should we blindly reject them all. Some traditional techniques will prove useful, albeit not perfect; some will give us insights into what we should not do to obtain certain ends with minimal costs to the individuals in the movement. Mostly, we will have to experiment with different kinds of structuring and develop a variety of techniques to use for different situations. The 'lot system' is one such idea which has emerged from the movement. It is not applicable to all situations, but it is useful, in some. Other ideas for structuring are needed. But before we can proceed to experiment intelligently, we must accept the idea that there is nothing inherently bad about structure itself - only its excessive use.

While engaging in this trial-and-error process, there are some principles we can keep in mind that are essential to democratic structuring and are politically effective also:

1 **Delegation** of specific authority to specific individuals for specific tasks by democratic procedures. Letting people assume jobs or tasks by default only means they are not dependably done. If people are selected to do a task, preferably after expressing an interest or willingness to do it, they have

made a commitment which cannot easily be ignored.

2 Requiring all those to whom authority has been delegated to be **responsible** to all those who selected them. This is how the group has control over people in positions of authority. Individuals may exercise power, but it is the group that has the ultimate say over how the power is exercised.

3 **Distribution** of authority among as many people as is reasonably possible. This prevents monopoly of power and requires those in positions of authority to consult with many others in the process of exercising it. It also gives many people an opportunity to have responsibility for specific tasks and thereby to learn specific skills.

4 **Rotation** of tasks among individuals. Responsibilities which are held too long by one person, formally or informally, come to be seen as that person's 'property' and are not easily relinquished or controlled by the group. Conversely, if tasks are rotated too frequently the individual does not have

time to learn her job well and acquire a sense of satisfaction of doing a good job.

5 **Allocation** of tasks along rational criteria. Selecting someone for a position because they are liked by the group, or giving them hard work because they are disliked, serves neither the group nor the person in the long run. Ability, interest and responsibility have got to be the major concerns in such selection. People should be given an opportunity to learn skills they do not have, but this is best done through some sort of 'apprenticeship' programme rather than the 'sink or swim' method. Having a responsibility one can't handle well is demoralising. Conversely, being blackballed from what one can do well does not encourage one to develop one's skills. Women have been punished for being competent throughout most of human history - the movement does not need to repeat this process.

6 **Diffusion of information** to everyone as frequently as possible. Information is power. Access to information enhances one's power. When an informal network spreads new ideas and information among themselves outside the group, they are already engaged in the process of forming an opinion - without the group participating. The more one knows about how things work, the more politically effective one can be.

7 **Equal access to resources** needed by the group. This is not always perfectly possible, but should be striven for. A member who maintains a monopoly over a needed resource (like a printing press or a darkroom owned by a husband) can unduly influence the use of that resource. Skills and information are also resources. Members' skills and information can be equally available only when members are willing to teach what they know to others.

When these principles are applied, they ensure that whatever structures are developed by different movement groups will be controlled by and be responsible to the group. The group of people in positions of authority will be diffuse, flexible, open and temporary. They will not be in such an easy position to institutionalise their power because ultimate decisions will be made by the group at large. The group will have the power to determine who shall exercise authority within it.

Jo Freeman.

ORIGINAL INTRODUCTION

During the years in which the women's liberation movement has been taking shape, a great emphasis has been placed on what are called leaderless, structureless groups as the main form of the movement. The source of this idea was a natural reaction against the overstructured society in which most of us found ourselves, the inevitable control this gave others over our lives, and the continual elitism of the Left and similar groups among those who were supposedly fighting this over-structuredness.

The idea of 'structurelessness', however, has moved from a healthy counter to these tendencies to becoming a goddess in its own right. The idea is as little examined as the term is much used, but it has become an intrinsic and unquestioned part of women's liberation ideology. For the early development of the movement this did not much matter. It early defined its main method as consciousness-raising, and the 'structureless rap group' was an excellent means to this end. Its looseness and informality encouraged participation in discussion and the often supportive atmosphere elicited personal insight. If nothing more concrete than personal insight ever resulted from these groups, that did not much matter, because their purpose did not really extend beyond this.

The basic problems didn't appear until individual rap groups exhausted the virtues of consciousness-raising and decided they wanted to do something more specific. At this point they usually floundered because most groups were unwilling to change their structure when they changed their task. Women had thoroughly accepted the idea of 'structurelessness' without realising the limitations of its uses. People would try to use the 'structureless' group and the informal conference for purposes for which they were unsuitable out of a blind belief that no other means could possibly be anything but oppressive.

If the movement is to move beyond these elementary stages of development, it will have to disabuse itself of some of its prejudices about organisation and structure. There is nothing inherently bad about either of these. They can be and often are misused, but to reject them out of hand because they are misused is to deny ourselves the necessary tools to further development. We need to understand why 'structurelessness' does not work

Printing history for this text

'The Tyranny of Structurelessness', by Jo Freeman, was first printed by the women's liberation movement, USA, in 1970. It was reprinted in Berkeley Journal of Sociology in 1970 and later issued as a pamphlet by Agitprop in 1972. It was again issued as a pamphlet by the Leeds women's group of the Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists (ORA) and then re-printed by the Kingston group of the Anarchist Workers' Association (AWA). It was later Published jointly by Dark Star Press and Rebel Press in 1984 in a pamphlet called 'Untying the Knot - Feminism, Anarchism & Organisation', with the printing done by Algate Press [84b Whitechapel High St, London E1]. Around 1996 this text was placed on the web at <http://www.tigerden.com/~berios/tos.txt>. This edition is based on a that text with US spellings switched to British ones.

International Anarchist Platform

We invite you to look at the 'Anarchist Platform' points and if you agree with them to subscribe to this international anarchist mailing list

<http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/platform.html>

Struggle

Struggle is a web site that provides a home for a number of campaigns

<http://struggle.ws>

Tienstappenplan voor de kunstensector

Hoe kan de kunstensector beter de samenleving weerspiegelen? Een manifest in tien stappen.

1) Vraag je af hoe je je instelling kan dekoloniseren

En nee, dekoloniseren is niet alleen een witwasoperatie voor witte zielen om hun geschiedenis goed te maken. Instellingen zijn vuurtorens van betekenisvorming. Haal dus meer mensen aan boord die deze samenleving weerspiegelen, om mee het beleid en het aanbod uit te tekenen, beslissingen te nemen over personeelszaken, een meer inclusieve missie en visie te schrijven. Stel je niet tevreden met één gekleurde merel of twee *magic blacks*, daarmee word je nog geen baken van diversiteit.

En wie zit er in je bestuur? Ook daar mag eens aan gemorreld worden. Omring je witte 'cis male' directeur met een juiste mix van mensen: vertegenwoordigers van nieuwkomers, transmensen, gemeenschappen van kleur en/of religieuze minderheidsgroepen. Zij weten dingen die jij niet weet. Ook al je artiesten verdienen een gelijkwaardig loon.

2) Ben je zelf zo'n witte 'cis male' zestiger, begin aan je exitplan

Nee, voel je niet gediscrimineerd. Discriminerend zou het zijn, mocht je bestuur een jonger iemand adviseren om plaats te maken. Omarm dat advies gewoon. Word geen Fidel, maar een Che: geen patriarch die aan de macht vasthoudt tot het graf, maar een doorreizende vrijheidsstrijder die anderen opleidt tot revoluties. 'Mentor, mentor, mentor': bedenk wie je zou kunnen coachen die qua gender of ideeën niet zomaar jouw duplicaat is. Begin graag vijf jaar op voorhand en laat je opvolging voor zichzelf spreken, terwijl jij steun biedt vanuit de achtergrond.

Weet je niet hoe dat moet, roep dan de wijsheid aan van Harry Belafonte: hij bleef bij de Women's March bewust uit de spotlights, maar steunde het intitiatief met zijn geld en advies. In de coulissen staan er genoeg klaar – zeker 'womxn' van kleur – die al bewezen hebben dat ze met brio nieuwe culturele paden kunnen banen. Jij hebt je rust verdiend, het is tijd voor andere tijden.

3) Herverdeel de middelen tussen grote spelers en kleine vissen

Instituten zoals KVS, Kaaitheater, deSingel, Toneelhuis en NTGent kunnen hun achterdeur beter gebruiken om een deel van hun budget door te spelen naar kleinere organisaties zoals Le Space, Citylab, Mestizo Arts Festival, Warrior Poets of Gentse Lente. Waarom? Simpel, om vernieuwing te stimuleren. Alle extra geld voor culturele organisaties die van nature mensen in de marge bereiken, is beter besteed.

En nu we het toch over subsidies hebben: wiens idee was het eigenlijk om fusies te stimuleren? De logica zit fout. Een cultureel landschap is een ecosysteem: zonder de veldmuis geen stralende lentebloemen in de kleurige vlaktes van Yellowstone, noch grizzly's. 'Bigger is better' is vooral contra-intuïtief.

4) Laat je witte instelling bezetten...

... door mensen van kleur, op hún voorwaarden, niet volgens je eigen comfortabele voorschriften. Zeker grote huizen moeten harder hun best doen, zich opengooien naar de stad. Bied lokale gemeenschappen af en toe gastvrij onderdak. Doe bijvoorbeeld ook eens open op zondag. Of bied je huis aan in de zomer. Er zijn genoeg mensen op zoek naar ongebruikte gebouwen voor gemeenschapsvormende activiteiten. Dat kost geld, zeg je? Ok, maar van wie zijn die middelen? Laten we ophouden met uitstralen dat alleen de zuurverdiende centjes van een kleine bemiddelde minderheid onze lichten doen branden.

Matt Fenton, artistiek leider van het Contact Theatre in Manchester, deed het: 'We doen niet langer verwoede pogingen om de westerse canon naar sociale thema's te plooiën in de hoop dat gekleurde gemeenschappen de link zullen zien met hun eigen leefwereld. We engageren ons van in het begin mee in sociale kwesties, niet enkel op het eind. We bedisselen ons programma niet langer achter gesloten deuren, maar zorgen dat jongeren met een brede waaier aan achtergronden gewoon mee rond de tafel zitten.' Zie je? Het kan. Gewoon af en toe de sleutel afgeven. Anders word je een slot.

5) Gooi de canon open

Hoeveel werken telt je programma die verschillen van het bekende repertoire? Eén taal spreken volstaat niet meer, wil je van de wereld worden. De richting is wat Hannah Arendt zegt, in *Plurality of Languages*: 'Het is cruciaal 1) dat er verschillende talen zijn, en dat die niet enkel verschillen qua woordenschat, maar ook qua grammatica, en dus qua denkwijze, en 2) dat alle talen te leren vallen.' Vijfvoudig vertalen en boven je ingang hangen, dit inzicht. Omdat we vaker moeten stilstaan bij de taal die we gebruiken, en hoe die onze levens vormgeeft, én ons huis. Geen taal is neutraal.

Gloria Wekker heeft het erover in *White Innocence*: 400 jaar Nederlands imperialisme speelt een vitale, maar verduisterde rol in de heersende betekenisgeving, ook wat ons zelfbeeld betreft. Dus wie zijn wij? Wat is de taal die we spreken? Als cultuurwerkers zijn we beslissende actoren in de betekenisprocessen van een nieuwe samenleving. We moeten weg van witte onschuld, dieper graven in onze privileges en dat inzicht aanwenden om meer verschillende canons een plek te geven.

6) Stop met navelstaren

Maak werk van nieuwe leiderschapsstijlen. Hoe zou het culturele veld eruit zien mocht het functioneren als Occupy, in directe democratie, waar iedereen aan kan deelnemen die wil? Hoe zou het veld eruit zien als we lessen zouden trekken uit de aanpak tijdens de Arabische Lente, of uit het gespreide leiderschap van Black Lives Matter? In plaats van één leider als het gezicht van de hele beweging – zoals vroeger Martin Luther King – bouwt Black Lives Matter op een reeks vertegenwoordigers van verschillende gemeenschappen over het hele land. Politiek zitten ze lang niet altijd op één lijn, maar ze scharen zich wel rond één missie: de kwaliteit van zwarte levens verbeteren.

Daar kunnen onze witte patriarchale structuren nog iets van leren. Stel dat we de verschillende stemmen van verschillende gemeenschappen zouden integreren in een gespreid leiderschapsmodel, hoe zou inclusie in de kunsten er dan uitzien? Slacht de

macht. Geef één project of zelfs één seizoen aan individuen en organisaties die jouw ideeën niet weerspiegelen.

7) Vlucht het stelen van andermans goed

Al te vaak bedrijven culturele instellingen een praktijk die lijkt op wat parasieten doen in het darmkanaal. Of op wat president Ford deed in 1975: terwijl de FBI al jaren hielp om leiders van de Black Panthers te vermoorden, eigende Ford zich wel hun gratis ontbijtprogramma toe. Een weinig symbiotische relatie, zeg maar. Je ziet ze ook wel eens in de cultuursector, bij samenwerking met kleinere organisaties: 'Goed wat je doet, wij nemen het over.' Credits blijven achterwege.

Ook intellectuele eigendom wordt graag ingepikt. Groot huis gaat in gesprek met kleine organisatie, 'om elkaar te leren kennen', of 'om samen te werken'. Tegen het eind van de meeting heeft de kleine organisatie haar hele netwerk en haar methodes op tafel gelegd. Als ze vraagt naar een volgende meeting, weerklinkt alleen het geluid van krekels in de nacht. Het gebeurt. Ofwel zou die organisatie een vaste samenwerking moeten krijgen, ofwel een bewijs van erkentelijkheid, of minstens een *consultancy fee* voor de doorgespeelde informatie. Intussen dikt het huis met een mooi verhaal z'n subsidiedossier voor de volgende ronde aan.

8) Kraak je kwaliteitscode

Hoe meet je kwaliteit? Of iets goed is, ligt niet alleen aan het beoordeelde werk of aan de nieuwe kunstenaar, maar ook aan de lat waartegen zij worden afgemeten. Als die lat eenzijdig is, krijg je eenzijdige kunst. En daar moet je mee oppassen: elke monocultuur is kwetsbaar. Het geheim om je vaste kwaliteitscode te kraken? Zie punt 1, punt 4 en punt 5: omdat kwaliteit een meervoud is, moet ook je organisatie dat zijn.

9) Zet in op transnationale allianties...

... met instellingen die een compleet andere aanpak hebben ontwikkeld. Een organisatie als Youth Speaks uit San Francisco zal je veel leren over werken met jonge nieuwkomers in de stad. Van een initiatief als het Audre Lorde Project uit New York kan je heel wat opsteken over de kijk op cultuur door een transpersoon. Ook hoe ze in Latijns-Amerika omgaan met samenwerking en alternatieve financiering kan best inspirerend zijn. Europa is zo klein dat eurocentrisme dodelijk kan zijn.

10) Maak van je werkvloer een *safe space*...

... veilig voor de etterende cultuur van seksisme, racisme, transfobie, haat in het algemeen, discriminatie van ouderen, obese mensen, mensen met een beperking... Als we het niet langer ok vinden dat culturele types als Woody Allen, Bill Cosby, Max Stafford-Clark of Jappe Claes bepalen hoe wij de wereld bekijken, zullen we meer op het spel moeten zetten voor die stemmen die dan wel de verhalen van de toekomst moeten vertellen.

Af en toe wat participatieve projecten voldoen allang niet meer om de verbeelding te vangen van zoveel nieuwe talenten die echt niet langer zullen wachten om de leidende posities in te nemen die jij en ik vandaag bezetten. Alleen als we onze angst voor onze positie laten varen, én onze vaste overtuiging over hoe kunst eruit moet zien, zullen we uitkomen bij hoe ons landschap eruit moet zien.

Compositions Scolaires

Ce pouvoir sur les systèmes n'était pas limité au démiurge ou maître du jazz intergalactique. A la même époque que celle où le Scratch Orchestra réinventait la musique à partir de ses fondations, un groupe d'enfants à la Muzzey Junior High School aux États-Unis expérimentait leur propre système de notation improvisé. Ces enfants n'écrivaient cependant pas de la musique, mais apprenaient en autodidactes à programmer des ordinateurs. Ils faisaient partie du premier LOGO Lab, un projet de Seymour Papert, un chercheur du Laboratoire d'Intelligence Artificielle du MIT. LOGO était un simple langage de programmation qui dirigeait une entité appelée 'tortue'. La tortue pouvait être soit un personnage virtuel sur écran soit un petit robot qui suivait des instructions pour se déplacer sur le terrain (sur l'écran ou l'espace au sol) et qui pouvait dessiner une traînée dans son sillage. Les étudiants du LOGO Lab développèrent leurs propres programmes sur lesquels les tortues exécutaient des dessins ou des exercices spatiaux. Dans la mesure où LOGO exprimait une série d'actions potentielles desquelles émerge un dessin, il ressemble à la notation du Scratch Orchestra, qui n'a pas souvent produit directement du son mais plutôt des actions desquelles pouvait naître du son. Comme l'écrivait Cardew dans ses notes à *Treatise*: "La notation est un moyen pour faire bouger les gens."

Tout comme le Scratch Orchestra, le LOGO Lab s'est développé à partir d'un intérêt pédagogique conscient pour le développement de recherches pratiques de formes collectives et autogérées. Elles furent réalisées dans des activités 'improvisées' semi-structurées et utilisaient des systèmes de notation auto-développés comme moyen de construction, de communication et de réflexion sur ces activités.

Comme il apparaît clairement dans la constitution, le Scratch Orchestra était une exploration consciente de ce que pouvait être la notation et quel lien elle entretenait avec les tentatives d'établir une autre compréhension de ce que peut être la pratique de la musique elle-même. Ceci fut développé au-delà du contexte pédagogique des classes du Morley College, et c'est peut-être dans un geste d'autodérision, que les *Nature Study Notes* du Scratch Orchestra et les plus



figure 136
Cornelius
Cardew,
Treatise,
1963-67

anciennes partitions *School Compositions* de Cardew prirent délibérément la forme de livres d'exercices.

Papert était convaincu que la programmation était un savoir qui devait être accessible à tout un chacun, pas en tant que 'technologie' – soit en tant que mécanisme pour une production manufacturée détachée du travail humain – mais comme un moyen d'exploration conceptuelle. Il existe des parallèles politiques entre les deux projets. L'approche de l'informatique de Papert a été influencée par son implication antérieure dans les mouvements politiques radicaux de gauche. Dans les années 1950, il fit partie du groupe qui publiait la *Socialist Review* à Londres. Le concept du LOGO Lab combinait des idées des études psychologiques de Jean Piaget et de Lev Vygotsky sur le développement des enfants suivant les principes de non-scolarité d'Ivan Illich. L'approche invoquée est celle "d'un enfant qui programme l'ordinateur plutôt qu'un ordinateur qui sert à programmer un enfant." Papert déclare aussi que la conception d'un langage de programmation pourrait refléter une position politique et éthique particulière. Il critique BASIC, un autre langage conçu à l'origine pour enseigner la programmation, comme démontrant "comment un système social conservateur s'approprie et tente de neutraliser un instrument potentiellement révolutionnaire." Bien que le Scratch Orchestra ne se soit pas développé à partir d'un programme politique défini, il a néanmoins agi comme un contexte pour le développement d'une pratique politisée des arts, instruite à la fois par des tendances marxistes et anarchistes. C'est par le Scratch Orchestra que Cardew a acquis une conscience politique profonde, appliquant une perspective explicitement maoïste à sa propre pratique, et qui le mena à son implication dans la fondation du Parti Communiste Révolutionnaire de Grande-Bretagne (Marxiste-Léniniste). Se faisant l'écho des critiques de Papert au sujet de BASIC, Cardew a également critiqué le conservatisme institutionnel de nombreuses notations de musique, exigeant plutôt que "tous les problèmes de notation soient résolus par les masses." Pour Papert et Cardew, la pédagogie était une voie à deux sens. Le labo et l'orchestre ont brisé les distinctions entre le maître et l'élève et placé l'apprentissage dans le contexte de la production autogérée. Ainsi, il s'agissait de formes de pratique distributive.

Apprentissage de la Contingence

Un élément de la contingence fut essentiel à cette forme de pédagogie radicale. Aux yeux de Papert, une des forces de la programmation comme outil d'apprentissage, était qu'elle encourageait l'attitude à l'erreur. Rencontrer l'erreur, sous forme de bugs, était un aspect inévitable et nécessaire de la programmation, surtout en ce qui concerne la pratique singulière de programmation développée aux AI Labs du MIT, appelée 'hacking'. Papert soulignait que dans l'éducation conventionnelle, les erreurs avaient une connotation purement négative. Lorsqu'un-e étudiant-e commet une erreur, il-elle est discrédité-e, perd des points ou est puni-e, ce qui inculque une peur de l'erreur et mène à ne pas vouloir s'écarter des limites conventionnelles et prendre des risques. Pour le-la hacker, par contre, ce qui importe n'est pas qu'une erreur soit commise ou pas mais bien comment lui répondre de façon créative. Tout comme pour l'Arkestra, inclure l'erreur est une possibilité productrice. La prise en compte de l'erreur est évoquée dans des documents tels que HAKMEM. Diminutif de 'hack memo', il s'agissait d'une série de bribes de codes et d'idées de programmation distribuées parmi les hackers des AI Labs, mémos auxquels ont contribué notamment Richard Stallman, James Gosling et Marvin Minsky. Il y est fait mention à de nombreuses reprises des possibilités découvertes à la suite de bugs et d'incohérences au sein des ordinateurs du PDP sur lesquels travaillait le AI Lab. D'autres contributions proposent des façons de jouer sur un nouvel algorithme particulier et encouragent les gens à le chambouler, d'une manière qui ne peut être décrite que comme une forme de jeu de code esthétique. On peut voir HAKMEM comme l'équivalent des AI Labs aux Scratchbooks échangés entre les membres du Scratch Orchestra. Au sein des LOGO Labs, du code était écrit et échangé entre étudiants de façon similaire. Plutôt que de préparer des programmes à l'avance, les élèves 'improvisaient' avec leur code en répondant à la performance de la tortue et modifiaient leurs programmes en fonction. L'apprentissage de LOGO passait donc par une boucle de feedback semblable de code-performance que des livecoders tels que Alex McLean identifient comme étant la base de leur pratique et qui est construite sur le principe de read-eval-print-loop.

Les langages informatiques et de programmation proposent des environnements hautement contraignants qui limitent l'éventail d'interprétations possibles d'une notation particulière. L'interprétation d'une notation par un humain peut être beaucoup moins contraignante. Pour Cardew, il s'agit d'une préoccupation majeure du développement de nouvelles formes de notations, car c'était à la fois un danger et une opportunité. Une opportunité car les notations ne doivent pas seulement encoder des modèles existants ou des systèmes définis de sons, mais peuvent aussi être des propositions et des provocations pour en écrire de nouveaux. Un danger car le musicien professionnel qui sera confronté à un système de notations inhabituel, pourrait se reposer sur ses habitudes et prédispositions personnelles, plutôt que d'y répondre directement. L'exécution risque de se résumer à une régurgitation de vieux clichés et de formules à l'instar du musicien de jazz amateur décrit par Adorno, qui est incapable de s'éloigner des modèles existants auxquels il s'est adapté et soumis. Lors de la performance, le musicien professionnel arrive avec un système prédéfini de production sonore dans le cadre duquel il interprète la nouvelle notation. On peut réagir à ce qui était novateur dans la nouvelle notation comme à une 'erreur' ou à un bruit interne au système et donc l'éviter. Les nouvelles notations nécessitent des artistes ayant une attitude similaire à celle du hacker ou d'un étudiant du LOGO lab, quelqu'un qui peut réagir de manière créative face à l'inconnu et à l'inattendu. L'artiste ne peut donc pas répéter une telle musique mais plutôt s'entraîner à la façon d'un art martial, en développant des façons d'agir sur la contingence. Ceci s'est également développé au moyen d'une boucle de feedback de performance-code qui a constitué la base de la pratique de la Scratch Music.

C'est par de telles boucles de feedback que les notations incorporent l'expérience du contingent dans une pratique future. Ce qui constituait l'erreur inattendue passée devient la préparation pour des possibilités inconnues futures. En l'intégrant, une notation enregistre le développement historique d'une pratique, en captant différentes versions de 'comment faire' et en permettant la comparaison, l'analyse et la synthèse. Les LOGO Labs et le Scratch Orchestra s'engageaient

consciemment dans ce processus d'enregistrement de versions successives, y mêlant le savoir progressif, les intentions et les standards de la communauté des praticiens, qui agissait comme une forme de contrôle des versions, distinguant les pratiques les plus courantes des pratiques plus contradictoires ou tangentes.

La Musique Noire en Notation

Comment on en arrive à définir une notation et comment celle-ci est distribuée sont des questions essentiellement politiques. Cette distribution s'étend au-delà de la publication des partitions ou du code logiciel, sous la forme appliquée par l'usage des mécanismes de copy-left par le Scratch Orchestra. Ainsi que le rappelle Ornette Coleman, la visibilité même des notations au sein du processus de production, comment elles sont révélées et dissimulées, dépendent et expriment des relations de pouvoir particulières:

Une fois, j'ai entendu Eubie Blake dire que quand il jouait dans des groupes noirs pour des audiences blanches, à l'époque où la ségrégation était forte, les musiciens devaient arriver sur scène sans aucune partition écrite. Les musiciens regardaient les partitions dans les coulisses, les laissaient là et partaient la jouer. Ils disaient qu'ils étaient plus vendables s'ils prétendaient savoir ce qu'ils faisaient. L'audience blanche se sentait plus en sécurité.

Le désaveu de la notation décrit dans cet exemple est un refus de l'auto-légitimisation du musicien noir. Si l'usage d'une notation peut aider à documenter le développement d'une pratique, son histoire et auto-analyse, alors le refus de notation est le refus de cette histoire, et donc, le refus de la base d'une légitimation de l'artiste. C'est dans cette optique que Coleman met une distance entre sa propre pratique et l'idée d'improvisation, car cette forme de 'virtuosité' est devenue la base d'un déni de légitimation. Le 'free jazz' que lui et d'autres musiciens noirs ont mis en avant dans les années 60, n'était pas juste libre dans le sens d'une cassure de la structure musicale conventionnelle, mais aussi libre car il rompait avec la condition "d'improvisateur dans



figure 134
Black
Artists'
Group,
St Louis.



figure 135
Black
Artists'
Group



figure 137
Lester Bowie
of the Art
Ensemble
of Chicago

une situation requise”. Ceci a mené au développement de nouveaux espaces de performances, beaucoup d’entre eux étant situés directement au sein des communautés noires, et à l’articulation consciente de la pratique comme une forme de recherche. Lester Bowie de l’Art Ensemble of Chicago a choisi de revêtir un tablier de laborantin sur scène pour annoncer la performance elle-même comme un lieu d’expérimentation radicale. Sun Ra encourageait son Arkestra en déclarant: “Vous n’êtes pas des musiciens, vous êtes des scientifiques de la sonorité.” Ra a poussé ce concept encore plus loin avec la création de Ihnfinity Inc en 1967, une société de recherche qui était censée “posséder et opérer toutes sortes de laboratoires de recherche, de studios, d’équipement électronique, d’appareils électrochimiques communicationnels de notre propre design et créativité. . .” À St. Louis le Black Artists’ Group a mis en place un centre d’apprentissage afin de créer un forum de discussion pour la communauté locale qui, à côté des performances, des répétitions et des ateliers, organisait aussi des réunions et débats quotidiens sur des questions d’intérêt local. Selon Anthony Braxton, la relation de la notation à la légitimation est devenue la base des recherches qui forment désormais le centre de son travail, le développement de la ‘Musique Noire en Notation’. Ce concept va au-delà de la simple description de sons sur une page et se confronte au prolongement du rôle du son à un niveau socialement structurant: “la notation peut être perçue comme un facteur d’établissement de la plateforme de la réalité de la musique.”

Tandis qu’à la surface cela peut paraître refléter la base pédagogique de projets tels que le Scratch Orchestra et les LOGO Labs, ceux-ci se sont développés à partir d’une trajectoire complètement différente. Même si, d’une part, les pédagogies de Cardew et Papert visaient à briser les structures sociales existantes qui déterminaient l’acquisition de musique et les aptitudes à la programmation, la pédagogie constituait aussi la base à partir de laquelle ils réintégraient leurs travaux au sein du cadre institutionnel existant. De cette façon leur pratique était institutionnellement légitimée. En particulier, la pédagogie légitimait leur statut ‘non-commercial’. D’une manière identique, la dépendance des Logiciels Libres sur l’académique suggère un conflit d’intérêts potentiel au sein des ateliers gérés par des

artistes, ou du moins souligne les tensions sous-jacentes au travail auto-valorisant qui est censé ‘payer le loyer’. Pour les musiciens noirs des années 1960 aux Etats-Unis, pour lesquels même un accès de base à l’éducation était un problème, de telles voies n’étaient pas accessibles. S’approprier des tabliers ‘blancs’ de laborantins et une culture de recherche n’était pas le meilleur moyen pour obtenir la reconnaissance institutionnelle, mais questionnait plutôt leur usage même en tant que mécanismes de légitimation. Pour finir le Scratch Orchestra est devenu conscient de sa dépendance à de telles formes externes de légitimation et de ‘la situation obligatoire’ dans laquelle elle opérait.

Instrumentalisation du Collectif

En 1972 des tensions ont commencé à émerger au sein du Scratch Orchestra. Certains ont ressenti que le groupe fonctionnait d’une façon qui était en contradiction avec ses objectifs, et un ‘dossier des mécontents’ fut établi pour que les gens puissent y adresser leurs doléances. En réaction, Cardew, Keith Rowe et John Tilbury créèrent un groupe idéologique du Scratch Orchestra qui appliquait une pratique de l’auto-critique maoïste parmi les membres de l’Orchestra. Même si un processus d’auto-critique au sein de l’Orchestra a pu être bénéfique, cette approche avant-gardiste ne fit qu’exacerber la situation. Beaucoup pensèrent qu’il s’agissait d’une imposition de la part d’une élite auto-promue exerçant son autorité sur l’ensemble du Scratch Orchestra, et que le rejet de certaines initiatives des autres membres de la part du groupe idéologique, ne reconnaissait pas leur propre base politique. Plutôt que de retrouver un but clair, l’Orchestra s’est décomposé. Comme l’a dit par la suite un de ses membres, Eddie Prevost, la contradiction fondamentale que rencontrait l’Orchestra était sans doute sa dépendance à sa propre constitution, à l’objectif paradoxal de ‘légiférer pour la non-conformité’. Un autre membre, Michael Chant, fit observer que la constitution elle-même fut une ‘partition’. L’Orchestra était le produit de cette partition, une partition qui portait le nom d’un unique auteur: Cornelius Cardew. De ce point de vue, la création du groupe idéologique du Scratch pourrait être vu comme une tentative de récupérer la paternité de la

‘composition’ de Cardew, faisant écho à la préoccupation de ses premiers écrits selon lesquels “la partition doit gouverner la musique”. Voici peut-être un exemple classique d’une avant-garde idéologique qui s’empare et instrumentalise le collectif à ses propres fins, ou de la renaissance de l’auteur dans un groupe qui tente de dépasser de telles notions d’auteur unique. En refusant de succomber à l’acquisition de telles idéologies et de la notion d’auteur, une restructuration nécessaire de la ‘composition’ de l’Orchestra prenait place. La qualité essentiellement distributive de l’Orchestra a investi des formes d’auto-actualisation qui ont rendu le besoin d’un groupe unique cohérent superflu. De nombreux membres se sont plus tard engagés dans des activités qui prolongeaient la *praxis* radicale développée au sein de l’Orchestra. La rupture, par conséquent, ne représentait pas l’échec de ses membres, mais bien l’éclatement de la limite entre la structure formelle de la partition/constitution et les gens qui étaient la ‘substance’ de l’Orchestra. Comme le disait Adorno pour décrire une erreur de notation dans unes des compositions en série de Schoenberg, cela représentait:

(...) la percée de la substance devant être structurée, le point où elle rencontre le processus structurant et sans lequel cette dernière n’eut pu être légitimée.

Légiférer pour la Non-conformité

Il y a des parallèles à établir avec la manière dont le Logiciel Libre s’appuie sur le copyleft et la GPL qui peut aussi être vue comme une mode de ‘législation pour la non-conformité’. La GPL peut certes ‘retourner’ les restrictions normales créées par le droit d’auteur traditionnel, mais cela dépend néanmoins de leur cadre légal de base et donc d’une notion légalisée de liberté réalisée par l’entremise de la propriété exclusive. De là vient l’attraction du copyleft pour des libertariens de droite tels qu’Eric Raymond. En effet, on peut avancer que le copyleft, dans sa réalisation actuelle, plutôt que d’incarner une forme de ‘production en commun’ illustre en réalité quelque chose de plus proche de la ‘transaction juste’ de Robert Nozick. Le problème avec le copyleft est sa forme actuelle et les notions de ‘remix’ et de

culture légalisée de l' 'appropriation' qui s'y sont développées, est qu'il présente simplement une alternative *au sein* de la production propriétaire et acquisitive (capitalisme) plutôt qu'une alternative à celle-ci. Cela apparaît dans la promotion active de la 'liberté' jeffersonienne parmi les avocats de l'open source et des Creative Commons, tels que Raymond et Lawrence Lessig. Mettre l'emphase sur le copyleft comme une fin en soi et sur la GPL comme le document définissant le logiciel libre, est donc potentiellement contraire aux objectifs du Logiciel Libre. Un commentaire de Stallman corrobore cela:

Le logiciel libre est une question de liberté. De notre point de vue, savoir quel est précisément le mécanisme légal utilisé pour dénier toute liberté aux utilisateurs du logiciel est juste un détail d'implémentation. Que ce soit fait avec le droit d'auteur, avec les contrats, ou de tout autre manière, il est faux de refuser au public les libertés nécessaires pour former une communauté et coopérer. C'est pourquoi il est inexact de comprendre le Mouvement du Logiciel Libre comme étant spécifiquement une question d'opposition au droit d'auteur sur le logiciel. C'est à la fois plus et moins que cela.

Il est significatif que cette remarque était une réponse à la promotion du copyleft par Robert T. Long comme étant compatible avec les valeurs d'un marché libre libertarien. C'est peut-être mieux dès lors d'envisager la GPL et le copyleft comme des tactiques conférant un certain levier dans les circonstances actuelles. La prolifération des licences 'libres' dans les dernières années pourrait être plus le signe de l'aménagement de pratiques résistantes à un ordre de légitimation qu'ils feraient mieux d'éviter, dans la mesure où, dans le droit actuel, il n'existe aucun schéma magique de license qui mettra fin à la production propriétaire.

Production Distributive

Les conflits au sein du Scratch Orchestra et les conflits entre Logiciel Libre et Logiciel Open Source illustrent les distinctions, parmi les formes de production, entre celles qui sont collectives et distributives,

A Code of Conduct Is Not Enough

Despite “doing everything right,” we failed to create a safe space for our attendees. How did we screw up?

by Maggie Zhou & Alex Clemmer & Lindsey Kuper on October 27th, 2014

This spring, a small group of volunteers organized !!Con (pronounced *bang bang con*), a two-day conference about “the excitement, joy, and surprise of programming.” We worked hard to make our conference as inclusive, safe, and welcoming as possible. It was free to attend. We had a gender-balanced organizing team. We did extensive, individually tailored outreach when soliciting talks, and we used an anonymous talk selection process; the result was an extraordinarily diverse lineup of speakers. At the event itself, we had real-time captioning of talks, a photography policy, gender-inclusive single-occupancy restrooms, food options to accommodate everyone, and no alcohol. We made a point of holding the conference at Hacker School, an established safe space, and we adopted the Hacker School social rules for our event.

In spite of all these efforts, there were two reported violations of our code of conduct (CoC) at our tiny two-day conference with 120 attendees. Despite “doing everything right,” we failed to create a safe space for our attendees. How did we screw up?

Harassment still happens, even with a code of conduct

The push for adoption of anti-harassment policies at tech conferences has been a success: since 2010, hundreds of conferences have adopted an anti-harassment policy, many of them based on an example policy on the Geek Feminism wiki. Thanks in large part to anti-harassment policy advocacy by the Ada Initiative and other organizations, an anti-harassment policy is the done thing these days.

The introduction to the Geek Feminism wiki’s example policy states, “Simply having an anti-harassment policy can prevent harassment all by itself.” Indeed, the widespread adoption of conference codes of conduct is often considered a victory in its own right by tech culture activists.

Unfortunately, it isn’t enough, and harassment at conferences continues. While it’s true that the existence of an anti-harassment policy or code of conduct can discourage the worst offenders from attending an event, or encourage some attendees to think more carefully about their behavior while there, we’ve seen firsthand that a code of conduct alone is not remotely sufficient to prevent all incidents of harassment and misconduct from occurring.

Don’t follow copy/paste culture

As many conferences do, we forked an existing conference’s code of conduct without many modifications. We posted a copy of our CoC on our website and briefly mentioned it at the beginning of the conference: “We have a code of conduct! Go

read it.” We assumed, incorrectly, that all of the attendees of our tiny conference shared our values and knew why we had a CoC.

Having a token CoC that is never explicitly discussed is **almost worse than no code of conduct at all**. It tells conference-goers that you threw a CoC up on your website because doing so is expected, rather than as part of an intentional effort to define the culture of your event. Consider the all-too-common situation in which a conference’s CoC is publicly violated – for instance, by sexualized or gendered humor in a talk – but the violation is not publicly addressed. When this happens, it further reinforces the perception that the event only has a CoC because the organizers feel obligated to have one, or because they heard somewhere that it was important.

For us, spending even ten minutes in front of the entire conference articulating **why** we had a CoC, our thought process in creating it, and our hopes for how the CoC would define the culture of our event, would have been useful and informative. Ideally, doing so would have also made it easier for attendees to talk to each other and us about the code of conduct and the violations that occurred. There are other things that event organizers can do to make it clear that they take their own code of conduct seriously; for example, organizers could ask attendees (and organizers) to read and sign an event’s code of conduct as part of registering for the event.

Don’ t ignore microaggressions

Marginalized people are used to microaggressions being a part of their everyday lives. To be in a space that is explicitly trying to deter microaggressions is novel to most attendees – marginalized and otherwise – and this needs to be spoken about explicitly. Yet it’s typical for CoCs to not mention microaggressions at all.

As organizers, we were very aware of this. We’ve all attended conferences whose anti-harassment policies only addressed overt harassment, and we’ve all experienced or seen microaggressions in those spaces anyway. For instance, a microaggression that women often encounter at a technical conference is the assumption that she is not part of the audience at whom the conference is primarily aimed – either she’s there in a non-technical capacity, or she’s “with someone there”. We attempted to explicitly address microaggressions like this one by incorporating Hacker School’s social rules into our code of conduct – these rules explicitly talk about a variety of microaggressions that can make a space feel less safe.

However, we didn’t do anything more. We didn’t do anything to explain to our attendees what a social rule violation looks like, or how to respond to it if they saw one. We could have done better by explicitly role-playing what a microaggression looks like and how a bystander could respond to it, and making it clear that microaggressions are considered CoC breaches that violators will be held accountable for.

Be clear about your values

One of the two known CoC violations at !!Con was reported directly to an organizer whose contact information was listed in our CoC. We learned of the other known violation indirectly because we were friends with the victim. We genuinely don’t know how many violations happened.

There's a remarkable burden in asking people to report all incidents of misconduct or harassment to a designated organizer. In "Why didn't you report it?", s.e. smith discusses some of the many reasons why rape is underreported to law enforcement and campus officials: fear of reprisal, worries about not being believed, lack of faith in the authorities, and so on. In the setting of a conference, some of the same reasons for underreporting of CoC violations apply.

Especially when the organizers are **not very clear** about what they consider to be misconduct or a CoC violation, it makes the burden of reporting violations higher. Attendees are forced to speculate: "Will this organizer (who I don't know, who I've never interacted with before) respond to my report seriously? Will they consider *my report itself* to be bad behavior?" At !!Con, we were not clear enough about our values to our attendees, which made it difficult for attendees to feel safe reporting violations to us.

As event organizers, we spend a lot of time thinking about and planning ways to make events as inclusive as possible, and then implementing those plans. *We* all know that inclusivity is one of our goals, and we all trust each other to prioritize it. But our attendees don't necessarily know what our priorities are — after all, we are in many cases complete strangers to them. If a dry CoC document is the only artifact of all of our thinking about inclusivity, our attendees won't know whether the inclusive aspects of the event were intentional choices we made, or just things that happened. We need to earn the trust of the people attending our event by telling them what choices we made and why. For instance, we had real-time captioning because there was a real need for it, not because it was fun (although it was tremendously fun). No alcohol, gender-neutral bathrooms, no Q&A, quiet rooms, and yes, our code of conduct — all these aspects of !!Con were choices we made explicitly for the benefit of our conference-goers. And we should have told them that.

Community accountability

Codes of conduct often put strong emphasis on the accountability of conference organizers. But this is only part of the picture: practically, we've found it is important for attendees themselves to play a role in developing the event's culture, rather than having it all dictated, owned and enforced by organizers.

Hacker School's social rules are an extraordinary example of bottom-up, community-driven accountability working together with top-down, organizer-enforced accountability. The social rules suggest: "If someone says, 'hey, you just feigned surprise,' or 'that's subtly sexist,' don't worry. Just apologize, reflect for a second, and move on." The key here is *acknowledging* that mistakes will happen. The sting of a microaggression can be ameliorated by acknowledging the mistake, apologizing, and striving to not do it again (and to call other people on it when they do). Not all CoC violations should result in someone being kicked out of the conference, or require escalation to an organizer; some can be most effectively handled by a community process.

At !!Con, we tried to shoehorn this sense of community-building into our CoC by just including the Hacker School social rules wholesale, but we didn't quite succeed (demonstrating again that culture isn't something that can be copied and pasted). For this approach to work, we would have needed to educate attendees and actively foster an environment in which everybody is expected and allowed to remind

each other of the social rules. An event that succeeds in doing this not only creates a better culture for all attendees, but it lightens the victim's burden of speculating whether or not an incident is worth reporting to the organizers, and transmutes it into all attendees and organizers continually reflecting on our interactions with each other.

A code of conduct is not a replacement for culture

CoC violations sometimes will happen in spite of our best efforts. If we judge the success of our CoC (and of our event) by whether there are CoC violations, it will ultimately discourage reporting of violations, because nobody wants to be the one to have "ruined" the event by reporting. And that's the opposite of what we want.

On the other hand, we absolutely do want to do everything we can to prevent misconduct in the first place. We don't just want an event with fewer *reported* violations, we want an event *with fewer violations*, period.

A well-organized event, then, will in fact have two goals regarding misconduct:

- Make it easier to report misconduct.
- Make misconduct less likely.

Both goals are crucial. An event that emphasizes the second goal but not the first would be, for instance, one that doesn't include contact information for organizers in its CoC, or one that doesn't explain what will happen when misconduct is reported. Fluffy "be excellent to each other"-style CoCs can fall into this category.

Other conferences emphasize the first goal by listing in their CoC specific people to whom violations should be reported, and explaining the process by which the conference will respond to reported violations. This is the kind of CoC that !!Con had this year, and also the current accepted best practice for a CoC. However, making it easier to report misconduct is clearly not enough; we also need to work to make misconduct less likely in the first place. This second goal – that of making misconduct less likely – isn't about the CoC document itself; it's about how we talk about conduct with attendees, how we present the CoC to them, and what we do to create a culture in which people can be accountable to each other. It's about being explicit about the culture of the space of the conference, and what is different about the conference's space from the outside world.

A code of conduct is not a replacement for culture.

COPYRIGHTEOUS

rebel with rather too many causes

OCTOBER 20, 2009 BY BENJAMIN MAKO HILL

Updating the Ubuntu Code of Conduct

The [Ubuntu Code of Conduct](#) is one of the most surprisingly successful projects I've ever had the privilege of working on. On my first day working for the company that would become [Canonical](#), I talked with Mark Shuttleworth about some ideas for community governance. Partially in reaction to some harsh behavior in other free software projects we'd worked on, Mark and I agreed that some sort of explicit standard for behavior in Ubuntu would be a good thing. Over lunch of what was my literally first day working on Ubuntu, I wrote a draft of code of conduct that was essentially the version that Ubuntu has used until today. Shuttleworth made a series of modifications to my draft but I don't think either of us took it *too* seriously. We figured it would be easy to update it later.

Over time, that code has become a central piece of the Ubuntu community. Every new Ubuntu [member](#) cryptographically signs the code. When conversation in any Ubuntu forums, channels, or lists becomes disrespectful, users almost instinctively remind each other of the code. Through this process, the code has become a sort of constitution of our community and a widely enforced standard. People treat the code as a reflection of what "ubuntu" — both the concept and our project — stands for.

Over time, the original code has spawned a [Leadership Code of Conduct](#) (which I also worked to draft), and has been modified and employed by scores of free software projects and by many projects that have nothing to do with free software at all. This is all wonderful, but a side effect has been that updating the code has become a more a difficult process that we originally imagined.

Despite its success, the code remains a text written in an afternoon in Mark's flat. At times, this fact shows. For example, the code contains some off-hand [humor](#) that now seems a little awkward and the text was a bit too [developer centric](#) at points. And there was a lot that, quite simply, we would have done better if we had realized that the code would be so important. So this summer, [Daniel Holbach](#) and I spent another afternoon

in Berlin discussing and crafting a new version of the code along with a detailed rationale document that describes all the things we'd changed and why.

We believe that what we've created is fully in the spirit of the original code. We've made efforts to minimize the delta in terms of text as possible. Daniel and I realize that changing the code out from under our community is a dangerous game, and we've make exceptional efforts to make sure that the new code doesn't say anything substantively different than the old code — but that it does say it better.

So I'm thrilled that, after being posted since early June and after incorporating a series of revisions with members of the Ubuntu Community Council, the new draft was approved at a council meeting earlier today.

Of course, we are continuing to think about how we might improve the text going forward. One important goal we've thrown around, for example, is the creation of a code that is no longer Ubuntu specific and that can be employed by a wide range of different groups and different free and open source software projects.

FREESOFTWARE, REFLECTIONS

3 Replies to “Updating the Ubuntu Code of Conduct”

Jared Spurbeck

OCTOBER 20, 2009 AT 14:49

With regards to the part of the Leadership Code of Conduct about “conflicts of interest” — Does Ubuntu One's use of the Ubuntu trademark, and its integration into the Free / Open-Source Ubuntu desktop, constitute a conflict of interest for all Canonical employees? If not, is it okay if they keep adding more proprietary cloud service tie-ins to the Ubuntu desktop, as the spec suggests they are planning to do?

Mikko Rauhala

OCTOBER 20, 2009 AT 15:29

I'd like to take this opportunity to point out my earlier criticism of not so much the CoC itself, but its practical application by the IRC council:

Censorship, IRC and the Ubuntu Code of Conduct

v.1.0

Preface: Some people seem to very much like to think that I'm claiming here that the users of the Ubuntu IRC channels are somehow entitled to something, or that IRC is a democracy, or that this is a free speech issue, or that the operators aren't within their privileges to do whatever they damn well please.

The real point is, of course, none of the above, as you could well see from careful reading of the actual text. The actual point is the plain and simple double standards and hypocrisy of the practices when looked at from the perspective of the Code of Conduct, which is what the operators themselves use to *justify* their actions. (Hypocrisy means saying one thing and doing another.)

Now that that's cleared up, let's get on to the text:

It has become evident to me from long participation on the Ubuntu IRC channels, that the Ubuntu IRC Council's practice as to the interpretation of the Ubuntu Code of Conduct (CoC) is best described as petty, arrogant and disrespectful – all qualities not endorsed by the CoC itself.

I do not have high hopes for this essay to change the situation outright, or to provoke changes in the CoC to discourage petty interpretations. The first would require the people involved to be able to acknowledge their current practice as arbitrary micromanagement, and as for the latter, the CoC itself is not really at fault, the root cause of the problem rather being the common human trait of being predisposed to imposing one's values on others.

I do hope that this essay will provoke some introspection in at least some community members, so that in the long run we might have a more tolerant Ubuntu community. Also, the arguments may apply to other situations as well where a perhaps well-meaning but misguided elite try and enforce their ways on others.

I will discuss two forms of active censorship and how they exhibit the qualities mentioned above. Let's start with the less egregious one.

Censorship by topic

Censorship by topic is something to be tolerated to some extent — I am not advocating allowing personal attacks, for instance, or to reintroduce offtopic material to support channels, or any such thing. However, the IRC Guidelines take this further, even for miscellaneous chatter channels such as #ubuntu-offtopic:

"[T]ake touchy subject choices such as war, race, religion, politics (unless related to software licencing), gender, sexuality, drugs, questionable legal activities, removing of ones [sic] self from the planet are taken [sic] to other channels such as #off-topic or ##politics."

Basically, the guidelines state, and the operators enforce, a *precrime* approach. You might have not insulted or provoked anyone. You might not have done anything that is wrong according to most anyone's *common sense* (the use of which is otherwise generally encouraged by the ops). Nevertheless, you will be discouraged, and eventually removed, for having an unapproved topic of conversation. On a conversation channel.

So, how can regulating these subjects be bad? Well, for instance, there are the issues of sexuality and gender. Now, Ubuntu channels certainly are no netsex channels, but making the entire subjects taboo does not speak well for their tolerance. I am reminded of "Don't ask, don't tell" policies of the US Army, for instance; "If you're gay, just don't ever mention it and we'll be cool". While I am not of that persuasion, and my sexuality is not a strong part of my identity, there are those to whom it's highly integral. I find the policy extremely

disrespectful towards these people. And how about the feminine side of geekdom? Verboten to discuss in specific, whether it's to speculate on some differences to the more prevalent male geekdom, or if there are any at all. Relevantly, it seems that for instance any discussion on how to get more women interested in our causes is, well, off-topic.

Before one jumps up to say that the ops use common sense in enforcement, the situation is actually made worse its arbitrary nature. Many of these subjects, especially politics, are often broached on specifically #ubuntu-offtopic. Sometimes the operators react, sometimes they don't, and the conversations continue for a long time. Sometimes the operators clearly choose not to interfere (even when clear personal insults are involved), sometimes it may be just that nobody's watching. Regardless, the visible result on the channel is highly arbitrary enforcement of rules. One cannot help but wonder if for instance politics is more easily let slide if the operators present agree with what's being said.

The usual counter to the arbitrariness is that these are "guidelines", not rules. I counter that a guideline in this case is a rule that an enforcer can ignore or enforce at his or her personal convenience (also called "whim"). This is not conducive to a mutually respectful, collaborative environment.

In short, you should *not* have this sort of blanket rules that give operators full discretion in whether to impose their opinions on suitable topics of conversation on people.

As a humorous side note, apparently in the pursuit of "family-friendliness" the guidelines are formulated sufficiently unclearly to require people to once in a while ask what's "removing of ones self from the planet". Thus somebody will explain it means suicide, and so the rules themselves bring up the subject occasionally, even if it is not generally discussed as such after that. Also other taboos are often metaconversed about in passing, and double standards abound (for instance the usual American one; kidding about killing someone seems to be mostly okay, while if you, all in good fun, even hint at sexuality, you're pretty sure to be reprimanded).

Censorship by vocabulary

Then there is censorship by vocabulary. This I find more offensive of the two forms of censorship because of the sheer pettiness and arrogance of it.

To be perfectly clear, I'm not advocating that people shouldn't be admonished for making personal insults or discouraged from spouting profanities every other word (as that makes the text hard to follow). I am, however, firmly against fussing over every gosh-darn swear word that people happen to mention as emphasis, embellishment, or simply *in the course of their natural use of their language*.

Ubuntu claims multiculturality. Swearing is an *extremely* cultural thing. And I'm not talking about large cultures either. In the modern world, subcultures abound. There are *no* objective measures here, and while one form of "*being considerate*" is indeed trying to a *reasonable degree* not to offend people, it is likewise "*considerate*" not to freak out at someone every single time you happen to see some "alarming" combination of glyphs on the screen. Even if it's not a one-time slip. It's *just words*, for crying out loud.

In fact, I would go so far as to say that anyone who extols his or her own definition of "proper" vocabulary above all others *and* is willing to enforce this view by forcible removal of dissenters from the community is *not "being respectful"*, quite the opposite. It is disrespectful of all those people to whom this is a *natural part* of their daily language.

This arrogance goes even deeper than the individual level. Referring to the subcultural issues, this degree of meddling in peoples' choice of words is *cultural discrimination*. Qualitatively, it's no different from saying that if you grew up in a proper white Republican upper middle class home with good Christian values (though don't say that last part, that's taboo), you're fine and welcome to our midst. If you grew up on the streets of the local nigger ghetto, you're filthy and not fit to be in our company if you don't learn to talk like proper white folk, pronto. (Yes, that's slightly exaggarated, though still even in itself a valid example of what kind of communities are more or less likely than others to pass the Ubuntu requirements. I trust reasonable people are intellectually honest enough to see the point behind the exaggaration and not use it as an excuse to carry on discriminating.)

"Family friendliness" is often cited as an excuse for policing every last punctuating utterance of chatters. This is a misnomer. Families are not threatened by words, and neither are children damaged by these random four-letters sprinkled in conversation. If anything, they may be slightly traumatized if the adults make a huge screaming deal about it — or they may just use it as a way of ticking said adults off. Finally, this excuse is rendered rather hollow by the fact that technical terms such as "brainfuck" are *explicitly allowed* (which in itself is very sane, of course, merely a massive double standard). Are we to believe that children are not damaged if we add "brain" to the Bad Word? Or if they still are damaged, why isn't "brainfuck" banned as well? Is an obscure joke of a language word more important? Oh, won't somebody please think of the children!

Then, of course, there is the same arbitrariness of measure as with subject-based censorship. Gosh-darn, what is one allowed to say? "F*ck", "duck", "freck" or "frell"? "WTF"? If not, how about "OMG"? If yes, why? This is all up to the whims of the presiding operators. An easy solution is of course to submit completely to the cultural superiority of the IRC Council's idealized image of a white upper middle class American, and never use any strong emphasis at all. This would, however, take away from the expressiveness of the language, as well as amount to bowing down to an unjust policy all too easily.

Finally, there is the problem that the rule has become a sort of a joke. Specifically on #ubuntu-offtopic, again, the regulars often !ohmy each other. Then there might be some pondering if what was said was actually !ohmy-worthy. It's hard to take it seriously anymore. Rules that are used as running gags are not worthy of their label.

Conclusion

The Ubuntu IRC Council's practice of censorship on the IRC channels is not conducive to creating a mutually respectful, collaborative, multicultural environment. It's based largely on the idea of the supremacy of some idealized, cleaned-up (and non-existing) form of American mainstream culture, as witnessed by for instance the categorical dismissal of swear words and preference of violence over sexuality. The IRC Council seems to have forgotten that respect and considerateness are two-way streets.

The rules (or guidelines) are enforced very arbitrarily, many of them being regularly broken and/or used as running gags. A regular user can easily get the impression that operators bend the guidelines when they agree with what's being said, and start being more strict if they disagree.

In closing, I hope this essay will prove the tiniest bit useful, at least in the long run, in pushing away some of the censorship, double standards, arbitrary rules, and excess presumptions of cultural supremacy around the Ubuntu community and elsewhere. This would truly be in the spirit of the CoC, and not mere lip service.

Au sein des occupant·es se sont formées peu à peu des mouvances très marquées. Pour simplifier, on peut parler de deux modes d'organisations soutendues par deux visions des luttes : les anti-autoritaires et féministes d'un côté, et les autonomes et « appellistes_s » regroupés depuis environ deux ans au sein du **CMDO** (Comité pour le maintien des occupations) de l'autre. Entre ces deux pôles, se sont constitués des groupes plus ou moins durables tentant des voies différentes. D'autres occupant·es, ne se retrouvant pas dans ces formes d'organisation assez structurées, se sont toujours tenu·es à l'écart des réunions et actions officielles. Il n'empêche que ces derniers, appelés à NDDL « les gens de l'Est » parce qu'ils ont construit leurs habitations plutôt à l'Est de la ZAD, ne restent pas inactifs ou inorganisés. Entre autre, ils ont imposé aux agriculteurs une zone non motorisée. Pour continuer dans la description à grands traits, on peut dire que les occupant·es des groupes organisés sont majoritairement issu·es de la petite bourgeoisie intellectuelle en voie de déclassement, et que les gens dit « de l'Est » sont plutôt issus des classes populaires paupérisées.

Les mythes à l'épreuve des faits : unité, horizontalité, consensus

Si vous avez réussi à vous repérer dans ce paysage social, vous avez compris que le mythe propagé, en particulier par les textes officiels de la ZAD (« *en vrai si on a gagné, c'est parce qu'il y avait tellement de modes d'actions différents avec tellement de gens différents, que les keufs ont jamais su comment réagir, et c'était trop stylé* ») ou les livres écrits par le collectif Mauvaise Troupe⁶, ce mythe de « **l'unité dans la diversité** » est une tromperie qui profite aux dominants. Pour les citoyennistes, il était impensable de remettre en question l'État ou le système capitaliste. Il s'agissait juste de défendre le domaine agricole et foncier contre le projet d'aéroport. Pour les occupant·es, l'aéroport était certes important, mais il était inconcevable de lutter contre ce Projet Inutile sans remettre en cause l'État et le système capitaliste qui en sont à l'origine. Les premiers ont dû néanmoins s'arranger avec les seconds tant que le maintien du projet d'aéroport, avec la menace d'une expulsion

militarisée violente, était brandie par les différents gouvernements Hollande.

Ce mythe de l'unité dans la diversité a fait et continue à faire des dégâts. A l'intérieur du Mouvement « anti-aéroport », il a muselé les occupant·es, organisées ou non, mais critiques sur le mécanisme de confiscation de la lutte. Ils et elles ne voulaient pas risquer de briser l'unité qui « fait la force du Mouvement ». A l'extérieur, ce mythe de l'unité dans la diversité a créé des imaginaires de lutte idyllique. Idéalisation et culpabilisation sont encore aujourd'hui le lot de bien des soutiens à cette lutte qui pensent n'être pas capables de faire pareil.

Le 1er Août 2017, en AG du Mouvement, la Coordination testa, par une mise en scène théâtrale, la force de ce mythe. Elle prit prétexte de trois actes d'hostilité lors de rassemblements⁷ qu'elle avait organisés et dont elle tint l'ensemble des occupant·es pour responsable. Elle demanda aux occupant·es de condamner les auteurs de ces « incivilités ». Devant le refus de l'assemblée, les membres de la Coordination quittèrent l'AG, courroucés. Quelques membres du CMDO leur emboîtèrent le pas. Ils laissèrent seul·es les occupant·es, semblant briser ainsi la sacro-sainte unité du Mouvement, pour mieux recomposer une unité de façade qui exclura, sans jamais l'assumer publiquement, les occupant·es les moins intégrables.

Autre mythe à qui la réalité s'est chargée de tordre le cou, c'est celui du **fonctionnement « horizontal »** des réunions. Vous connaissez le fonctionnement plutôt vertical classique des associations ou collectifs, avec un conseil d'administration ou du moins avec des prises de décision au vote majoritaire. Les occupant·es, pour leur part, ont cherché à mettre en œuvre un fonctionnement horizontal dans les réunions.

Cette organisation aurait dû faciliter la prise de parole. Mais l'horizontalité est aussi un leurre, chacun·e ne l'abordant pas avec les mêmes caractéristiques.

La prise de parole ne dépend pas seulement d'un donneur de parole, mais surtout de la capacité de chaque participant-e à s'exprimer avec les codes en vigueur dans l'AG, du fait de se sentir légitime pour intervenir, y compris contre la majorité du groupe, de la capacité à passer outre les ricanements, les humiliations voire les intimidations. Ces compétences, qui dépendent essentiellement de la possession, ou non, d'un certain capital culturel, ne sont pas également réparties entre les participant-e-s à une AG. Quelles que soient les techniques de conduite d'un groupe, ce seront toujours les mêmes qui seront plus à l'aise, excluant, même sans le vouloir, celles et ceux qui en réaction ne prendront plus la parole, puis ne viendront plus à ces réunions. Ce seront toujours les mêmes qui auront la possibilité de porter leurs intérêts en avant.

Et comme on ne prête qu'aux riches, ce capital culturel va de pair avec un capital social plus ou moins conséquent, qui permet de faire fonctionner ses réseaux à l'extérieur, réseaux politiques, de soutien. C'est ainsi que certains lieux de vie sur la ZAD se sont trouvés à la tête de moyens matériels mis à leur disposition pour mener à bien leurs projets : machines agricoles ou matériel de construction, par exemple, qui ne furent pas souvent mis à la disposition de toutes et tous. Peut-on parler d'horizontalité si on ne veille pas, au sein du Mouvement, à la redistribution égale des moyens matériels et financiers venus de l'extérieur ?

Autre ressource inégalement répartie au sein des occupant-e-s, c'est le temps disponible pour lire, écrire, se documenter, rechercher les informations et les diffuser, organiser les réunions, etc. Et ce temps est d'autant plus disponible qu'on habite une maison en dur ou un habitat auto-construit confortable, sans le souci d'aller à la recherche d'eau ou d'une machine à laver, où on a accès à l'électricité et au chauffage, ressources dont toutes les habitant-e-s de la ZAD ne disposent pas. Plutôt que de parler de diversité, il serait ainsi plus juste de parler d'inégalité au sein du Mouvement. Inégalité qui, si elle a été combattue par certain-e-s, persiste et fait toujours sentir

La prise de pouvoir est d'autant plus aisée si un groupe doté de tous ces types de capital, matériel, social et culturel décide de prendre en main le fonctionnement des réunions, pour allier efficacité et défense de ses intérêts, au nom de l'intérêt commun, bien entendu. Et l'on peut s'interroger sur la « bienveillance » de ce groupe quand il décide de boycotter, comme l'a fait le CMDO à l'automne, la réunion hebdomadaire des Habitant·es, plus anti-autoritaire, sous prétexte qu'elle ne sert à rien. D'autant que dans le même temps, le même groupe mettait en place de nouvelles instances dirigeantes. Notons encore une fois les positions inégales entre la stratégie du CMDO qui construit ce pouvoir et prend de vitesse la majorité des habitant·es, et une partie des occupant·es qui continue d'affirmer publiquement que le Mouvement doit avancer « au rythme de ceux qui trébuchent » (discours élaboré en réunion des habitant·es, dont le CMDO est officiellement absent, et prononcé à la tribune du 10 février).

Sur la ZAD, le mythe de « **la recherche du consensus** » a eu la vie dure. Il était clamé haut et fort que les décisions étaient prises au consensus. Ce qui faisait râler les composantes plus verticales qui estimaient que c'était une perte de temps. On voit bien, par l'analyse de l'horizontalité, qu'il ne peut y avoir de consensus si tous les participant·es n'abordent pas une réunion à égalité, encore moins si une bonne partie s'exclut d'un fonctionnement qui les exclut de fait. Mais le 18 janvier, au lendemain de la « victoire », les composantes extérieures, n'ayant plus en vue que la nouvelle phase de la lutte, c'est-à-dire les futures négociations⁸ avec le gouvernement, ont jeté les masques. Ces négociations ayant pour enjeu la redistribution de la propriété privée (les terres et les fermes), il ne fut plus question de consensus ou de décisions prises par tout le Mouvement.

La Coordination et COPAIN, suivis par le CMDO, ont informé l'AG qu'ils allaient détruire les cabanes et les chicanes qui avaient été construites après l'opération César sur la D281 et maintenues depuis, ceci sous prétexte que le gouvernement le demandait. Ces composantes étaient soucieuses de lui montrer leur capacité à maîtriser la situation en interne.

D'autres coups de force ont eu lieu, comme rajouter en catimini une phrase pouvant susciter une opposition au communiqué commun de « victoire » adopté en AG⁹ ; comme la menace de quitter le Mouvement et de laisser les occupant·es de la fraction dominée, les « perdant·es », comme certain·es se nomment alors, seul·es devant les forces de gendarmerie mobile ou la préfecture si les réfractaires refusaient les compromis.

*Chronique d'une bureaucratisation en cours*¹⁰

Il est toujours plus facile de comprendre les processus au début de leur mise en place quand ils sont encore visibles parce qu'ils se heurtent à des résistances, que lorsqu'ils sont bien huilés, qu'ils ont forcé l'acceptation de toutes et tous. Les différentes options encore possibles lors des prémisses ont disparu, et les processus installés ne sont plus remis en cause.

Le processus de bureaucratisation assurant la prise de pouvoir des fractions dominantes du Mouvement (essentiellement COPAIN, la Coordination et le CMDO¹¹) fut lent et d'autant plus insidieux qu'il fut le fait de potes avec qui s'étaient nouées des connivences et des amitiés complices dans le partage de la vie quotidienne au fil des années. La ZAD a ceci de particulier, qu'y sont étroitement imbriqués les lieux de vie et les lieux de lutte. Ces liens affectifs ont affaibli la vigilance des occupant·es anti-autoritaires, pourtant au fait de ces processus. Le flou dans lequel restent volontairement les membres de groupes organisés au sein du Mouvement ne permet pas de nommer clairement les adversaires. L'autocensure vint aussi de la réaction de proches s'exclamant « t'es chiant·e ! » à la moindre remarque critique. L'isolement et le sentiment d'être « parano » et de se l'entendre dire à un impuissant nombre d'occupant·es. Celles et ceux qui étaient lucides sur la tournure de la situation, lassé·es d'être seul·es à la dénoncer, ont souvent quitté définitivement le Mouvement.

Hacer frente con nuestras espaldas

Notas antes y después del segundo encuentro de la *Casa de Bajo Estudios* – en la Cazona de Flores, el domingo 3 diciembre 2017, “Cuerpos, potencias, resistencias”, donde fui invitada junto a Verónica Gago, Amparo González, Alejandra Rodríguez, Nicolás Cuello; coordinación de Silvio Lang.

Porque sabemos que los ataques están viniendo por todos lados,

que focalizarnos los ojos en una pantalla haciendo de la trágica (anunciada) desaparición de un submarino una serie televisiva es una estrategia de anestesia,

que podemos mirar por los bordes, dejar entrar las intensidades que marcan grados de oscuridad/luminosidad cuando los párpados se entreabren, volver nuestras miradas tangibles y tangentes,

hacer de nuestras espaldas, frentes.

Lo mataron de espalda. A Rafael Nahuel lo mató el escuadrón Albatros con un tiro en la espalda.

Esto también lo sabemos y lo sentimos. Y no tenemos claro qué hacer con todo este saber-sentir. ¿Qué hacemos con este saber y sentir que sin embargo no nos deja muy claro el hacer?

Sí, sabemos que es el dato que constituye una prueba para un día que se haga justicia, cuando haya justicia, y no encubrimiento del proceso jurídico por el poder político, de que Nahuel murió en una cacería, una cacería racista que es la política de Estado.

Es también el dato que hace correr la vulnerabilidad absoluta de ese chico que huía bajo las balas sobre nuestra piel, y nos mete un poco más de miedo. ¿Qué hacemos con la piel erizada de horror y todo lo que sí sabemos?

Desde la piel que tiene esa potencia de escuchar y relacionar en todas direcciones nos preguntamos si la era de apelar a la vulnerabilidad (y vuelve una y otra vez en este punto la voz de Suely Rolnik) como estrategia política no llegó a su fin con el pasaje de umbral de la violencia y represión, muerte y desaparición, que estamos viviendo. Se vuelve insistente la pregunta: ¿no será tiempo de pasar a cómo armarnos caparazón? ¿Esa vulnerabilidad de la espalda puede ser una fuerza?

Si nos metemos precisamente no *hablando sobre los cuerpos* sino desde los saberes-sentires que circulan en las prácticas corporales y escénicas, la pregunta se agudiza: ¿podemos respaldarnos en nuestras espaldas que escapan al campo visual, que son zona de vulnerabilidad al ataque? Cuando la mirada focalizada en un punto central se descentra a lo largo de la piel, diseminándose por los bordes; cuando hacen alianza la piel y los ojos con los oídos (los de la escucha y los del meta-equilibrio propioceptivo), cuando se pone a circular la atención por los costados y el atrás, desorganizando así la frontalidad y la focalización clara y distinta como modo de conocimiento obligatorio, cuando nos autorizamos a conocer desde nuestras espaldas estremecidas... ¿se esbozan maneras de estar haciendo frente con nuestras espaldas?

Implica repensar lo que entendemos por vulnerabilidad, pero también por fuerza. La vulnerabilidad no es una apología de una gran fragilidad ni de una entrega a las cosas tales como están. No es sino asumir la fragilidad que conlleva el hecho de existir (Silvio Lang), y de ahí hace alianza con la insistencia de persistir a vivir.

Investigar esta pregunta por la vulnerabilidad en la potencia singular de los tejidos blandos que abren otro camino que el de la híper-elongación o el de la fuerza de la contracción blindada y la hipertrofia muscular; en el cuerpo/espacio voluminoso y redistribuido que ni suelta ni agarra: vibra (Amparo Gonzalez). Si de vulnerabilidad como estrategia de resistencia podemos seguir hablando, es tal vez en la medida en que no es ni porosidad, ni gran apertura beata; es en la medida en que no se opone a una gran fuerza bien activa porque ella sería una gran pasividad e la entrega, sino que socava en cada gesto, mirada, toma de palabra, el imperativo de la pregunta "¿y? activx o pasivx?" (que se declina perfectamente en "¿winner o loser?" que ordena los discursos y políticas neoliberales). Esa potencia que reconoce la posición de vulnerabilidad redistribuye roles y modos de tomar el espacio público, que no serían ni un repliegue absoluto, ni una avanzada obnubilada por la revancha final o el retorno del paraíso.

De la brújula estético-ética de lo abigarrado que Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui contó (en la Asamblea de Escuela de Prácticas Colectivas en abril 2017) haber recibido no bajo la mirada sino en la espalda de Rosa entre los roces y destellos de colores del aguayo, al pensamiento anal de panfletos de Preciado-Hocquenghem, pasando por los abrazos de las muchas plazas, los #acuerparnos tejidos en las marchas Ni una menos, los #estamosaparanosotras, los paros de mujeres desde hace más de un año... pero también pasando por todos los talleres de movimiento, de danza, de prácticas corporales y escénicas donde se tejen modos de conocer y de hacer alianzas desde gestos y saberes, podemos movilizar saberes de cuerpos que hacen de espaldas territorios de aprendizaje, autorizaciones para escapar a los órdenes de lo que se puede y debe, fugarse por los costados.

Si de "saber del cuerpo" se trata, es de un saber no que provendría de "el cuerpo" como súper fuente de verdad revelada, ni de un saber que sabría todo muy bien *sobre el* cuerpo (como si existiría tal "objeto" de conocimiento, y como si estuviera abstracto y universalizante de las trayectorias de vida que se/lo componen). Sino de un conocimiento del atrás, de una situación, de estar con atrás y para atrás, de no tener la mirada fija en una clara esperanza o promesa.

Avanzando hacia atrás o lateralmente como cangrejos, se desarma lo que creemos saber de la conquista de la verticalidad, de la correcta derechitud, y del buen eje, asumiendo mirar desde los bordes que no tiene por qué ser blandos o abiertos, sino que deshacen con paciencia los poderes de tenerlo todo claro y distinto. Se asume sentir, conocer y actuar en una opacidad, una claro-oscuridad tal vez, (justo antes que tome exactamente una forma, más bien en una tensión-alianza deforme entre el "derecho a la opacidad" del tratado de Todo-Mundo de Edouard Glissant anclado en las Antillas, y el Día de la Opacidad Gay de la mano de Nicolas Cuello y una banda ocupando la Plaza Giordano Bruno), de una extensión del dominio del pe(n)sar más allá de los límites del campo visual que organiza lo claro y lo distinto, lo bien aclarado y no borroso como únicos modos de conocer y de hacer.

Haremos de nuestras espaldas una frente, muchas frentes, donde no esperaremos que la vulnerabilidad se invierte en un caparazón todo poderoso, sino que sabremos y haremos circular todo lo que sabemos y tenemos por saber de las redes de cuidado

alternativos que escapan y conectan a la vez de la guardia y hospital de día del Alvear, un cuidado que no es un repliegue ni un nuevo control bien-pensante sobre las propias prácticas guiado por la paranoia, sino un modo de meterse con la realidad, afirmando que algo de esa fragilidad puede también ser la fuerza misma de las transformaciones.

Implica repensar las temporalidades de nuestras acciones, cuando el paso para adelante dejó de ser un programa bien claro. ¿Cómo sigue? Haciendo la larga lista de todo lo que se hizo este año, la sensación de “todo lo que se hizo” contraviene a la sensación de impotencia absoluta (Alejandra Rodríguez). Nos preguntamos ¿qué ritmos? ¿cuánto dura? ¿qué modos de insistencias? Y en qué medida implican esas temporalidades desconocidas, que conectan también experiencias pasadas como futuro e imágenes del futuro como ecos pasados, anclarse en cierta relación concreta con estar ahora, con suspender algo de la ansiedad o de la proyección de resultados (Nicolas Cuello). También aparece la idea de que estas acciones, en cuanto escapan al gran relato de la victoria, pero también a ser solo actos repetitivos donde el ritual del espacio público se vuelve experiencia de la impotencia, tienden ante todo a inscribirse en prácticas largas de cocina (Verónica Gago), de maduración, con-spiración, conversación, en espacios menos visibles, más opacos, de invención de acciones que no presuponen diferencia jerárquica entre una investigación y una acción directa, o sostener una ocupación.

Y si de largo porvenir se trata, sabemos que no es fijando la mirada sobre el punto del paraíso futuro de mañanas perfectas sino “mirando atrás y adelante (al futuro-pasado) podemos caminar en el presente-futuro”[1].

Conocer, tejer, armar frentes con nuestras espaldas, juntas.

[1] Traducción del aforismo aymara “Qhipnayra uñtasis sarnaqapxañani”, en Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Sociología de la imagen*, tinta limón.

ECOLOGIES / POLITICS /

Martha Nussbaum (2008), *The social contract* (EN)

Jane Bennet (2008), *Political ecologies*. In: *Vibrant matter* (EN)

[section]

Mariame Kabe (2019), *Everything Worthwhile Is Done With Other People* (EN) [section]

Tumult (2013), *Archipel: Affinité, organisation informelle et projets insurrectionnels* (FR) [section]

Edouard Glissant (1997), *Dictate, Decree*. In: *Poetics of relation* (EN)[section]

Chedia Lersij (2018), *Pour une écologie politique pragmatique* (FR)

Martha Nussbaum interview Part 1: The Social Contract

How much of your personal liberty would you be prepared to give up in exchange for drains that work and trains that run on time? The idea of the social contract has been with us for many centuries now. It embodies the idea that society is a trade-off between liberties and benefits. This week, we discuss the contract and its shortcomings with one of the greatest moral and political philosophers of the age, Martha C. Nussbaum.

Alan Saunders: Hello and welcome to *The Philosopher's Zone*. I'm Alan Saunders.

This week a conversation with one of the foremost moral and legal philosophers of the age, Martha C. Nussbaum, distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago.

She's written on an amazingly wide variety of topics, but today I want to concentrate on one of her most recent books, *Frontiers of Justice*. This began life as the Tanner Lectures in Human Values delivered at the Australian National University in 2002. The problem it addresses is how we can extend our theories of social justice beyond national boundaries and also to creatures who have normally been excluded from such considerations, disabled humans and members of other species.

This book is dedicated to the memory of John Rawls, whose *Theory of Justice* published in 1971, was a major new account of liberal theory and of what's known as the social contract.

But before we come to Martha Nussbaum, let's look at one of John Rawls' original contributions to contract theory, and that's what called 'the veil of ignorance'. Now 'the veil of ignorance' turns up as a party game, played by the solid and comfortably middle-class cast of the English writer, Margaret Drabble's novel, *The Witch of Exmoor*, published in 1998. Here's what they make of it.

MUSIC

Reader: This weekend was set up as a family conclave, but David and Nathan agree that they cannot spend all their time playing *Unhappy Families*. They've already spent much of the weekend talking about the problem; in the pool, on the tennis court, walking in the shrubbery, chopping parsley. And now it's their turn, at least for a brief respite, to talk about something else.

The Palmers tacitly agree. They're refreshed by the claret and the roast potatoes. They're willing to play David's game, which he says is called 'The Veil of Ignorance'. He's tried to explain it to them in simple terms, but some of them are not very quick, or perhaps they're too quick by half, for they keep interrupting him and going off at tangents and having ideas of their own.

'No, it's not a question of imagining a Utopia', he repeats, 'it's more a question of unimagining everything that you are, and then working out the kind of society which you would be willing to accept if you didn't in advance know your own place in it. If you knew you would have no special privileges or bargaining powers. All you have to imagine is that in the original position of choice, you don't know who you are or where you stand. You don't know if you're rich or poor, able or disabled, clever or mentally sub-normal, plain or beautiful, male or female, black or white, strong or weak. You

don't know if you're an optimist or a pessimist, a risk-taker or a traditionalist, fertile or infertile, straight or gay.

Nor do you know if the society itself is going to be rich or poor, pre-industrial, technologically developed, rapidly developing, booming or declining. You can't expect to be yourself, nor can you expect society to be anything you recognise. Your eyes are veiled by 'the veil of ignorance'. And from this position you have to examine the first principles of justice, and decide what they are. If you cling to any trace of your existing self, you'll find yourself constructing a theory of justice and society that favours you'.

'Let me get this straight', says Patsy who's been trying to concentrate through distractions about bread provision. (Could they really finish off yet another loaf? She was damned if she was going to bake at midnight, and she has a busy day on Sunday). 'Tell me again, David, you mean you've got to construct a society in which I would be willing to take my place as the poorest of the poor and the lowest of the low?'

'Well', says David, 'it's not the whole of society you have to construct, it's more the principles on which it's founded.'

'I can't see the difference', murmurs Emily.

'You could decide', continues David, 'that a small contingent of the very poor are necessary for the proper functioning of society, and that it would just be bad luck, a sort of social sacrifice if you ended up as one of them. It would be quite hard to argue, I think, that a numerically overwhelming mass of the very poor can constitute a just society, but it certainly has been argued -'

'Not to say practiced', murmurs Emily.

'What I want to know is this', says Rosemary. 'If it were all worked out according to David's rules, the universal principles of justice and all that, would anyone dare to press the button and make it happen?'

'Of course one wouldn't dare', says Daniel Palmer. 'It would mean giving up all this' - he gestures widely, and with a lifted eyebrow perhaps of dissociation, at his lawns, his Aga, his wife, his dissenting children, his deliquescent Brie, his three empty bottles - 'I like all this. I've worked hard for this. Years of my life have gone into this, years of Patsy's life have gone into it. I want to see the bay tree reach six foot, slow growth. You know, slow growth. Why should I press a button and risk losing all of this?'

MUSIC

Alan Saunders: 'The Veil of Ignorance' in the work of Margaret Drabble, and to talk about her new take on these ideas, here's Martha Nussbaum.

Martha Nussbaum: The idea of the state of nature was a very powerful idea when it was originated by Locke and other thinkers in the 17th century because it was an idea of taking away all the artificial advantages that people derive from rank, from wealth, from social status, and just thinking what principles they would contract among themselves if they were simply stripped of all those advantages. Now the downside is that in order to get this fiction going, Locke and the others assume that people are roughly equal, not only morally equal, but roughly equal in physical and intellectual capacity. And so he says, 'Look, even though there are differences, the weakest one could always kill the strongest by stealth. That was said already by Hobbes, and Rawls, although his main emphasis is on the moral equality of persons, buys into that

feature of the classical social contract. He stipulates that we're talking about a contract among people who are all roughly equal in physical and mental actual ability, and he himself said very explicitly that for this reason his theory has great difficulty dealing with the case of justice for people with disabilities, justice to non-human animals and for a related reason, justice across national boundaries, because the different nations of the world, who are imagined as similar to persons, are tremendously unequal in their physical capacities.

Alan Saunders: To return to the state of nature, we're talking about a hypothetical state in which people are living before the establishment of human societies, but they want to gain the benefits that come from co-operative activity; defence, defending the weak against the strong, and presumably, also building, engineering and transport and so on. And in order to do this, they form a social contract, they take out a social contract, they surrender some of their individual liberty in exchange for the gains that come from acting in concert, acting together as a society.

Martha Nussbaum: Yes, that's very nicely put. I'm smiling here because I think it's so nice to be on a program where somebody could say that with such elegance.

Yes, that's exactly it. So the idea is that Rawls takes this picture over and of course making it explicit that this is just a thought experiment, he's not supposed to be real history, and he too, imagines people taking up a position in which they're going to make a contract to co-operate together. The thing that he added was that people, in order to make this contract a really fair one, they have to not know certain things about themselves and their position in the resulting society. They don't know their family rank, they don't know their wealth, they don't know their social status, and very importantly, they don't know their race or their sex.

Now the reason he did that is that then they can't jigger things in such a way that the resulting society is unfair and gives them a special set of opportunities that people in an otherwise place don't have. So there's a moral element in Rawls' version of the social contract that's not so clearly present in some of the earlier versions. But he still assumes that they're roughly equal in physical and intellectual power, and therefore the whole question of justice for people with very severe disabilities, he explicitly says has to be left till later after the basic principles of society are already designed, then we'll figure out how to take care of those people who can't really participate in the making of the contract.

Alan Saunders: Now it's interesting you talk about the people who are participating in the making of the contract, but you make the point, don't you, that the social contract tradition conflates two questions that are in principle, distinct. One question, By whom are society's basic principles designed? And the other one, For whom are society's basic principles designed? Two separate questions which tend to be treated as though they were one question in the social contract tradition.

Martha Nussbaum: Yes, that's exactly right. They're making a deal for the best life they can live together as they themselves, the makers of the contract. Now of course that does not prevent them from later taking thought for their children and other dependents, but it's very clear that they're thinking, 'This is a contract by us and for us'. So of course you could imagine having a contract that was by a group, but immediately from the very start, they're thinking that the citizens of the resulting state include other people, who for one reason or another couldn't be represented in that contract, because they can't speak, because they're not human and various other things we might imagine. So this tradition does conflate those two

things, whereas what I want to say in the end is that my own view, according to which it's the job of political planning to foster for all a set of basic capabilities to lead a flourishing life, this view does not make that conflation. It says Well, let's give an account of whose capability should be promoted, but then, of course, it's the ones who reason and speak who will do the planning, but it doesn't mean they're planning only for themselves.

Alan Saunders: Turning to those who are excluded in Rawls' theory, the people beyond our borders, people with disabilities, members of non-human species, what unites these cases is the fact that they all involve an asymmetry of power and capacity, don't they, between the creatures whose entitlements we're concerned with, and some dominant group?

Martha Nussbaum: Yes, and they involve an asymmetry that's large enough that we can't say their co-operation will be to mutual advantage of all. So the idea of mutual advantage, was, as you said very nicely at the heart of the classical social contract tradition, so people are thinking, We're going to get together, because it's to the advantage of all of us to have some rules governing our lives.

But when we think about people with very severe cognitive impairments for example, not at all clear that a contract that includes them as fully equal citizens, therefore with equal claims to health care, education, even to participation in the political process, is going to be to the mutual advantage of everyone, if we think of advantage in the way the tradition does, namely a narrowly economic way. And of course we could say the human advantages of virtue, compassion, love and so on that we get from treating people with disabilities equally, and I think that's a very, very important thing to say. But the social contract tradition thinks of advantage much more narrowly in terms of economic efficiency, and even Rawls does. So we have to say that this puts great limits on what the contract is going to say even about these people that are not present in the very beginning of the contract.

Alan Saunders: Now as Martha Nussbaum's told us, the approach to social theory so strongly argued for by John Rawls, emits three kinds of creature: humans with disabilities, humans in countries other than our own, and non-human animals.

To take account of them, Martha Nussbaum urges an approach that focuses on capabilities. What does that mean?

Martha Nussbaum: OK, well this is an approach that started out in a dissident part of economics that was very worried about the fact that development was understood just in terms of economic growth, not in terms of what the development process does for real people. And so the claim made by Amartya Sen, who won the Nobel Prize for Economics in 1998 for this week, and his associates, was that development is a human process, and what it's about is expanding the opportunity set of real people. So that the right question to ask is, What are they actually able to do and to be? And so the answer to that question is, their capabilities, what they're capable of, what their opportunities and options are.'

Now what I've done is to take that basic idea and use it as the building block of a theory of justice. So I've said it's not enough to compare the opportunities that the people have in one society with what they have in another. We also want to say that a minimally decent society will give to all of its citizens, a certain threshold level of ten central capabilities. And then I go on to spell them out in a very general form, and I think of them as a kind of set of constitutional entitlements that whether

there's a written constitution or not, we could understand to be fundamental to the idea of minimal social justice in society.

Alan Saunders: I won't ask you to go through the full list, but perhaps you could give us a couple of examples just to give us some idea of the sort of thing you're talking about.

Martha Nussbaum: Sure. Well health is one very important example; being able to have access to good health care and then of course that has to be further specified. We have to say what the threshold is. Education is another very important one, having access to a suitable education and then I argue that each country should set the threshold in its own way but that something like free compulsory primary and secondary education is crucial. But also some more intangible things, like being able to play and have access to recreational facilities.

My work started out with thinking about women in developing countries, and one of the things most lacking in their lives is leisure, and the opportunity to play. And so I wanted to say that whatever the labour conditions are that a society sets up, they have to make sure its citizens do have access to recreational time and recreational activities. And then, emotional health. That's rarely mentioned, even my collaborator Amartya Sen doesn't mention it so much, but I think you know, there's a tremendous amount that the politics of a country can do to promote not just physical health but emotional health. For example, women who live in countries that don't have adequate laws against domestic violence, that don't have adequate police who take women's complaints of rape seriously and so on, those women are living in a state of fear and this cripples the rest of their activities. So that's the kind of thing I mean about emotional health, I mean there's of course a lot that the family has to do with that, but I think also the State and the legal process has a great deal to do with something as intangible as emotional health.

Alan Saunders: All of this means doesn't it, that whereas contract theory envisages us as individuals who come out of the state of nature for our mutual advantage. You see us as essentially social and political beings from the start, from the get-go?

Martha Nussbaum: That's right. And it's right and it's important because I think we really can't talk about mutual advantage in the individualistic way that the social contract condition does. If we want to have a picture of society that really does fully include people with disabilities and that does justice to relationships with people in distant nations. So yes, I think of the idea of co-operation as involving the idea of promoting a rich network of human relationships that is seen as valuable in their own right.

But there is one thing that I think is very right about the social contract tradition. Namely, the emphasis on the idea that each person has these entitlements. That each person is to be treated as an end and none as a mere means to the ends of others. So I don't want to have, and don't have the kind of communitarian view that says Oh, let's promote a glorious situation for families, or groups, even though we know that such groups often subordinate individual members. So I want to look inside the household and say 'Are women getting food there?' I don't want to just say 'On, let's promote a lovely situation for households.' So in that way, my approach is individualistic, because it wants justice to be done to each and every one, but then what it is for justice to be done involves very much thinking about relationship, mutual concern, mutual compassion, and so on.

Alan Saunders: You say that in contrast with your capabilities approach, John Rawls' approach is purely procedural. What do you mean by that?

Martha Nussbaum: OK. What Rawls says is there are two ways that we can think of the theory of justice. One way is to think of what a just outcome would be, and then tailor the procedure so you'd get that outcome, and he uses the example of dividing a pie and he says, 'Well you might think that equal shares is the right outcome' and then you figure out what the procedure is of getting to that outcome. Maybe we'll hand the knife around to each person in the group, or however we think that will promote the right cutting of that pie.' But his approach, by contrast, he says is a pure procedural approach because it doesn't say what the fair outcome would be, but instead it imagines a fair procedure, let's say everyone has an equal turn at cutting the pie, and then whatever falls out from that procedure, will be by definition, fair.

So that's a big difference between Rawls' approach and mine, and I don't necessarily say that a procedural approach is a bad approach, I just want people to notice this, because it makes it very difficult to compare Rawls' approach with mine. Mine is much closer in a funny way, to utilitarianism, I mean not because I am a utilitarian and in fact I'm profoundly critical of utilitarianism in a way similar to the way Rawls is. I mean namely saying it doesn't care enough about how the lowest and least well off are doing. But in one way I am closer to them, because I'm thinking about consequences, and I'm thinking That's what really matters, is where we actually get to.

Alan Saunders: And your rather cheeky counter example against the Rawlsean procedural approach is the pasta machine. Tell us how that figures in your thinking.

Martha Nussbaum: Well I want to say that the Rawlsean approach just says Well let's figure out what a good-looking pasta machine would be, and let's just define good pasta is whatever it is that comes out from that good-looking machine, and of course in real life you never do that, you design the machine in order to get the result that you independently think is a good pasta. So of course that's just an illustration, it doesn't tell us anything is profoundly wrong with Rawls' view, but that shows you what I've got in mind.

Alan Saunders: But for you, to change the foodstuff, for you the proof of the pudding is always in the eating, even though the pudding may have been made with the best ingredients and strictly in accordance with the recipe.

Martha Nussbaum: Yes. I mean this is really what constitutional law is all about. And that of course is where I'm coming from. That is, we've got to think do people really have those entitlements, or are they mere words on paper. So what is the society really giving to each and every inhabitant? And so yes, if we find that the procedure looks very nice but the resulting society looks pretty bad, then we wouldn't be happy.

Now of course Rawls says this too, and his own theory is very complex. He does think that once you've designed the procedure, you've got to go back and check it against what it produces, and in the end the whole process that involves consulting our moral intuitions and trying to get the view that fits them best overall, is very complicated in Rawls' view. It takes many, many years, and you go through all the different theories and look at their procedures and their outcomes and so on. So in the end, I think his view is not so much of a pure procedural view as he initially says and therefore it's closer to my view. But at least that is the way he describes it initially.

Alan Saunders: Martha Nussbaum. Details of her and of her book, one of many, *Frontiers of Justice - Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* on our website.

The show is produced by Kyla Slaven, with technical production by Charlie McKune. Claudia Taranto read from Margaret Drabble, and I'm Alan Saunders.

And next week on *The Philosopher's Zone*, we look at how Martha Nussbaum's theories deal with the excluded, particularly the non-human excluded.

morphic resonances. Clusters of neurons in a human brain, groupings of buildings in a city, and colonies of slime molds all have been shown to follow similar organizational rules; each is an instance of what Steven Johnson has called "organized complexity."¹⁰

The Public and Its Problems

What, if anything, does the claim that worms and trees and aluminum are participants in an ecosystem say about political participation? The answer depends in part on whether a political system itself constitutes a kind of ecosystem. Dewey's notion of a public suggests that it does. I turn now to him and to the advantages and limits of modeling politics as an ecology. If Darwin highlights the power of choice in worms to contest the idea that worms are moved only by animal instinct or bodily affect, Dewey closes the gap between human and nonhuman from the other direction: he highlights the affective, bodily nature of human responses.

In *The Public and Its Problems*, Dewey presents a public as a confederation of bodies, bodies pulled together not so much by choice (a public is not exactly a voluntary association) as by a shared experience of harm that, over time, coalesces into a "problem." Dewey makes it clear that a public does not preexist its particular problem but emerges in response to it.¹¹ A public is a contingent and temporary formation existing alongside many other publics, protopublics, and residual or postpublics. Problems come and go, and so, too, do publics: at any given moment, many different publics are in the process of crystallizing and dissolving.¹²

When diverse bodies suddenly draw near and form a public, they have been provoked to do so by a problem, that is, by the "indirect, serious and enduring" consequences of "conjoint action."¹³ Problems are effects of the phenomenon of conjoint action. Like the conjoint action of Darwin's worms, the conjoint action of Dewey's citizens is not under the control of any rational plan or deliberate intention. No efficient cause of the problems it generates can really be pinpointed. What is more, there is no action that is not conjoint, that does not, in other words, immediately become enmeshed in a web of connections. For Dewey, any action is always a trans-action, and any act is really but an initiative

that gives birth to a cascade of legitimate and bastard progeny. This is because an act can only take place in a field already crowded with other endeavors and their consequences, a crowd with which the new entrant immediately interacts, overlaps, interferes. The field of *political* action is thus for Dewey a kind of ecology. No one body owns its supposedly own initiatives, for initiatives instantly conjoin with an impersonal swarm of contemporaneous endeavors, each with its own duration and intensity, with endeavors that are losing or gaining momentum, rippling into and recombining with others. In Dewey's own terms, conjoint actions generate "multitudinous consequences," and each of these consequences "crosses the others" to generate its own problems, and thus its own publics or "group of persons especially affected."¹⁴

Dewey imagines a public as a set of bodies affected by a common problem generated by a pulsing swarm of activities. Let us bracket for the moment Dewey's claim that a public is a group of "persons especially affected" and leave aside the question of what *kinds* of bodies can do the "acts" that are conjoining, and focus instead on the way Dewey defines the members of a public in terms of their "affective" capacity. We would then get this (Spinozist) version of Dewey's theory of the public and of conjoint action: problems give rise to publics, publics are groups of bodies with the capacity to affect and be affected; problems are signals that the would-be or protomembers of a public had already encountered the indirect effects of other endeavoring bodies, effects that have decreased the capacity for action of the protomembers. A public is a cluster of bodies harmed by the actions of others or even by actions born from their own actions as these trans-act; harmed bodies draw near each other and seek to engage in new acts that will restore their power, protect against future harm, or compensate for damage done—in *that* consists their political action, which, fortunately or unfortunately, will also become conjoint action with a chain of indirect, unpredictable consequences.

Dewey presents the members of a public as having been *inducted* into rather than *volunteering* for it: each body finds itself thrown together with other harmed and squirming bodies. Dewey's political pragmatism, like the one expressed at the end of my discussion of the black-out in chapter 2, emphasizes consequences more than intentions and makes "responsibility" more a matter of responding to harms than of

identifying objects of blame. Dewey's concept of conjoint action distributes responsibility to many different (human) actors. What is more, in naming a *problem* (rather than an act of will) as the driving force behind the formation of a public, Dewey (almost) acknowledges that a *political* action need not originate in human bodies at all. For is it not the case that some of the initiatives that conjoin and cause harm started from (or later became conjoined with) the vibrant bodies of animals, plants, metals, or machines?

In *Art as Experience*, Dewey comes close to saying that even human initiatives are not *exclusively* human; he flirts with a posthuman conception of action when he notes the porosity of the border between a human body and its out-side: "The epidermis is only in the most superficial way an indication of where an organism ends and its environment begins. There are things inside the body that are foreign to it, and there are things outside of it that belong to it *de jure* if not *de facto*; that must be taken possession of if life is to continue. The need that is manifest in the urgent impulsions that demand completion through what the environment—and it alone—can supply, is a dynamic acknowledgment of this dependence of the self for wholeness upon its surroundings."¹⁵

Of course, Dewey is not quite a vital materialist. His language quoted above ultimately relegates the nonhuman and the nonorganic to the role of "environment" rather than actor and affirms a profound "dependence" of humans on "surroundings," but not a true reciprocity between participants of various material compositions. And Dewey generally assumes that the acts in conjoint action are *human* endeavors. Such anthropocentrism is impossible to avoid completely: as Theodor Adorno said, we are (almost) blind to the gap between concept and thing, and we have a tendency, as did even Spinoza, to privilege *human* efforts even when acknowledging the presence of other kinds of conative bodies. A pragmatic approach to politics, which emphasizes problem solving, may call forth with particular vigor what Henri Bergson described as action-oriented perception. For are not human bodies the ones best equipped to analyze a problem and devise strategies for its solution? All kinds of bodies may be able to join forces, but a pragmatist would be quick to note that only *some* bodies can make this association into a *task* force. And yet there also persists a self-interested motivation for the presumption that all material bodies are potential members of the public into

which one has been inducted. Such a presumption will enable me to discern more fully the extent of their power over me: How is this food or worm or aluminum contributing to a problem affecting me? How might these nonhumans contribute to its solution?

Latour pushes Dewey's theory of the public and its problems further in a vital materialist direction. He does so, first, by inventing the concept of an actant, which is an attempt, as is conjoint action, to pry some space between the idea of action and the idea of human intentionality. Second, Latour explicitly rejects the categories of "nature" and "culture" in favor of the "collective," which refers to an ecology of human and nonhuman elements.¹⁶ A polity is one of these collectives. Third, Latour frames political action not as the enactment of choices but as the call-and-response between "propositions."¹⁷ A proposition has no decisionistic power but is a lending of weight, an incentive toward, a pressure in the direction of one trajectory of action rather than another.¹⁸ Any given response to a problem is less the result of "deliberation" than of the "fermentation" of the various propositions and energies of the affected bodies.¹⁹ Finally, Latour distributes agentic capacity also to the "event." Policy directions and political moods are irreducible to the sum of the propositions of even an ontologically plural public, for there is always a slight surprise of action: "There are events. I never act; I am always slightly surprised by what I do. That which acts through me is also surprised by what I do, by the chance to mutate, to change, and to bifurcate."²⁰

Dewey's account of a public as the product of conjoint action paints a picture of a political system that has much in common with a dynamic natural ecosystem. This, along with his claim that a member of a public is one "affected by the indirect consequences of transactions to such an extent that it is deemed necessary to have those consequences systematically cared for,"²¹ paves the way for a theory of action that more explicitly accepts nonhuman bodies as members of a public, more explicitly attends to how they, too, participate in conjoint action, and more clearly discerns instances of harm to the (affective) bodies of animals, vegetables, minerals, and their ecocultures. These harms will surely provoke some "events" in response, but it is an open question whether they will provoke people to throw their weight toward a solution to them. Humans may notice the harm too late to intervene effectively, or their

strategies of intervention may be ineffective, or they simply may deem it unnecessary “to systematically care for” a harm, as we regularly sacrifice some actants for the sake of ourselves. For while every public may very well be an ecosystem, not every ecosystem is democratic. And I cannot envision any polity so egalitarian that important human needs, such as health or survival, would not take priority.

Why not? Since I have challenged the uniqueness of humanity in several ways, why not conclude that we and they are equally entitled? Because I have not eliminated all differences between us but examined instead the affinities across these differences, affinities that enable the very assemblages explored in the present book. To put it bluntly, my conatus will not let me “horizontalize” the world completely. I also identify with members of my species, insofar as they are bodies most similar to mine. I so identify even as I seek to extend awareness of our interinvolvements and interdependencies. The political goal of a vital materialism is not the perfect equality of actants, but a polity with more channels of communication between members. (Latour calls this a more “vascularized” collective.²²)

There are many practical and conceptual obstacles here: How can communication proceed when many members are nonlinguistic? Can we theorize more closely the various forms of such communicative energies? How can humans learn to hear or enhance our receptivity for “propositions” not expressed in words? How to translate between them? What kinds of institutions and rituals of democracy would be appropriate? Latour suggests that we convene a “parliament of things,” an idea that is as provocative as it is elusive.²³ Perhaps we can make better progress on this front by looking at a theory designed to open democracy to the voices of excluded humans. I turn to Rancière’s theory of democracy as disruption.

Disruptions and the Demos

Compared to Dewey and Latour, Rancière is less concerned with how a public emerges than with the means by which its (apparent) coherence can be interrupted. In his influential *Disagreement*, he focuses on a potentially disruptive human force that exists within (though is not

recognized by) the public. He calls this the force of the people or of the "demos." The democratic act par excellence occurs when the demos does something that exposes the arbitrariness of the dominant "partition of the sensible."²⁴ This is the partition that had been rendering some people visible as political actors while pushing others below the threshold of note. Politics, as Rancière frames it, consists not in acts that preserve a political order or respond to already articulated problems, but is "the name of a singular disruption of this order of distribution of bodies."²⁵

These singular disruptions are neither intentional acts nor aleatory eruptions; Rancière locates them in the between-space of the staged event. The demos more or less spontaneously constructs "a polemical scene" within which what was formerly heard as noise by powerful persons begins to sound to them like "argumentative utterances."²⁶ Such scenes, however different in their cast of characters, always tell the same story: the story of "the equality of speaking beings."²⁷ The "mise-en-scènes that reconfigure the relations of the visible and the sayable" expose "the ultimate secret of any social order,"²⁸ that is, that "there is no natural principle of domination by one person over another."²⁹

For Rancière, then, the political act consists in the exclamatory interjection of affective bodies as they enter a preexisting public, or, rather, as they reveal that they have been there all along as an unaccounted-for part. (Rancière would be helped here, I think, were he to adopt Dewey's insight about multiple, coexisting publics, rather than speak of a single demos with an overt and a latent set of members.) What difference does this interjection by formerly ignored bodies make, according to Rancière? It modifies the "partition of the perceptible" or the "regime of the visible,"³⁰ and this changes everything. As an example Rancière cites the interruption staged by the plebeians of the Roman (patrician) Republic:

The plebs gathered on the Aventine . . . do not set up a fortified camp in the manner of the Scythian slaves. They do what would have been unthinkable for the latter: they establish another order, another partition of the perceptible, by constituting themselves not as warriors equal to other warriors but as speaking beings sharing the same properties as those who deny them these. They thereby execute a series of speech acts that mimic those of the patricians: they pronounce imprecations and apotheoses; they delegate one

of their number to go and consult *their* oracles; they give themselves representatives by rebaptizing them. In a word, they conduct themselves like beings with names. Through transgression, they find that they too . . . are endowed with speech that does not simply express want, suffering, or rage, but intelligence.³¹

The plebs managed to repartition the regime of the sensible. Is this an exclusively human power? Though the metaphors of eruption or disruption that Rancière employs may suggest that the political act is “like” a force of nature, his description of the act increasingly takes on a linguistic cast (“disruption” becomes “interruption” and then “disagreement”). It is an “objection to a wrong,” where a wrong is defined as the unequal treatment of beings who are equally endowed with a capacity for human speech. When asked in public whether he thought that an animal or a plant or a drug or a (nonlinguistic) sound could disrupt the police order, Rancière said no: he did not want to extend the concept of the political that far; nonhumans do not qualify as participants in a demos; the disruption effect must be accompanied by the desire to engage in reasoned discourse.³²

Despite this reply, I think that even against his will, so to speak, Rancière’s model contains inklings of and opportunities for a more (vital) materialist theory of democracy. Consider, for example, the way it imagines the being of the demos: not as a formed thing or fixed entity, but as an unruly activity or indeterminate wave of energy. The demos is, we read, “neither the sum of the population nor the disfavored element within,” but an “excess” irreducible to the particular *bodies* involved.³³ This idea of a force that traverses bodies without itself being one resonates with Spinoza’s *conatus* and Deleuze’s notion of (the motility of) intensities, discussed in chapters 2 and 4, respectively. Does not the protean “excess” that Rancière invokes flow through nonhuman bodies? Might not this be what the *New York Times* was pointing to by saying that the grid “lives and dies by its own rules”? (Or what is intuited in phrases like “the war has a momentum of its own”?) Rancière implicitly raises this question: Is the power to disrupt really limited to human speakers?

A second opportunity for a more materialist theory of democracy arises when Rancière chooses to define what counts as political by what effect is generated: a political act not only disrupts, it disrupts in such

a way as to change radically what people can “see”: it repartitions the sensible; it overthrows the regime of the perceptible. Here again the political gate is opened enough for nonhumans (dead rats, bottle caps, gadgets, fire, electricity, berries, metal) to slip through, for they also have the power to startle and provoke a gestalt shift in perception: what was trash becomes things, what was an instrument becomes a participant, what was foodstuff becomes agent, what was adamantine becomes intensity. We see how an animal, plant, mineral, or artifact can sometimes catalyze a public, and we might then see how to devise more effective (experimental) tactics for enhancing or weakening that public. It feels dangerous to leave the gate open, for it renders many conceptual, moral, and psychological possessions exposed and vulnerable. It seems safer to figure eruptive events as “argumentative utterances.”

It is, of course, quite normal for democratic theory to be anthropocentric and quite reasonable to tie political participation to some degree of linguistic or deliberative competence.³⁴ These tendencies have directed democratic theorists toward important problems: the uninformed voter and a scarcity of deliberative forums, the unequal access of different human groups to political power, the harm caused when we fail to discern not just established constituencies but also what William Connolly has described as those protean identities emerging from inarticulate “currents of experience.”³⁵

But what if we loosened the tie between participation and human language use, encountering the world as a swarm of vibrant materials entering and leaving agentic assemblages? We might then entertain a set of crazy and not-so-crazy questions: Did the typical American diet play any role in engendering the widespread susceptibility to the propaganda leading up to the invasion of Iraq? Do sand storms make a difference to the spread of so-called sectarian violence? Does mercury help enact autism? In what ways does the effect on sensibility of a video game exceed the intentions of its designers and users? Can a hurricane bring down a president? Can HIV mobilize homophobia or an evangelical revival? Can an avian virus jump from birds to humans and create havoc for systems of health care and international trade and travel?

Though Rancière objects to the “Platonic” prejudice against the demos, which positions commoners as defective versions of men in possession of logos, to imagine politics as a realm of human activity

alone may also be a kind of prejudice: a prejudice against a (nonhuman) multitude misrecognized as context, constraint, or tool. A vital materialist theory of democracy seeks to transform the divide between speaking subjects and mute objects into a set of differential tendencies and variable capacities. I think this is also what Darwin and Latour were trying to do when they told their worm stories.

A Diet of Worms

As our ability to detect and translate the more subtle forms of animal behavior and communication has grown, so, too, has our willingness to attribute intelligence to it and to recast it from behavior to action. But to truly take worms seriously, we would not only have to revise our assessment of their activities but also need to question our larger faith in the uniqueness of humans and to reinvent concepts now attached to that faith.³⁶ Theories of democracy that assume a world of active subjects and passive objects begin to appear as thin descriptions at a time when the interactions between human, viral, animal, and technological bodies are becoming more and more intense. If human culture is inextricably enmeshed with vibrant, nonhuman agencies,³⁷ and if human intentionality can be agentic only if accompanied by a vast entourage of nonhumans,³⁸ then it seems that the appropriate unit of analysis for democratic theory is neither the individual human nor an exclusively human collective but the (ontologically heterogeneous) “public” coalescing around a problem.³⁹ We need not only to invent or reinvoke concepts like *conatus*, *actant*, *assemblage*, *small agency*, *operator*, *disruption*, and the like but also to devise new procedures, technologies, and regimes of perception that enable us to consult nonhumans more closely, or to listen and respond more carefully to their outbreaks, objections, testimonies, and propositions. For these offerings are profoundly important to the health of the political ecologies to which we belong.

Of course, to acknowledge nonhuman materialities as participants in a political ecology is not to claim that everything is always a participant, or that all participants are alike. Persons, worms, leaves, bacteria, metals, and hurricanes have different types and degrees of power, just as different persons have different types and degrees of power, different

worms have different types and degrees of power, and so on, depending on the time, place, composition, and density of the formation. But surely the scope of democratization can be broadened to acknowledge more nonhumans in more ways, in something like the ways in which we have come to hear the political voices of other humans formerly on the outs: "Are you ready, and at the price of what sacrifice, to live the good life together? That this highest of moral and political questions could have been raised, for so many centuries, by so many bright minds, *for human only* without the nonhumans that make them up, will soon appear, I have no doubt, as extravagant as when the Founding Fathers denied slaves and women the vote."⁴⁰

Mariame Kaba: Everything Worthwhile Is Done With Other People

The organizer and prison abolitionist on the political power of relationships and why knowledge is built through struggle.

[EVE L. EWING](#)

[Fall 2019](#)



Image courtesy of Mariame Kaba

[Interview](#)

[Intervention](#)

From Ella Baker to Septima Clark, history is rife with examples of Black women whose tremendous legacies in the world of political organizing are accompanied by a relative absence in the dominant narratives we tell ourselves about the times in which they lived. They say that fortune favors the bold; we might also observe that history favors the men.

And yet, as we continue to navigate the daily assaults against humanity lobbed at us by an authoritarian presidential administration, history may be on our side—if we choose to take a second look. One of the enduring gifts of the movement for Black lives is a renewed interest in another vision of leadership, starkly divergent from the one that prevailed in our elementary school history textbooks.

What if, after all, social transformation wasn't about waiting for a designated [male, straight, cis, nondisabled] hero to come along and rescue us? What if regular people had the tools at our disposal to work collectively toward justice? As it turns out, those stories have been waiting for us

all along, latent beneath the easier and more familiar tale of charismatic messiahs acting all alone. And they have much to teach us.

In this context, it is no surprise that those struggling to believe in something in the face of despair have turned to the work of educator and organizer Mariame Kaba. Many (myself included) came to her first through Prison Culture, the blog she has published since 2010 that explores the many arms of the carceral state and how we might dismantle our current systems of punishment. Others may know her from Project NIA, the organization she founded that uses participatory community justice to fight youth incarceration. Or one of the many other projects she has founded, co-founded or co-led: campaigns to free Marissa Alexander and Bresha Meadows, the Chicago Freedom School, the Chicago Community Bond Fund, We Charge Genocide, and Reparations Now, which secured reparations for victims of police violence in Chicago.

What unites these efforts, other than the fact that they have literally saved people's lives, is that each of Kaba's many projects offers teachable, replicable, participatory models for liberation. Always, she invites us to walk with her in struggle and solidarity, shining a light on the many ways that average people can make a more just world. And always, she takes the bold way, choosing imagination where others might choose compromise.

I spoke with Kaba about her family history, what it means to be an organizer, and the work she's most proud of.

Eve L. Ewing: Talk to me about coming of age in New York in the '80s. Your father was also an organizer?

Mariame Kaba: My dad had been involved in Guinea during the independence struggle. Guinea was the first among the French West African countries to seek independence, and that led to a lot of retribution by the French, sacking our libraries before they left, doing all sorts of stuff.

My father was then sent [to the US] by Sékou Touré, who became the first president of the country. They grew up together, and they were friends and comrades in the struggle together. They were all coming up on socialism and Marxism. [Touré sent them] to study different things so that they could basically, after the revolution, come back to build the country. My father was going to be a kind of Finance Minister; that was the notion.

[But] he started hearing rumors about what was going on post-revolution, which was that Sékou was consolidating power, and he was arresting some of the people who didn't struggle, and locking them up in a prison called Camp Boiro. Camp Boiro became an infamous prison in West Africa known for the disappearing of thousands, and one of those people that he imprisoned and disappeared is my uncle. When that happened, my father was like, "This is not what we signed up for, and we were not fighting for this consolidation of power and eliminating our comrades who became their enemies because they dissent on one thing."

He decided not to go back. So, Sékou's pissed and tells the US to send my father back, to extradite him. The UN heard what was going on, and they gave him a blue passport, a UN passport, which meant that he could renounce his Guinea citizenship in order to be able to escape having to go back, because Sékou came to the US in a big pompous affair and came specifically to get my dad to go back. My father never talked about his life, never talked about this period because of such heartbreak.

Eve L. Ewing: Because Sékou was his friend.

Mariame Kaba: They fought together, and he loved him, and they loved each other. It also led to my family moving to the Ivory Coast, a large part; my grandparents, everybody, having to leave because of the political turmoil. My father never got to go back to Guinea again until 1986, and that was because Sékou died in '84. He'd been told that if he set foot in Guinea he'd be arrested.

My father was always avidly interested in politics, and I grew up in a house full of books. That became my political education. And, listening to my father's conversations about political struggles around the world; about socialism and its failings, about revolution and what people really mean by "revolution," and what people don't understand about what revolutions really do.

He always told me, "You have a responsibility to live in this world. Your responsibility is not just to yourself. You are connected to everyone." He drilled this into us, to my siblings, "You have each other only. So, if you don't get along, you fucking work that shit out because we're not going to be here all the time, and we're not going to be here forever. You have each other." So we are close, close, close my siblings.

But then the second thing he said was, "You are interconnected to everyone, because the world doesn't work without everyone." You may think that you're alone, but you're never actually alone. This was really important because at a very young age that made me understand the importance of collectivity, and that we can't do anything alone that's worth it. Everything worthwhile is done with other people. So that became the soundtrack in my head.

My mother was in a different league altogether. She was not political in the same way, but she's incredibly religious and very focused on charity in the sense of mutual aid. My friends were homeless—at the time we lived in the Lower East Side—and I recalled later on how strange it was that my mother just let people stay in our house. But she wasn't going to let those kids stay outside when it was winter.

Eve L. Ewing: I see both of those things as such clear strands in your work. On the one hand, organizing collectively and building structures for freedom and resistance and resilience. And on the other hand, the theme of mutual aid. I wonder as well whether the anti-colonial framework, and global Pan-Africanist framework within which your father was working, influences the way you think about politics now.

Mariame Kaba: Always. Always. It made me an internationalist. I can't imagine my organizing not being international, and not having an eye toward other people beyond the borders that I live in, and also questioning the idea of borders.

Eve L. Ewing: Do you think most US-based black organizers right now have that same internationalist awareness that folks had, say, in the '60s where they were very much seeing anti-colonial struggles in Africa and Asia as being intrinsically related to black freedom struggles?

Mariame Kaba: I think it's always been the case that *some* people were like that. In the '60s, not all black revolutionaries or black organizers took that to the heart. I don't know if Fannie Lou Hamer had a deep sense beyond Mississippi and the US borders. I know she fought like hell for everybody's freedom, but I've never read her talking about that.

And in this [historical] moment it's the same way. There are people who are incredibly focused on international struggles—people who are very prominent in the movement for Black Lives who go to South Africa and learn, talk to people in Brazil. They don't happen to be the people that are elevated so they're not getting big glossy magazine covers, but they're the ones actually holding the infrastructure of some of these organizations together.



Eve L. Ewing: I would venture to say, with my own comparatively short memory, that the languages of repair, reparation, of certainly restorative justice, and also of abolition, are moving through discourse in a different way than they have been.

Mariame Kaba: Absolutely.

Eve L. Ewing: These are ideas that folks like you have been working on literally since before I was born, that are now being taken up. But what is being potentially misunderstood? Where do we need a course correction in our conversations there?

Mariame Kaba: That's a really difficult question. Because I'm so uninterested in *narratives*. That word that gets used often. Narrative-building. People that want to be all about narrative-shifting, narrative-building.

I believe that when we are in relationship with each other, we influence each other. What matters to me, as the unit of interest, is relationships.

The second thing that matters to me as a unit of impact is harm. I want to figure out how to transform harm in every possible context because I have been harmed, and I have harmed other people. My political commitments are to developing stronger relationships with people, and to transforming harm. All those other things that you mentioned, the ideas only matter to me to the extent that they impact both those [commitments]. It is deeply offensive and hurtful to me that we have prisons because they break relationships and people. That's how I feel about prisons—they are inherently made for isolation.

When they talk about repair and restorative justice, it's all about relationships, and relationships in the context of harm. So, when people talk about these things as though they are just abstract ideas, or things that are just theory-building without connection to actual people's lives, I can't recognize it.

Eve L. Ewing: I think that makes perfect sense because it also is the consequence of what happens when people are learning about concepts primarily through—

Mariame Kaba: Reading.

Eve L. Ewing: Right. Like, "I read this interesting article," as opposed to, "I believe in this." Most black people in Chicago that I know who don't believe in policing, it's not because they read a great article that used debate and rhetoric to convince them, but because of their lived empirical experience.

Mariame Kaba: Angela Davis says this perfectly; she's like, knowledge is built through struggle. It isn't just built through somebody theorizing an idea. But through the struggle of it together, we come up with new concepts and ideas: that's the best thinking.

Eve L. Ewing: Do you think it's okay for folks to have different lanes? Where they're like, "I'm just trying to organize for Philly right now," for example. Or do you think that all organizers would benefit from more international experience?

Mariame Kaba: That's a great question. I think we would all benefit from it, just in our political education, but I think it's okay to have your own lane.

There's been this struggle over the last few years of people talking about, "I'm just an activist and I just do things on my own. I don't have anybody who is a base for me, and nobody holds me accountable." And that's not sustainable, and that's also not organizing. That's activism, and activism has its place and is important to do. Most organizers are activists also, but most activists are not organizers, and so we just have to be clear about what we're trying to achieve.

But I do believe lanes are super important, and not all of us care about the same thing. That's also okay. The same passion you feel about saving the whales, somebody else feels about saving pencils. It's not a judgment; it's just the fact that we have different interests.

Eve L. Ewing: Let's talk more about organizing and activism because I think that that is a really important distinction. I do not identify as an activist. I am very frequently identified as an activist, which I find very puzzling. What do you see as the difference between those things?

Mariame Kaba: I think that people who are activists are folks who are taking action on particular issues that really move them in some specific way, but activism only demands that you personally take on the issue. That means signing petitions. Being on a board of a particular organization that's doing good in the world.

That way, activist is super broad, and that's why people call people activists. Your individual action, for example, of writing, can be a form of activism in the sense that it wants to educate people and get them to take action in their own way. You are in that way potentially being activist in your orientation, at least, if not in identity.

Organizers, however, can't exist solo. Because who the hell are you organizing? You can't just decide to wake up one morning and be like, "I'm just going to do this shit." If you're organizing, other people are counting on you, but more importantly, your actions are accountable to somebody else.

Organizing is both science and art. It is thinking through a vision, a strategy, and then figuring out who your targets are, always being concerned about power, always being concerned about how you're going to actually build power in order to be able to push your issues, in order to be able to get the target to actually move in the way that you want to.

I have been an organizer for a big part of my life in the sense that I've been involved with other people in campaigns to move various things. But sometimes I'm just an activist.

But [in that case] I have no accountability to anybody, and that's kind of dangerous. Because there are a lot of people doing a lot of shit that nobody can call them on.

Eve L. Ewing: Who is failed when that happens?

Mariame Kaba: I think that the people who are most directly impacted by the things people are doing are failed. Because they should have a say, and be part of the shaping of that thing that is about them. That's critically important. But I also think that you yourself are failed if what you're trying to do is do a hard large-scale thing and you don't have any people.

Eve L. Ewing: Or you're just trying to do it by yourself.

Mariame Kaba: It's like, why?! You're going to burn out. It's not humanly possible for you to just be your Lone Ranger self out there in the world. Ella Baker's question, "Who are your people?" when she would meet you is so important. Who are you accountable to in this world? Because that will tell me a lot about who you are.

And how much hubris must we have to think that us individual persons are going to have all the answers for generations worth of harm built by multi-millions of people? It's like, I'm on a 500-year clock right now. I'm right here knowing that we've got a hell of a long time before we're going to see the end. Right now, all we're doing is building the conditions that will allow the thing to happen.



L'organisation informelle ne peut donc pas être fondée, constituée ou abolie. Elle naît de façon tout à fait naturelle selon les besoins d'un projet de lutte et disparaît quand ce projet est réalisé ou quand on estime qu'il n'est plus possible ou adéquat de chercher à le réaliser. Elle ne coïncide pas avec l'ensemble de la lutte en cours : de nombreuses formes organisationnelles, lieux de rencontres, assemblées, etc. produites par une lutte existeront indépendamment de l'organisation informelle, ce qui ne veut pas dire que des anarchistes ne pourront pas *aussi* y être présents.

Les « autres »

Mais nous avons jusque-ici surtout parlé des formes organisationnelles *entre* anarchistes. Sans aucun doute, de nombreuses révoltes fournissent des suggestions précieuses qui montrent des parallèles avec ce que nous venons dire. Que l'on pense par exemple aux révoltes des dernières années dans les métropoles. Nombre de rebelles s'organisent en petits groupes agiles. Ou pensons aux soulèvements de l'autre côté de la Méditerranée. Il n'y a pas eu besoin d'une organisation forte ou de quelque représentation des exploités pour déchaîner ces soulèvements, leur colonne vertébrale était bien les formes multiples et informelles d'auto-organisation. Bien entendu, nous ne nous sommes pas exprimés là sur le « contenu » de ces révoltes, mais sans formes organisationnelles plutôt antiautoritaires, il serait juste totalement impensable qu'elles aillent dans une direction libératrice et libertaire.

Il est temps de faire ses adieux, une fois pour toute, aux réflexes politiques, encore plus en ces temps où les révoltes ne répondent pas (ou plus) aux prérogatives politiques. Les insurrections et les révoltes ne doivent être dirigées, ni par les autoritaires, ni par les anarchistes. Elles ne demandent pas à être organisées dans quelque grande formation. Il n'empêche que notre contribution à de tels événements, des phénomènes véritablement sociaux, ne peut rester simplement spontanée, si elle aspire à être une contribution *qualitative* – elle requiert donc une certaine organisation et projectualité. Mais les exploités et les exclus n'ont pas besoin des anarchistes pour se révolter

ou s'insurger. Nous ne pouvons être qu'un élément supplémentaire, bienvenu ou pas, une présence qualitative. Mais qui n'en demeure pas moins importante, si nous voulons faire percer les ruptures insurrectionnelles dans un sens anarchiste.

Si les exploités et les exclus sont parfaitement capables de se révolter sans les anarchistes et sans leur concours, ce n'est pas pour autant que nous sommes prêts à renoncer à chercher des points et de terrain où on peut lutter *ensemble* avec eux. Ces points et terrains ne sont pas des conséquences « naturelles » ou « automatiques » des conditions historiques. La rencontre entre les groupes affinitaires, comme l'organisation informelle des anarchistes et des exploités qui sont prêts à lutter, se fait le mieux dans la lutte même, ou au moins, dans une proposition de lutte. La nécessité de diffuser et d'approfondir les idées anarchistes est indéniable et à aucun moment, il ne faudrait les cacher, les reléguer à l'arrière-plan ou les camoufler au nom d'une stratégie quelconque, mais dans un projet de lutte insurrectionnel il ne s'agit pas de convertir un maximum d'exploités et d'exclus à nos idées, mais plutôt de rendre possible des expériences de lutte avec la méthodologie anarchiste et insurrectionnelle (attaque, auto-organisation et conflictualité permanente). Selon les hypothèses et les projets, il faut effectivement réfléchir sur les formes organisationnelles que peut prendre cette rencontre entre anarchistes et ceux qui veulent lutter sur une base radicale. Ces formes organisationnelles ne peuvent certainement pas être des constellations exclusivement anarchistes, vu que d'autres rebelles y participent. Elles ne sont donc pas de supports pour « promouvoir » l'anarchisme, mais ont pour but de donner forme et substance à la lutte insurrectionnelle.

Dans certains textes, rédigés à partir d'une série d'expériences, on parle de « noyaux de base » formés dans le cadre d'un projet spécifique de lutte, de formes organisationnelles basées sur les trois caractéristiques fondamentales de la méthodologie insurrectionnelle. Les anarchistes y prennent part, mais avec d'autres. Dans un sens, ce sont surtout des points de référence (non pas de l'anarchisme, mais de la lutte en cours). Ils fonctionnent un peu comme des poumons de la lutte insurrectionnelle. Quand cette lutte est intense, ils comptent beau-

coup de personnes et se réduisent quand la température redescend. La dénomination de telles formes organisationnelles n'a évidemment que peu, voire aucune importance. Il s'agit d'envisager, dans le cadre de certains projets de lutte, si de telles formes organisationnelles sont imaginables et nécessaires. Il faut encore souligner qu'il ne s'agit pas de collectifs, de comités, d'assemblées de quartiers etc., formés à l'avance, qui ont généralement comme but de perdurer et dont la composition est rarement antipolitique et autonome (vu la présence d'éléments institutionnels). Les « noyaux de base » se forment au sein du projet de lutte et n'ont qu'un but concret : attaquer et détruire un aspect de la domination. Ce ne sont donc pas des organisations para-syndicales qui défendent les intérêts d'un groupe social (des comités de chômeurs, des assemblées d'étudiants,...), mais des occasions organisationnelles orientées vers l'attaque. Les expériences d'auto-organisation et d'attaque ne garantissent bien évidemment en rien que dans une prochaine lutte, les exploités n'accueilleront ou ne tolèreront plus d'éléments institutionnels. Mais sans ces expériences, ce genre de réactions est presque impensable.

Pour résumer, il ne s'agit donc pas, à notre avis, de constituer des organisations pour « attirer les masses » ou les organiser, mais de développer et de mettre en pratique des propositions concrètes de lutte. A l'intérieur de ces propositions de lutte, à caractère insurrectionnel, il faut donc réfléchir aux formes organisationnelles estimées nécessaires et adéquates pour réaliser la proposition d'attaque. Soulignons encore que ces formes organisationnelles n'impliquent pas forcément des structures avec des réunions, des lieux de rencontre etc., mais qu'elles peuvent peut-être naître aussi directement dans la rue, dans les moments de lutte. A certains endroits, il peut par exemple être plus facile de créer des « points de référence » ou des « noyaux de base » avec d'autres exploités en interrompant la routine, en érigeant une barricade dans la rue,... plutôt que d'attendre que tout le monde vienne à un rendez-vous pour parler de la possibilité d'une barricade. Ces aspects ne peuvent pas être laissés totalement au hasard et à la spontanéité. Une projectualité permet d'y réfléchir et d'évaluer les différentes possibilités et leur pertinence.

Bref

Si la question n'est plus de comment organiser les gens pour la lutte, elle devient comment organiser la lutte. Nous pensons que des archipels de groupes affinitaires, indépendants les uns des autres, qui peuvent s'associer selon des perspectives partagées et des projets concrets de lutte, sont la meilleure manière pour passer directement à l'offensive. Cette conception offre la plus grande autonomie et le plus large champ d'action possibles.. Dans le cadre de projets insurrectionnels, il est nécessaire et possible de trouver des manières de s'organiser informellement qui permettront la rencontre entre des anarchistes et d'autres rebelles, des formes d'organisation qui ne sont pas destinées à se perpétuer, mais sont orientées vers un but spécifique et insurrectionnel.

piece together the interactive totality. These unities are not models but revealing *echos-monde*. Thought makes music.

William Faulkner's work, Bob Marley's song, the theories of Benoit Mandelbrot, are all *echos-monde*. Wilfredo Lam's painting (flowing together) or that of Roberto Matta (tearing apart); the architecture of Chicago and just as easily the shantytowns of Rio or Caracas; Ezra Pound's *Cantos* but also the marching of schoolchildren in Soweto are *echos-monde*.

Finnegan's Wake was an *écho-monde* that was prophetic and consequently absolute (without admission into the real).

Antonin Artaud's words constitute an *écho-monde* outside of the world.

Whatever, coming from a tradition, enters into Relation; whatever, defending a tradition, justifies Relation; whatever, having left behind or refuted every tradition, provides the basis for another full-sense to Relation; whatever, born of Relation, contradicts and embodies it. Anglo-American pidgin (something, therefore, spoken neither by the English nor by the Americans) is a negative *écho-monde*, whose concrete force weaves the folds of Relation and neutralizes its subsistence.

The Creole language is a fragile and revealing *écho-monde*, born of a reality of relation and limited within this reality by its dependence.

Spoken languages, without exception, have become *echos-monde*, whose lack we are only just beginning to feel each time one is wiped out by this circularity in evolution.

Echos-monde are not exacerbations that result directly from the convulsive conditions of Relation. They are at work in the matter of the world; they prophesy or illuminate it, divert it or conversely gain strength within it.

In order to cope with or express confluences, every individual, every community, forms its own *echos-monde*, imagined from power or vainglory, from suffering or impatience. Each individual makes this sort of music and each community as

well. As does the totality composed of individuals and communities.

Echos-monde thus allow us to sense and cite the cultures of peoples in the turbulent confluence whose globality organizes our *chaos-monde*. They pattern its constituent (not conclusive) elements and its expressions.

What we earlier remarked in Saint-John Perse as an aesthetics of the universe (“narration of the universe”), we now describe in a different manner. It is an aesthetics of the *chaos-monde*.

The *chaos-monde* is only disorder if one assumes there to be an order whose full force poetics is not prepared to reveal (poetics is not a science). The ambition of poetics, rather, is to safeguard the energy of this order. The aesthetics of the universe assumed preestablished norms; the aesthetics of *chaos-monde* is the impassioned illustration and refutation of these. Chaos is not devoid of norms, but these neither constitute a goal nor govern a method there.

Chaos-monde is neither fusion nor confusion: it acknowledges neither the uniform blend—a ravenous integration—nor muddled nothingness. Chaos is not “chaotic.”

But its hidden order does not presuppose hierarchies or pre-cellencies—neither of chosen languages nor of prince-nations. The *chaos-monde* is not a mechanism; it has no keys.

The aesthetics of the *chaos-monde* (what we were thus calling the aesthetics of the universe but cleared of a priori values) embraces all the elements and forms of expression of this totality within us; it is totality’s act and its fluidity, totality’s reflection and agent in motion.

The baroque is the not-established outcome of this motion.

Relation is that which simultaneously realizes and expresses this motion. It is the *chaos-monde* relating (to itself).

The poetics of Relation (which is, therefore, part of the aesthetics of the *chaos-monde*) senses, assumes, opens, gathers,

scatters, continues, and transforms the thought of these elements, these forms, and this motion.

Destructure these facts, declare them void, replace them, reinvent their music: totality's imagination is inexhaustible and always, in every form, wholly legitimate—that is, free of all legitimacy.

An equilibrium and ability to endure are revived through *échos-monde*. Individuals and communities go beyond vain-glory or suffering, power or impatience, together—however imperceptibly. The important thing is that such a process represents an optimum. Its results are unpredictable, but the beginnings of the capacity to endure are detectible, coming where formerly there were classicisms. It is no longer through deepening a tradition but through the tendency of all traditions to enter into relation that this is achieved. Baroque serve to relay classicisms. Techniques of relation are gradually substituted for techniques of the absolute, which frequently were techniques of self-absolution. The arts of expanse relate (dilate) the arts of depth.

These are the forms we must use to contemplate the evolution of the Creole language: viewing it as a propagation of the dialects that compose it, each extending toward the other; but being aware also that this language can disappear, or un-appear if you will, in one place or another.

We agree that the extinction of any language at all impoverishes everyone. And even more so, if that is possible, when a composite language like Creole is in question, for this would be an instant setback for the processes of bringing-into-relation. But how many languages, dialects, or idioms will have vanished, eroded by the implacable consensus among powers between profits and controls, before human communities learn to preserve together their diversities. The threat of this disappearance is one of the facts to be incorporated, as we earlier remarked, into the field of descriptive linguistics.

Not every disappearance, however, is equivalent. The fact that French-Ontarians are gradually ceasing to speak French will not cause the latter to vanish from the world panorama. Creole is not in the same situation because its elision in one single region would make the areas of its survival even more scarce. But establishing that these differences exist in no way attenuates both the human drama unleashed each time it happens and the extent of impoverishment then inflicted upon the *chaos-monde*.

We are not going to save one language or another here or there, while letting others perish. The floodtide of extinction, unstoppable in its power of contagion, will win out. It will leave a residue that is not one victorious language, or several, but one or more desolate codes that will take a long time to reconstitute the organic and unpredictable liveliness of a language. Linguistic multiplicity protects ways of speaking, from the most extensive to the most fragile. It is in the name of this total multiplicity and in function of it, rather than of any selective pseudo-solidarities, that each language must be defended.

An idiom like Creole, one so rapidly constituted in so fluid a field of relations, cannot be analyzed the way, for example, it was done for Indo-European languages that aggregated slowly around their roots. We need to know why this Creole language was the only one to appear, why it took the same forms in both the Caribbean basin and the Indian Ocean, and why solely in countries colonized by the French; whereas the other languages of this colonization process, English and Spanish, remained inflexible as far as the colonized populations were concerned, their only concessions being pidgins or other dialects that were derived.*

*Another language of the region that would be an exception to this statistical rule is Papiamentu, which has a Spanish lexical basis in countries (Curaçao) that are no longer Spanish. It seems that, in this same region of the Americas, more and more linguistic microzones are being discovered in which Creoles, pidgins, and patois become undifferentiated.

One possible response—in any case, the one I venture—is that the French language, which we think of as so intent on universality, was, of course, not like this at the time of the conquest of the Americas, having perhaps not yet achieved its normative unity. Breton and Norman dialects, the ones used in Santo Domingo and the other islands, were less coercively centripetal and thus able to enter into the composition of a new language. English and Spanish were already perhaps more “classic,” and lent themselves less to this first amalgam from which a language could have sprung. Of course, the “unified” French language also spread throughout these territories with no language. The Creole compromise (metaphorical and synthesizing), favored by Plantation structure, was the result of both the uprooting of African languages and the deviance of French provincial idioms. The origins of this compromise are already a marginality. It did, indeed, name another reality, another mentality; but its actual poetics—or construction—was what was deviant in relation to any supposed classicism.

Traditional linguistics, when applied to such a case, seeks first and foremost (and counter to what the history of the language would indicate) to “classify” this language. That is—and it is perfectly understandable—it attempts to endow it with a body of rules and specifically stated standards ensuring its ability to endure. But, though fixing usage and transcription are both indispensable, there still remains a need to devise (given marginality as a component of the language) systems of variables, such as I earlier discussed, that would be distinguished from a mere allocation of variants among the dialects—of Haiti, Guadeloupe, or Guiana, etc.—of this Creole language. We would have a whole range of choices within each dialect. Wherever etymology or phonetics faltered (and, doubtless, etymology would be of less use in the matter) one should let poetics take its course, that is, follow intuition about both the history of the language and its development in the margins. In other words, the alleged scientific character can lapse into scholarly illusion, can conceal its strategem

for “staying put.” The standard of such a language formation would be fluent. One could never legitimately have decreed it.

The decisive element, as far as fixing language is concerned, is the rule of usage; those who forge words frequently come up against it. And, in turn, this rule depends to a large extent on the practical functioning of the language. But, in the environment we have outlined (combining *échos-monde* and prevalent baroque), one could assume that the true basis for an ability to endure is that the rule of usage have both momentum and diffraction.

One can imagine language diasporas that would change so rapidly within themselves and with such feedback, so many turnarounds of norms (deviations and back and forth) that their fixity would lie in that change. Their ability to endure would not be accessible through deepening but through the shimmer of variety. It would be a fluid equilibrium. This linguistic sparkle, so far removed from the mechanics of sabirs and codes, is still inconceivable for us, but only because we are paralyzed to this day by monolingual prejudice (“my language is my root”).

The normative decree, edict and instrument of this prejudice, prides itself, then, on the outmoded “guarantees” of scientific positivism and tries to administer the evolution of threatened languages, such as Creole, by attempting to “furnish” such a guarantee to the principle of identity (of permanence) that language implies. But it is not simply because the Creole language is a component of my identity that I am worried about its possible disappearance; it is because the language would also be missing from the radiant sparkle, the fluid equilibrium, and the ability to endure in disorder of the *chaos-monde*. The way that I defend it must take this into account.

Normative decrees have ceased to be the authoritative rule as far as vehicular languages are concerned. English and Span-

Pour une écologie politique pragmatiste

Mise en ligne: 30 novembre 2018

L'emballlement du réchauffement climatique pose avec urgence la nécessité d'une intelligence collective de la situation au sens d'une puissance de penser et d'agir.

« Dans cent ou deux cents ans le monde, étant sillonné de chemins de fer, de bateaux à vapeur, étant couverts d'usines, de fabriques, dégagera des billions de mètres cubes d'acide carbonique et d'oxyde de carbone, et comme les forêts auront été détruites, ces centaines de billions d'acide carbonique et d'oxyde de carbone pourront bien troubler un peu l'harmonie du monde ». [1]

Emballlement du réchauffement climatique, fonte des glaciers, fonte du permafrost, montée des eaux, intensifications des intempéries et des cyclones, intensification de la désertification, acidification des océans, sixième extinction de masse des espèces... En dépit du climatoscepticisme porté par une frange de la communauté scientifique largement payée par les industriels pour semer le doute [2], une certitude s'impose : nous vivons un véritable changement du régime d'existence de la Terre et de ceux qui la peuplent. Les équilibres thermodynamique et biologique de la planète sont en partie irréversiblement transformés [3]

La situation appelle une réelle bifurcation dans les manières d'habiter le monde. Du moins pour tous ceux qui veulent protéger la possibilité de garder un avenir qui ne soit pas celui de la barbarie qui ne manque déjà pas de se manifester et y manquera d'autant moins dans un environnement dévasté. Jamais situation n'a posé avec autant d'urgence la nécessité d'une intelligence collective au sens d'une puissance de penser et d'agir. Jamais situation n'a posé avec autant d'acuité la question des collectifs et des manières d'habiter le monde qui sont et seront à même de produire cette intelligence.

Un monde en commun

Pour les héritiers de la modernité occidentale, la catastrophe écologique globale opère un brutal retour sur Terre : le monde est clos, et ses ressources finies. Il n'y a plus de frontière sauvage à conquérir : nos expéditions dans l'espace ne nous sauveront pas, ou alors peut-être les quelques milliardaires qui auront su à temps investir sur la fuite en avant. Le monde est définitivement un grand écosystème où interagissent différents écosystèmes locaux. Des liens d'interdépendance lient les vivants – et parmi eux les humains, aux bactéries en passant par les matières inorganiques.

A rebours de l'entreprise de la modernité occidentale qui s'est échinée à distinguer la culture de la nature, nous refaisons l'expérience de l'imbrication réciproque du monde des hommes et de la nature. Mais ce retour d'expérience du temps météorologique de la nature dans l'histoire des hommes se produit dramatiquement sous la forme d'une succession de cataclysmes [4].

Le vaisseau-Terre prend l'eau. Et il coule pour tout le monde même si certains plus que d'autres auront les moyens de se payer des bouées de sauvetage, à l'image de ces riches survivalistes, dirigeants de la Silicon Valley ou grands investisseurs du numérique, qui s'achètent des terrains en hauteurs, ou des îles artificielles en prévision de la montée des eaux.

Mais il n'est pas dit que leurs ultimes bouées survivent à l'acidité des océans, ni aux formes que la vie prendra dans ce temps d'après la fin. Contre ces solutions individualistes, il

devient évident qu'une réponse non barbare à la catastrophe doit prendre en compte l'ensemble des collectifs avec lesquels nous cohabitons sur le seul monde que nous avons.

Les possibilités d'intelligences collectives

Mais comment penser collectivement dans le temps de la fin ? Comment répondre à l'intrusion de la catastrophe écologique dans la politique des hommes quand des « êtres » tels que les contaminants radioactifs produisent des effets dont la durée semble rendre inopérant le temps ordinaire de l'action collective et politique ?

L'ampleur de la situation a de quoi provoquer un effet de sidération. Il s'observe d'ailleurs chez nos contemporains une forme de panique froide face à l'énormité de l'évènement (la possibilité réelle d'une fin du monde) et de ses causes (l'homme élevé au statut de force géologique). « Nous sommes impuissants devant notre toute puissance » dit De Castro [5] Sauf pour certains qui surfent justement à la fois sur l'impuissance collective et le délire de toute puissance.

En effet, un groupe restreint d'humains spéculé sur la catastrophe pour réussir à se placer eux et leurs solutions autoritaires au-dessus des autres. Composé d'ingénieurs, de scientifiques et d'hommes d'affaires - partie prenante des conditions par lesquelles la crise climatique est advenue -, il œuvre à la constitution, à l'horizon proche, d'une forme de géopouvoir.

Leur projet n'est rien de moins qu'une maîtrise complète du « métabolisme terrestre » basée sur un ensemble de procédés techniques sophistiqués tels que la régulation du réchauffement climatique par géo-ingénierie. Ils promeuvent par exemple la dispersion de soufre dans l'atmosphère pour faire baisser la température globale. Outre les effets sanitaires majeurs d'un tel projet, ainsi que les risques de perturbation climatique, celui-ci implique qu'il faudrait continuer à répandre du soufre sous peine de voir la température remonter rapidement et probablement au-dessus des niveaux de départ.

Un engagement irréversible, donc, et qui s'inscrit dans la continuité des projets prométhéens de la modernité : une maîtrise totale des cycles naturels par l'homme tout puissant. Enfin certains hommes, en l'occurrence, une poignée d'intendants se projettent déjà aux manettes du « système-Terre » avec l'espèce humaine comme sujet [6]

Cette dystopie en cours de construction est rendue possible, entre autres, par une certaine manière de faire le récit de l'anthropocène, énième actualisation de l'épopée de l'homme dont le destin exceptionnel a été de se démarquer d'une nature qu'il lui revient de dominer. Ce nouveau grand récit qui s'ouvre sur les chasseurs cueilleurs, et connaît son climax lors de la grande accélération de la révolution industrielle, retrace l'Histoire d'une espèce humaine, irresponsable et dont la conscience aux conséquences néfastes de son activité aurait été éveillée par la science.

Ici la responsabilité dans l'avènement du désastre, voire la culpabilité serait partagée de manière homogène par l'ensemble de l'espèce humaine. Fonctionnant à la manière d'une narration chrétienne, la promesse de salvation serait rendue possible et conduite par ce que ce discours permet de constituer : une classe de nouveaux experts est anthropocène, ou anthropocénologue.

Ce récit omet singulièrement les inégalités socio-environnementales dans l'avènement de la catastrophe [7]. Nulle considération pour des faits aussi simples que l'empreinte écologique d'un Américain moyen du Nord est 32 fois supérieure à celle d'un Ethiopien moyen ; 1 % des richesses mondiales sont détenues par la moitié la plus pauvre (43,6 % de la population) de l'humanité contre 99% pour les plus riches (1 % de la population) [8].

Ce grand récit, ceux qui le produisent et leurs délires de maîtrise totale du climat ont échos aux projets de domination mondiale de l'époque de la guerre froide. Et tout comme les armements atomiques qui parsèment le globe, ils sont une menace sérieuse qui pèse sur les possibilités de penser collectivement les conditions d'une réelle transformation des manières d'habiter le monde.

Contre cette intelligence du savoir faire profits de la situation, quelles seraient les conditions de possibilité d'intelligences de la situation qui ne soient pas celle de la spéculation sur le désastre. Comment impliquer des collectifs élargis qui ne soient pas ceux par qui la catastrophe est advenue, et qui n'en reproduisent pas les logiques ?

Comment en sommes-nous arrivés là ?

Pour démonter l'idée d'une culpabilité partagée de manière homogène par l'espèce humaine, nous avons besoin de récits alternatifs qui répondent à la question : comment en sommes-nous arrivés là ?

C'est ce à quoi travaillent certains courants de l'histoire des sciences en mettant en lumière les oppositions et les résistances qui ont émaillé chaque étape du proto-capitalisme et du capitalisme industriel et qu'il a fallu contourner, réprimer, délégitimer et intégrer dans les manières de gouverner le risque industriel et ses effets socio-sanitaires.

Au XIXème siècle se sont joués de véritables conflits de monde qui ont mis aux prises des ontologies, des manières d'habiter le monde et dans lesquels ont été mises en œuvre des stratégies pour délégitimer les savoirs et étologies traditionnels [9]. De même, la phase d'accélération qui suit la Seconde Guerre mondiale, nommée à tort selon certains « les trente glorieuses », a été parsemée par les résistances aux constructions de nouvelles infrastructures et les critiques de leurs pollutions [10].

Nous en avons besoin de ces récits car ils nous permettent de puiser dans ces luttes des outils, des pratiques, des rapports au monde, sous une forme actualisée, qui sont autant de pistes d'alternatives à la poursuite des logiques de la catastrophe. Que serait par exemple une médecine qui porterait à nouveau attention à la manière dont les environnements agissent sur les corps et qui tiendrait ensemble l'impératif d'une bonne santé des corps et des environnements dans lesquels ils évoluent ?

Récits d'avenirs alternatifs

Tout aussi importants sont les scénarii que nous élaborons d'autres futurs possibles que celui des géocrates, par exemple. Ici il faut distinguer entre les récits qui reconduisent ce rapport au futur des modernes, rejeton du temps linéaire du progrès, qui sert d'alibi moral à une déresponsabilisation quant aux conséquences de nos actions ; et ceux qui proposent de réapprendre à porter une attention à ce qui vient et ceux qui viennent.

Réintroduire une attention aux conséquences de nos décisions, nourrir une forme de responsabilité attentive aux relations entre les générations présentes et à venir, construire un sentiment de communauté temporelle, c'est notamment ce qu'implique la proposition d'une écologie politique pragmatiste. C'est une proposition qui engage à faire rentrer les collectifs à venir dans nos puissances de penser et d'agir. La manière dont les générations futures ont été invitées dans le débat sur les déchets nucléaires pour éviter que celui-ci ne soit clos trop facilement au nom de l'autorité de la science et de ses experts, peut être une piste pour penser avec nos descendants [11].

Mais l'invocation des générations futures reste bien souvent restreinte au monde humain. Comment, alors, élaborer des à-venir qui mettent fin à ce que Whitehead a nommé la bifurca-

tion entre la nature et l'humanité ? Ou autrement dit, comment mettre fin à l'aliénation, dans le sens étymologique de la séparation (du latin *alii* : l'autre), au sentiment de l'absence, absence de cet « autre » construit par la modernité, le non-humain, mais aussi absence de ces êtres toujours plus nombreux à manquer à l'appel (insectes, oiseaux, glaciers...) ?

La fabulation narrative est une piste pour tenter de répondre à l'appel de ces absents.

« Comment donner au futur les conditions d'un monde possible, de son maintien, voire de sa restauration, nourrir la conscience d'une co-évolution, la volonté d'augmenter les entrelacements avec les autres espèces dans un monde vivant qui se défait » [12].

La proposition partage des affinités avec l'écologie politique pragmatiste, mais emboîte le pas à Haraway - « nous avons besoin de nouveaux récits » [13] et dans le même temps tente une réponse à la question de Stengers : comment penser au bord du gouffre ? [14]

Camille est l'une des enfants de cette tentative. Il y a de multiples manières de faire le récit de Camille enfant du compost née à plusieurs générations d'ici. En voici une [15] : notre descendante Camille appartient à une *kinship*, mal traduit par un réseau de parenté qui met en relation familles d'humains et symbiotes, dans le cas de la *kinship* de Camille, celui du papillon monarque. Plus qu'une relation, les humains de cette parenté ont une responsabilité envers leur symbiote. Cette responsabilité est vécue intimement par les humains par l'implantation de l'ADN du symbiote et par une sensibilisation à la forme de vie symbiotique dès le plus jeune âge.

C'est le stratagème qu'imaginent les fabulateurs pour nous rendre à nouveau sensibles à la nature qui nous compose et que nous composons en retour. En effet, la disparition du symbiote serait alors vécue brutalement comme une profonde absence psychique et physique.

Ce sentiment d'intime responsabilité oblige les membres de cette *kinship* à tenter de maintenir les conditions de vie et la biodiversité nécessaires aux monarques. Le monarque est un papillon qui migre sur des milliers de kilomètres chaque année, sur plusieurs générations de papillons et qui voit aujourd'hui son habitat mis en danger par les pesticides, les OGM et la fragmentation du territoire.

Dans cet avenir où persiste de l'espoir, les membres de la *kinship* de Camille se sont déployés tout le long des côtes occidentales et orientales du Pacifique, afin de préserver des lieux de repos et de ressourcement tout au long de ce parcours, et en particulier d'y préserver l'asclépiade toxique, la plante-hôte du Monarque.

Cet exercice de fabulation narrative tire les fils des expériences présentes - et fragiles - pour nourrir l'imaginaire d'avenirs où existe encore du possible malgré les conditions complexes dont ils héritent. Ainsi le récit s'appuie sur l'expérience du parc du Yellowstone en Californie où la réintroduction du loup a eu un effet de redéploiement de la biodiversité. Cette expérience permet aux ancêtres de Camille d'imaginer des poches de territoires (mines, carrières abandonnées) où des communautés ont appris à régénérer les écosystèmes locaux. Et en retour, ces récits d'avenirs qui ne soient pas que le règne de la barbarie, nous indiquent les expériences du présent dont nous voulons prendre soin pour ouvrir des possibles pour l'avenir.

Une politique de la présence

Nous qui héritons de la modernité, commençons à peine à réaliser que notre destin et celui des autres communautés écologiques de la Terre sont inextricablement liés. Répondre à la catastrophe (écologique, culturelle, sociale, politique) dans laquelle nous a engagé la modernité occidentale exige de penser à partir de ces relations multiples et complexes qui nous lient au non humain, voire de penser avec le non-humain.

Comment prendre en compte les point-de-vues des collectifs non-humains ? Cela engage d'abord à modifier notre regard et à ne plus voir le non-humain sous la forme de moyens, ou uniquement à l'aune de son utilité, mais de lui reconnaître des fins. Qu'est-ce que cela change quand une personne humaine s'engage dans une relation, non plus avec un objet, mais avec une personne extra-humaine ? L'anthropomorphisme peut-il déjouer l'anthropocentrisme qui caractérise le rapport des modernes au non-humain ? Par exemple quand des scientifiques se mettent à traiter les animaux comme des personnes, qu'ils commencent à poser des questions qui intéressent ces derniers, et se laissent la possibilité d'être eux-mêmes changés par la relation, se crée peut-être les possibilités de faire cohabiter des point de vues, et de participer à la fabrication d'un monde commun [16].

Comment aussi prendre au sérieux la nécessité d'une politique de la présence au sens d'une politique où sont présents les non-humains ? Il y a peut-être à s'inspirer du côté des propositions perspectivistes, c'est-à-dire à partir de la (re)connaissance de l'existence du politique dans le non-humain. Il devient possible alors d'entrer en interaction avec les collectifs non-humains dans des formes qui correspondent à leurs politiques propres. Le regard sur le loup, par exemple, s'est métamorphosé avec la (re)connaissance que les animaux élaborent entre eux des conventions et négocient, notamment leur territoire. Sur cette (re)connaissance certains tentent d'intégrer les symboles du loup, et ses marquages physico-chimiques dans l'élaboration d'une cohabitation au sein d'un territoire partagé [17].

Comment, enfin, réfléchir à partir de la dépendance des hommes à la biodiversité rendue possible par les autres communautés écologiques de la Terre ? Cela passe par reconnaître qu'il existe des puissances d'agir non-humaines, ou extra-humaines, avec des savoir-faire, des intelligences et des temps de l'agir propres qui répondent à leur manière aux dégâts d'origine anthropique. Les forêts, par exemple, ont transformé nos conditions de vie bien avant que ne commence le temps de l'action des hommes, et continuent, difficilement, de créer les conditions nécessaires à la vie.

« Les arbres sont vraisemblablement les mieux armés en termes de corps, de métabolismes et de savoir-faire, pour répondre aux types de problèmes spécifiques qui nous sont posés par le réchauffement climatique et l'explosion du CO2 dans l'atmosphère » [18].

Mais comment convoquer ces puissances dans une stratégie politique contre la puissance destructrice de certaines formes d'activité humaine ? Le réseau pour les alternatives forestières en France est l'illustration d'une tentative d'élaborer une stratégie commune entre des humains et la puissance réparatrice des sociétés-forêts ce « tissu de communication, d'échanges d'information et d'entraide moléculaire » [19].

Ce réseau réunit écologues, formateurs, chercheurs, militants, amoureux de la nature, forestiers, et bien-sûr forêts. Leur objectif est de constituer un réseau d'information, de pratiques, de luttes sur les forêts françaises, mais aussi de racheter des forêts pour les soustraire au marché et leur donner la possibilité de déployer leur puissance de soin.

Ce type d'expérience, celle d'une alliance entre intelligence humaine et intelligence sylvestre, et d'un agencement entre le temps court de l'action des hommes et temps long de

l'agir forêt, fait partie des pistes qui peuvent nous inspirer pour repenser notre imbrication réciproque avec le monde.

Écrire des récits alternatifs du passé, fabuler des futurs ouverts aux possibles et sensibles à la co-habitation et la co-évolution des espèces et autres entités en interdépendance, rentrer en politique avec le non-humain sans anthropocentrisme, expérimenter des alliances avec des intelligences non humaines, cet article visait à proposer ces quelques pistes à questionner, avec lesquelles dialoguer, desquelles s'inspirer, pour tenter des réponses complexes et non barbares à la catastrophe en cours.

par Chedia Leroij

Merci à Guillermo Kozlowski pour ses relectures successives.

Notes

- [1] Eugène Huzar, *L'Arbre de la science*, Paris, Dentu, 1857, p. 106, cité dans Christophe Bonneuil et Pierre De Jouvancourt, « En finir avec l'épopée, récit, géopouvoir et sujets de l'anthropocène », in *De l'univers clos au monde infini*, Editions Dehors (Hache, Emilie, 2014), 57 106, p. 78
- [2] Edwin Zaccaï et al., éd., *Controverses climatiques, sciences et politique*, Domaine développement durable (Paris : Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 2012).
- [3] Voir le dernier rapport du GIEC.]
- Jamais n'a été aussi perceptible et aussi scientifiquement renseigné, informé et modélisé la possibilité d'un effondrement global. Et cette possibilité de « la fin du monde » est générée par l'activité humaine. L'anthropocène est le nom qui a été proposé pour décréter le basculement dans une nouvelle ère géologique caractérisée par cette situation inédite : les humains sont devenus une force géologique, avec une capacité transformatrice du même ordre qu'une météorite ou que la tectonique des plaques[[Paul Crutzen et Eugène Stoermer, « The Anthropocene », *International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme newsletter*, no 41, (2000).
- [4] Isabelle Stengers, *Au temps des catastrophes : résister à la barbarie qui vient*, La Découverte, 2013 ; Dipesh Chakrabarty, « The Climate of History : Four Theses », *Critical Inquiry* 35, no 2 (2009)
- [5] Intervention au rencontres Greffer de l'ouvert de Eduardo Viveiros de Castro « Pour en finir avec l'état d'exception ontologique de « notre espèce », 29 août 2017.
- [6] Christophe Bonneuil et Pierre De Jouvancourt, « En finir avec l'épopée, récit, géopouvoir et sujets de l'anthropocène », dans *De l'univers clos au monde infini*, Hache, Emilie (Paris : Editions Dehors 2014), 57 106.
- [7] Christophe Bonneuil et Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *L'événement anthropocène : la Terre, l'histoire et nous* (Paris : Éd. du Seuil, 2013).
- [8] Christophe Bonneuil et Pierre De Jouvancourt, op.cit.
- [9] Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *L'apocalypse joyeuse : Une histoire du risque technologique* (Paris : Éditions du Seuil, 2012).
- [10] Céline Pessis, Sezin Topçu, et Christophe Bonneuil, éd., *Une autre histoire des « trente glorieuses » : modernisation, contestations et pollutions dans la France d'après-guerre* (Paris : La Découverte, 2013).
- [11] Emilie Hache, *Ce à quoi nous tenons*, (Paris : La Découverte , 2011).
- [12] L. Strivay, F. Terranova et B. Zitouni, « Les Enfants du compost » dans Didier Debaise et Isabelle Stengers, éd., *Gestes spéculatifs : colloque de Cerisy* (Dijon : Les Presses du réel, 2015).
- [13] Donna Haraway, « Primatology is Politics by Other Means », dans B. Ruth, *Feminist Approaches to Sciences*, (Pergamo Press, 1986).
- [14] Isabelle Stengers, « Fabriquer de l'espoir au bord du gouffre : à propos de l'oeuvre de Donna Haraway » dans *La Revue internationale des livres et des idées*, n. 3, mars-avril 2009.
- [15] Pour cette version du récit voir : L. Strivay, F. Terranova et B. Zitouni, op.cit
- [16] Emilie Hache, *Ce à quoi nous tenons*, (Paris : La Découverte , 2011), pp.20-48
- [17] Baptiste Morizot, *Les diplomates : cohabiter avec les loups sur une autre carte du vivant*, (Paris : Éditions Wildproject, 2016).
- [18] Intervention du Collectif terrestres au séminaire Greffer de l'ouvert, « Nous ne sommes pas seuls. Les alliances sylvestres dans la division politique », 29 août 2017
- [19] Cité par le Collectif terrestres, op. cit.

ALLIES / ACCOMPLICES

Wretched of the earth (2019), *An open letter to Extinction Rebellion* (EN) + *Una Carta Abierta a Extinction Rebellion* (ES)

Sara Ahmed (2016), *An affinity of Hammers* (EN) [section]

Sunaura Taylor (2017), *L'entraide inter-espèces au delà du validisme*. In: *Braves Bêtes* (FR) [section]

Sunaura Taylor (2016), *Beasts of Burden* (EN) [section]

Paul Gilroy (2004), *The negative dialectics of convivial culture*. In: *Postcolonial melancholia* (EN) [section]

Miriyam Aouragh (2018), *De beperkingen van Wit Privilege: Shortcuts in de antiracisme strijd* (NL) [section]

Indigenous Action Media (2019?), *Accomplices not allies - abolishing the ally industrial complex* (EN)

ACT UP (1990), *Queer Nation Manifesto* (EN) [section]

An open letter to Extinction Rebellion

"The fight for climate justice is the fight of our lives, and we need to do it right."

By grassroots collective Wretched of The Earth.

This letter was collaboratively written with dozens of aligned groups. As the weeks of action called by Extinction Rebellion were coming to an end, our groups came together to reflect on the narrative, strategies, tactics and demands of a reinvigorated climate movement in the UK. In this letter we articulate a foundational set of principles and demands that are rooted in justice and which we feel are crucial for the whole movement to consider as we continue constructing a response to the 'climate emergency'

Dear Extinction Rebellion,

The emergence of a mass movement like Extinction Rebellion (XR) is an encouraging sign that we have reached a moment of opportunity in which there is both a collective consciousness of the immense danger ahead of us and a collective will to fight it. A critical mass agrees with the open letter launching XR when it states "If we continue on our current path, the future for our species is bleak."

At the same time, in order to construct a different future, or even to imagine it, we have to understand what this "path" is, and how we arrived at the world as we know it now. "The Truth" of the ecological crisis is that we did not get here by a sequence of small missteps, but were thrust here by powerful forces that drove the distribution of resources of the entire planet and the structure of our societies. The economic structures that dominate us were brought about by colonial projects whose sole purpose is the pursuit of domination and profit. For centuries, racism, sexism and classism have been necessary for this system to be upheld, and have shaped the conditions we find ourselves in.

Another truth is that for many, the bleakness is not something of "the future". For those of us who are indigenous, working class, black, brown, queer, trans or disabled, the experience of structural violence became part of our birthright. Greta Thunberg calls world leaders to act by reminding them that "Our house is on fire". For many of us, the house has been on fire for a long time: whenever the tide of ecological violence rises, our communities, especially in the Global South are always first hit. We are the first to face poor air quality, hunger, public health crises, drought, floods and displacement.

XR says that "The science is clear: It is understood we are facing an unprecedented global emergency. We are in a life or death situation of our own making. We must act now." You may not realize that when you focus on the science you often look past the fire and us – you look past our histories of struggle, dignity, victory and resilience. And you look past the vast intergenerational knowledge of unity with nature that our peoples have. Indigenous communities remind us that we are not separate from nature, and that protecting the environment is also protecting ourselves. In order to survive, communities in the Global South continue to lead the visioning and building of new worlds free of the violence of capitalism. We must both centre those experiences and recognise those knowledges here.

Our communities have been on fire for a long time and these flames are fanned by our exclusion and silencing. Without incorporating our experiences, any response to this disaster will fail to change the complex ways in which social, economic and political systems shape our lives – offering some an easy pass in life and making others pay the cost. In order to envision a future in which we will all be liberated from the root causes of the climate crisis – capital-

ism, extractivism, racism, sexism, classism, ableism and other systems of oppression – the climate movement must reflect the complex realities of everyone's lives in their narrative.

And this complexity needs to be reflected in the strategies too. Many of us live with the risk of arrest and criminalization. We have to carefully weigh the costs that can be inflicted on us and our communities by a state that is driven to target those who are racialised ahead of those who are white. The strategy of XR, with the primary tactic of being arrested, is a valid one – but it needs to be underlined by an ongoing analysis of privilege as well as the reality of police and state violence. XR participants should be able to use their privilege to risk arrest, whilst at the same time highlighting the racialised nature of policing. Though some of this analysis has started to happen, until it becomes central to XR's organising it is not sufficient. To address climate change and its roots in inequity and domination, a diversity and plurality of tactics and communities will be needed to co-create the transformative change necessary.

We commend the energy and enthusiasm XR has brought to the environmental movement, and it brings us hope to see so many people willing to take action. But as we have outlined here, we feel there are key aspects of their approach that need to evolve. This letter calls on XR to do more in the spirit of their principles which say they "are working to build a movement that is participatory, decentralised, and inclusive". We know that XR has already organised various listening exercises, and acknowledged some of the shortcomings in their approach, so we trust XR and its members will welcome our contribution.

As XR draws this period of actions to a close, we hope our letter presents some useful reflections for what can come next. The list of demands that we present below are not meant to be exhaustive, but to offer a starting point that supports the conversations that are urgently needed.

Wretched of the Earth, together with many other groups, hold the following demands as crucial for a climate justice rebellion:

- Implement a transition, with justice at its core, to reduce UK carbon emissions to zero by 2030 as part of its fair share to keep warming below 1.5°C; this includes halting all fracking projects, free transport solutions and decent housing, regulating and democratising corporations, and restoring ecosystems.
- Pass a Global Green New Deal to ensure finance and technology for the Global South through international cooperation. Climate justice must include reparations and redistribution; a greener economy in Britain will achieve very little if the government continues to hinder vulnerable countries from doing the same through crippling debt, unfair trade deals, and the export of its own deathly extractive industries. This Green New Deal would also include an end to the arms trade. Wars have been created to serve the interests of corporations – the largest arms deals have delivered oil; whilst the world's largest militaries are the biggest users of petrol.
- Hold transnational corporations accountable by creating a system that regulates them and stops them from practicing global destruction. This would include getting rid of many existing trade and investment agreements that enshrine the will of these transnational corporations.
- Take the planet off the stock market by restructuring the financial sector to make it transparent, democratised, and sustainable while discentivising investment in extractive industries and subsidising renewable energy programmes, ecological justice and regeneration programmes.

- End the hostile environment of walls and fences, detention centers and prisons that are used against racialised, migrant, and refugee communities. Instead, the UK should acknowledge it's historic and current responsibilities for driving the displacement of peoples and communities and honour its obligation to them.
- Guarantee flourishing communities both in the global north and the global south in which everyone has the right to free education, an adequate income whether in or out of work, universal healthcare including support for mental wellbeing, affordable transportation, affordable healthy food, dignified employment and housing, meaningful political participation, a transformative justice system, gender and sexuality freedoms, and, for disabled and older people, to live independently in the community.

The fight for climate justice is the fight of our lives, and we need to do it right. We share this reflection from a place of love and solidarity, by groups and networks working with front-line communities, united in the spirit of building a climate justice movement that does not make the poorest in the rich countries pay the price for tackling the climate crisis, and refuses to sacrifice the people of the global South to protect the citizens of the global North. It is crucial that we remain accountable to our communities, and all those who don't have access to the centres of power. Without this accountability, the call for climate justice is empty.

Wretched of The Earth is a grassroots collective for Indigenous, black, brown and diaspora groups and individuals demanding climate justice and acting in solidarity with our communities, both here in the UK and in Global South.

The Wretched of the Earth, Argentina Solidarity Campaign, Black Lives Matter UK, BP or not BP, Bolivian Platform on Climate Change, Bristol Rising Tide, Campaign Against the Arms Trade CAAT, Coal Action Network, Concrete Action, Decolonising Environmentalism, Decolonising our minds, Disabled People Against the Cuts, Earth in Brackets, Edge Fund, End Deportations, GAIA – Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives, Global Forest Coalition, Green Anticapitalist Front, Gentle Radical, Grow Heathrow/transition Heathrow, Hambach Forest occupation, Healing Justice London, Labour Against Racism and Fascism, Lesbians and Gays Support the Migrants, London campaign against police and state violence, London Mexico Solidarity, London Feminist Antifa, London Latinxs, Marikana Solidarity Campaign, Mental Health Resistance Network, Mexico Solidarity Campaign, Migrants Connections festival, Migrants Rights Network, Movimiento Jaguar Despierto, Ni Una Menos UK, Ota Benga Alliance for Peace, Our Future Now, People's Climate Network, Peoples' Advocacy Foundation for Justice and, Race on the Agenda (ROTA), Redress, South Africa, Reclaim the Power, Science for the People, Platform, The Democracy Centre, The Leap, Third World Network, Tripod: Training for Creative Social Action, War on Want.

Una carta abierta a Extinction Rebellion

“La lucha por la justicia climática es la lucha por la vida misma, y lo debemos hacer bien”.

Escrita por el colectivo de base – Wretched of The Earth

(Lxs Despojadx de la Tierra)

Esta carta fue escrita a Extinction Rebellion, un movimiento europeo de justicia climática cuya estrategia de acción directa y arrestos masivos ha recibido extensas críticas. Aunque demuestra la nueva energía en el movimiento por la justicia climática, se le acusa de estar cometiendo los mismos errores del pasado.

Esta carta fue escrita en colaboración con docenas de grupos aliados a medida que las semanas de acción convocadas por Extinction Rebellion llegaban a su fin, nuestros grupos se unieron para reflexionar sobre las narrativas, estrategias, tácticas y demandas de un movimiento climático revitalizado en el Reino Unido.

En esta carta, articulamos una serie de principios y demandas fundamentales que tienen sus raíces en la justicia y que consideramos cruciales para que todo el movimiento lo considere para seguir construyendo una respuesta a la “emergencia climática”.

Queridxs Extinction Rebellion

La aparición de un movimiento de masas como Extinction Rebellion (XR) es una señal alentadora de que hemos llegado a el momento oportuno: existe una conciencia colectiva sobre el inmenso peligro que nos acecha y una voluntad colectiva para combatirlo. Una masa crítica de personas está de acuerdo con la carta abierta escrita para el lanzamiento de XR, cuando dice “si continuamos en el camino actual” el futuro para nuestra especie es sombrío”.

Al mismo tiempo, para construir un futuro diferente, o incluso para poder imaginarlo, tenemos que entender cual es este “camino” y cómo hemos llegado al mundo tal como lo conocemos ahora. “La verdad” de la crisis ecológica es que no llegamos aquí por una secuencia de pequeños pasos en falso, sino que fuimos empujados aquí por fuerzas poderosas que impulsaron la distribución de recursos de todo el planeta y las estructuras opresoras de nuestras sociedades.

Las estructuras económicas que nos dominan fueron creadas por proyectos coloniales cuyo único propósito fue y es la búsqueda de la dominación y la ganancia. Durante siglos, el racismo, el sexismo y el clasismo han sido necesarios para mantener este sistema y han dado forma a las condiciones en las que nos encontramos.

Otra verdad es que para muchos la desolación no es algo del “futuro”. Para aquellos de nosotrxs que somos indígenas, de clase trabajadora, negrxs, marronxs, queer, trans o discapacitadx, experimentar la violencia estructural se convirtió en parte de nuestro derecho de nacimiento. Greta Thunberg llama a lxs líderes mundiales a actuar recordándoles que “Nuestra casa está en llamas”.

Para muchxs de nosotrxs, la casa ha estado en llamas durante mucho tiempo: cada vez que aumenta la ola de violencia ecológica, nuestras comunidades, especialmente en el Sur Global, siempre son las primeras afectadas. Somos lxs primerxs en enfrentar la mala calidad del aire, el hambre, las crisis de salud pública, la sequía, las inundaciones y los desplazamientos.

XR dice que "la ciencia es clara: enfrentamos una emergencia mundial sin precedentes. Estamos en una situación de vida o muerte que nosotrxs mismxs hemos creado. Y debemos actuar ahora". Puede que no se den cuenta pero cuando se enfocan en la ciencia, terminan mirando más allá del fuego y de nosotrxs: miran más allá de nuestras historias de lucha, dignidad, victoria y resiliencia. Y miran más allá del abundante conocimiento intergeneracional que tienen nuestros pueblos tras cultivar unión con la naturaleza. Las comunidades indígenas nos recuerdan que no estamos separados de la naturaleza y que proteger el medio ambiente es protegerlos. Para sobrevivir, las comunidades en el Sur Global continúan liderando visiones y construcciones de nuevos mundos, libres de la violencia del capitalismo. Debemos centrar esas experiencias, y reconocer esos conocimientos aquí.

Nuestras comunidades están en llamas, llevan quemándose mucho tiempo y estas llamas se avivan a través de la exclusión y silenciamiento. Sin incorporar nuestras experiencias, cualquier respuesta a este desastre no podrá cambiar las formas complejas en que los sistemas sociales, económicos y políticos dan forma a nuestras vidas, ofreciendo a algunxs un paso fácil en la vida mientras que otrxs pagan los costos. Para imaginar un futuro en el que todxs seamos liberadxs de las causas profundas de la crisis climática- capitalismo, extractivismo, racismo, sexismo, clasismo, discriminación a las personas discapacitadas y otros sistemas de opresión- el movimiento climático debe reflejar en su narrativa, las complejas realidades de la vida de todxs.

Y esta complejidad también debe reflejarse en las estrategias. Muchxs de nosotrxs vivimos con el riesgo de ser arrestadxs y criminalizadxs. Tenemos que considerar cuidadosamente cómo es que este estado y su aparato policial y militar, caracterizado por el racismo estructural, inflige impactos devastadores sobre nosotrxs y nuestras comunidades. La estrategia de XR, con la táctica principal de incitar el arresto es válida, pero debe destacarse mediante un análisis continuo de nuestrxs privilegios; y de la realidad de la violencia policial y estatal. Los participantes de XR deberían poder usar su privilegio para arriesgarse a ser arrestadxs, y al mismo tiempo destacar la naturaleza del racismo estructural con el que funciona la policía. Aunque parte de este análisis ha comenzado a surgir, hasta que esto no se vuelva parte central de la organización de XR, no será suficiente. Para abordar el cambio climático y sus raíces en la inequidad y la opresión, se necesita una diversidad y una pluralidad de tácticas y comunidades para cocrear el cambio transformador necesitado.

Elogiamos la energía y el entusiasmo que XR ha aportado al movimiento ecologista, y nos brinda mucha esperanza ver tanta gente dispuesta a tomar medidas drásticas. Pero como hemos esbozado aquí, creemos que hay aspectos clave de su enfoque que deben evolucionar. Esta carta llama a XR a trabajar más en el espíritu de sus principios que dicen que "están trabajando para construir un movimiento que sea participativo, descentralizado e inclusivo".

Sabemos que XR ya ha organizado varios ejercicios de escucha y reconoce algunas de las deficiencias en su enfoque, por lo que confiamos en que XR y sus miembrxs agradecerán esta, nuestra contribución.

A medida que XR cierra este período de acciones, esperamos que nuestra carta presente algunas reflexiones útiles sobre lo que puede venir a continuación. La lista de demandas que presentamos a continuación no pretende ser exhaustiva, pero ofrece un punto de partida que respalde las conversaciones que se necesitan con urgencia.

Lxs Despojadxs de la Tierra (Wretched of the Earth), junto con muchos otros grupos, sostienen que las siguientes demandas son cruciales para una rebelión por la justicia climática:

- Implementar una transición con justicia. Reducir las emisiones de carbono del Reino Unido a cero de aquí al 2030, como parte de su contribución justa para mantener el calentamiento global por debajo de 1.5°C; Esto incluye detener todos los proyectos de fracking, soluciones para un transporte gratuito y vivienda digna, regular y democratizar las corporaciones y restaurar los ecosistemas.
- Aprobar un Global New Green Deal (Nuevo Acuerdo Verde y Global) para garantizar el financiamiento y la tecnología para el Sur Global a través de la cooperación internacional. La justicia climática debe incluir reparaciones y redistribución; una economía más verde en Gran Bretaña logrará muy poco si este gobierno continúa impidiendo que los países vulnerables también transformen sus economías por culpa de deudas paralizantes, acuerdos comerciales injustos y la exportación de industrias extractivas mortales – con sede en el Reino Unido. Este Global Green New Deal también incluiría el fin del comercio de armas. Se han creado guerras para servir los intereses de las corporaciones: los mayores negocios de armas han entregado petróleo; mientras que los ejércitos más grandes del mundo son los mayores usuarios de gasolina.
- Hacer responsables a las empresas transnacionales creando un sistema que las regule y les impida desatar más destrucción global. Esto implica deshacerse de muchos tratados comerciales y de inversión existentes que consagran la voluntad de estas corporaciones transnacionales.
- Sacar al planeta del mercado de valores reestructurando el sector financiero para que sea transparente, democratizado y sostenible, a la vez que desincentive la inversión en industrias extractivas y subsidie los programas de energía renovable, la justicia ecológica y los programas de regeneración.
- Poner fin a la política del 'ambiente hostil' contra lxs inmigrantes: Poner fin a los muros y fronteras, centros de detención y cárceles que se utilizan contra comunidades racializadas, migrantes y refugiadas. En cambio, el Reino Unido debería reconocer sus responsabilidades históricas y actuales en impulsar el desplazamiento de pueblos y comunidades; y debería cumplir con sus deudas hacia ellxs.
- Garantizar equidad a comunidades tanto en el norte global como en el sur global en las que todxs tienen derecho a la educación gratuita, un ingreso económico adecuado ya sea dentro o fuera del trabajo, atención médica universal, incluyendo el apoyo para el bienestar mental, transporte asequible, alimentos saludables y asequibles, empleo y vivienda digna, participación política significativa, un sistema de justicia transformador, libertades de género y sexualidad, y el apoyo para discapacitados y personas mayores, y vivir independientemente en la comunidad.

La lucha por la justicia climática es la lucha por la vida misma, y lo debemos hacer bien. Compartimos esta reflexión desde un lugar de amor y solidaridad, por grupos y redes que trabajan con comunidades de primera línea, unidxs en el espíritu de construir un movimiento por la justicia climática que no haga que lxs más pobres de los países ricos paguen el precio por enfrentar la crisis climática, y se niega a sacrificar a la gente del Sur Global para proteger a lxs ciudadanxs del Norte global. Es crucial que nos pongamos en disposición ante nuestras comunidades y todxs aquellxs que no tienen acceso a los centros de poder. Sin esta responsabilidad, el llamado por la justicia climática está vacío.

came into contact with a hammering I did not directly experience because of that privilege. The question of how we can account for that privilege is one that I will keep live throughout this piece.

A starting point is the point from which we proceed, from where a world unfolds (Ahmed 2006). We have many starting points. I write this contribution as a cis lesbian who has experienced gender norms as alienating insofar as gender norms are so often heteronorms: rules of conduct that direct girls toward boys and that render heterosexuality the right or best or happiest destination. I write this contribution as a woman of color who finds that gender norms so often remain predicated on an unremarkable whiteness: the evocation of a fragile female body who needs to be defended from various racialized as well as sexualized others. Intersectionality is *this*. It is about ups and downs, stopping and starting; how we pass through at one moment while being stopped at another, depending on who is receiving us, depending on what is being received through us. An affinity of hammers does not assume we will automatically be attuned to others who are stopped by what allows us to pass through, even when we ourselves have the experience of being stopped. We have to acquire that affinity. It is what we work toward.

The Letter

I want to account for the problem of trans-exclusionary radical feminism, the problem of how it is within some feminist spaces, that this hammering is happening. I will start with a letter, even though the letter in question is not the starting point of a certain kind of feminism that has long been chipping away at trans lives. On Sunday, February 1, 2015, a letter denouncing the tactics used by trans and sex-worker activists to contest speech they perceived as violent toward them was published in the *Guardian* under the headline, “We Cannot Allow Censorship and the Silencing of Individuals,” followed by a subheading, “Universities Have a Particular Responsibility to Resist This Kind of Bullying” (Campbell et al. 2015). It was signed by 130 prominent feminists, academics, and activists and became the most recent flash point of a long-running conflict regarding the relationship of transgender issues to feminism. Four examples are mentioned as evidence of this worrying trend: the cancellation of Kate Smurthwaite’s comedy show at Goldsmiths, University of London; the calls for the Cambridge Union to withdraw its speaking invitation to Germaine Greer; the pressure on the Green Party to “repudiate” Rupert Read after he “questioned the arguments put forward by some trans-activists”; and the “no platforming” of the “feminist activist and writer” Julie Bindel by the National Union of Students.

I will not rehearse some of the wider problems with this letter that I have discussed elsewhere (Ahmed 2015). I want to focus instead on how trans comes up.

The word *trans* is mentioned both as a description of activists and as a style of accusation: the letter refers to “a worrying pattern of intimidation and silencing of individuals whose views are deemed ‘transphobic’ or ‘whorephobic.’” The statement then says, “Today [no platforming] is being used to prevent the expression of feminist arguments critical of the sex industry and of some demands made by trans activists.” Put the sentences together and you have the picture: feminists who are critical of some of the demands of trans activists (which demands? one wonders¹) are accused of transphobia, which is how they are silenced. A summary: the accusation of transphobia is a means by which critical feminist voices have been silenced.

The sentences in the letter work to create a figure of the trans activist who is making unreasonable demands and arguments, and who is using the accusation of transphobia as a means to silence feminists. Indeed, if words like *silencing*, *bullying*, and *intimidation* cluster around the figure of the trans activist, then words like *critical*, *questioning*, and *democratic* cluster around the figure of the cis feminist.² The letter does not have to make an argument explicit: it works to create an impression that is sticky; trans activists are bullying the feminists, and universities are allowing this bullying to happen. The letter does not have to say explicitly that critical feminists and trans activists are distinct camps, one of whom is silenced and intimidated by the other, to carry the point.

The letter uses the language of free speech; in a way it both insists on free speech while announcing that free speech is under threat. In the United Kingdom, all speech is understood as free speech, with the exception of speech that is an “incitement to violence.” Free speech is increasingly mobilized as an ideological weapon by the creation of a clear distinction between offensive statements and “incitements to violence.” Let me offer an example. On March 15, 2015, a leading Black public figure, Trevor Phillips, the former head of the Commission for Racial Equality, released a documentary, *Things We Won't Say about Race That Are True* (Cooper 2015), which ends up defending racism as a form of free speech. The claims made are familiar, though they are more usually articulated in the right-wing press. Antiracism or political correctness is inflated as if it is a hegemonic discourse that has prevented “us” from being able to speak the truths (things we cannot say). The story goes something like this: we cannot ask legitimate questions about immigration because will be branded “racist.” The very accusation of racism is understood as what stops us from asking legitimate questions. Paradoxically, then, racism is now incited by being understood as prohibited or minority speech. In such an account the very act of being offensive or causing offense (often through articulating stereotypes about others) speaks to how we assert our national character (as being tolerant of different views) as well as our freedom.³ In such a schema, dominant views become rearticulated as if they are

minority views that we have to struggle to express. Racism is enacted by the claim that we are not free to be racist.

Let's return to our letter. I do not think the letter justifies the freedom to be "critical of . . . some demands made by trans activists" as the freedom to be offensive; rather, what is being implied is that trans activists, by labeling critical feminist speech as offensive (through the liberal use of the illiberal word *transphobia*), are intending to impose a restriction on feminist speech. In other words, being offended is registered as an imposition on the freedom of others. The real offense is caused by those who are offended. This is how the very use of the word *transphobia* is heard as an attempt at censorship. We might note that the claim to be censored can be generative of speech. The example of Germaine Greer mentioned by the letter is a case in point: she was not stopped from speaking at all. She did speak: as did transfeminist activists at another event organized by the LGBTI Society and the Women's Society (speakers included Roz Kaveney and Sarah Brown).⁴ If anything, the evidence here points to the opposite of what the letter claims: protests about who is speaking have led to the proliferation rather than prevention of discourse.

When the letter says that critical feminists are being silenced, it is implying that "being critical" of the "demands of trans activists" is a legitimate form of feminist speech. In other words, the letter relies on the assumption that we can distinguish "critical feminist speech" from "incitement to violence," and that there is censorship because others have failed to make that distinction. Behind the letter I can hear these sentences uttered in unison: "It is not racist to ask critical questions about immigration; it is not transphobic to ask critical questions about the demands of trans activists." But this distinction between critical speech and incitement to violence breaks down, which is how an incitement to violence is justified *as* freedom of speech.

Let me give an example of how this distinction breaks down. At a Reclaim the Night march that took place in London in November 2014, a pamphlet entitled "Not Our Sisters" was distributed by trans-exclusionary radical feminists.⁵ On one side of the pamphlet is written text. It begins by describing Reclaim the Night as "protesting male violence against women." It then describes trans women as "male transgenders" and suggests that "male transgenders" commit violence against women "at exactly the same rate as non-transgender males." This violent misgendering enables trans women to be positioned as imposters within a feminist march, as perpetrators rather than victims of male violence. On the other side of the pamphlet are four photographs of trans women who are given a story that is not theirs: they have committed violence against women; they have tried to hide that violence by describing themselves as trans or not men. The photographs are used to retell a story, to abbreviate and condense the associations made by the written text: trans women are "male transgenders," trans women are men; as men

they use *trans* as a mask to commit and conceal violence; trans women as men injure, rape, and murder women.

To abbreviate and condense an association in the form of an equation:

Trans = violence and death.

I was on Facebook when someone's status update caught my attention. The person spoke of how, sadly, a peaceful feminist march was interrupted by "trans activists." Outrage about violence becomes the cause of a disturbance and not the violence itself. In the next section, I will return to the issue of how disruption is located and narrated. When I wrote in response to that update of my own outrage about the pamphlet, one of the people named in the letter referred to above responded, "So are you saying it is as bad as the Holocaust." By "it" I think she was referring both to the pamphlet that I had described as hate speech and to the more general domain of antitrans feminist speech. It would take us a long time to unpack what is wrong with this statement. But just note the implication that violence against trans people is "relatively" minor, a footnote in a much more horrifying history of human hatred. And it is this very implication that was carried by the letter: "'No platforming' used to be a tactic used against self-proclaimed fascists and Holocaust-deniers. But today it is being used to prevent the expression of feminist arguments critical of the sex industry and of some demands made by trans activists." So this comparison ("it" is not like the Holocaust) is already in use not only to present feminists critical of "some demands made by trans activists" as unjustly censored but also to recast that critical speech as not as violent or offensive as other kinds of speech. I make this point just to make clear that even if those who signed up to the letter might argue that critical feminist speech can or should be separated from the kind of speech represented by the pamphlet, the terms of the letter point to such speech: it is exactly this kind of speech that becomes justifiable as a relatively minor form of offense, or even, as no offense at all.

How often: some forms of violence are understood as trivial, or not as violence at all. How often: violence is reproduced by not being understood as violence. So much violence directed against groups (that is, directed against those perceived as members of a group) works by locating that violence as coming from within those groups. Thus minorities are often deemed as being violent, or as causing violence, or even as causing the violence directed against them. To give an account of trans people as causing violence (by virtue of being trans) is to cause violence against trans people. We are most certainly talking about lives and deaths here; and we are most certainly talking about incitement to violence.

The letter tells a tale: that to take offense at "critical feminist speech" is a wrong (the offense taken is heard as antifeminism) that leads to more wrongs. To take offense at the letter would thus be judged as enacting the very problem

described by the letter. Those who protested against the letter were indeed understood not as expressing their freedom of speech but as displaying their desire to restrict freedom of speech in the very act of “being offended” by it. There is an economy of speech at work here. Some protests are judged as stifling free speech while other protests (such as the letter itself) become expressions of free speech. We learn that free speech has become a political technology that is used to redefine freedom around the right of some to occupy time and space. Whenever people keep being given a platform to say they have no platform, or whenever people speak endlessly about being silenced, you not only have a performative contradiction; you are witnessing a mechanism of power.

A Rebuttal System

When I first read the letter, I remember thinking that one of the worst consequences of it would be the new legitimacy it would give to antitrans and trans-exclusionary feminism. I thought at first I was indeed witnessing an increase of such speech. But once I began to work through the networks that supported that letter, mostly on social media, I began to realize that what I first heard as a turning up of the volume was just more of the same thing that had been going on all along for many trans people: that volume switch was already stuck on full blast. My cis privilege was, until then, not having had to notice that harassment or not having had to hear the sound of that blast.

In order to explain how this letter was taken up, we need an account of how privilege is affective as well as effective. When I think of affectivity I think of skin: a border that feels. Privilege could be thought of as rather like contact dermatitis: we are inflamed by something when or because we come into contact with it. Privilege is also thus: being able to avoid contact with the cause of an inflammation. We could contrast contact dermatitis with eczema, which is often called a “basket category,” used to describe skin conditions in which the cause of the inflammation is not known. With eczema it can feel as if you are the cause of your own inflammation, whether or not you are the cause, because there is no safe externality; nothing that can be eliminated to heal the skin or the situation.

Like all analogies, this one is imperfect, but I want to use it to dramatize how causality becomes a contact zone in everyday social experience. Let’s think of an inflammation as a conversation. Let’s say when you enter the room, things become inflamed. If this keeps happening, then you can feel like the cause of that inflammation, whether or not you are. You learn that you cannot stop an inflammation even if you begin to try to “tone things down.” So much racism feels like this: the volume turns up when race is mentioned, or the volume turns up when you turn up as a person of color. Racism is precisely how a body of color becomes the cause of tension. I always learn from bell hooks’s description of how

L'entraide inter-espèces au-delà du validisme

Les féministes ont compris l'importance de l'interdépendance depuis bien longtemps. Que ce soit en dénonçant le fait que l'aide aux « dépendants » ait toujours été le fardeau des femmes, en particulier des femmes de couleur, ou en attirant l'attention sur une éthique de l'assistance – qui place le souci de l'autre au cœur de notre conception de la justice –, depuis des générations, ces femmes militantes voient les humains (et souvent les non-humains) comme des êtres interdépendants qui comptent les uns sur les autres. Mais si la théorie féministe s'est amplement consacrée à la définition du mot *aider*, reste encore à explorer ce que signifie *être aidé*.

J'ai moi-même entretenu un rapport complexe à cette notion. En tant que personne handicapée, j'adhère à la philosophie de l'interdépendance, dont l'un des composants essentiels est précisément l'assistance, tout en réfutant l'idée selon laquelle recevoir de l'aide – en particulier si c'est fait par « bon cœur » ou par « charité » – me permettra de mener une vie plus libre. Avoir quelqu'un qui prend soin de vous peut s'avérer étouffant, voire infantilisant, oppressant, et bien entendu, s'occuper d'autrui peut l'être tout autant. Dans son article « Building Bridges with Accessible Care », Christine Kelly, théoricienne du handicap, écrit ceci : « Les travaux de recherche en matière de handicap définissent – explicitement ou non – l'aide à la personne comme une forme

d'oppression à plusieurs niveaux : maltraitance, coercition, négation de toute autonomie et placement en institution¹. » Historiquement, la position des défenseurs des droits des handicapés consiste à dire que nous ne voulons pas être aidés ; ce que nous voulons, ce sont des droits, des services et une société accessible qui ne nous empêche pas de nous engager et de contribuer pleinement à la vie collective. Au fil des années, ont émergé des figures féministes spécialisées dans les études du handicap ou autres, qui ont essayé de sortir de cette impasse en élaborant une théorie du *care** qui reconnaisse à la fois la valeur et le caractère oppressif de cette aide, pour qui la reçoit ou l'offre. L'un des aspects de ce travail consiste à se demander ce qu'apportent les personnes habituellement considérées comme ayant des besoins – les « dépendants » et les soi-disant fardeaux – à leurs relations, à la société et au monde en général.

Les théories du *care* et de l'interdépendance sont également présentes sous diverses formes dans la réflexion sur la défense des animaux – très fréquemment, comme nous l'avons vu, dans les débats sur leur bien-être. D'un côté, nous utilisons constamment les animaux d'élevage à notre avantage, et de l'autre, il est de notre responsabilité de prendre soin d'eux. Pour résoudre ce paradoxe, on avance souvent l'argument de leur dépendance : ils ont besoin des humains pour leur survie.

Dans sa version féministe, l'éthique du *care* appliquée aux animaux propose au contraire de ne pas considérer que les bêtes n'existent que pour notre profit ou notre plaisir, bien qu'elles soient souvent vulnérables et dépendantes. Animaux et humains sont perçus comme étant profondément interdépendants. On s'éloigne ici des théories des droits dont les principes reposent sur des règles, pour se rapprocher d'« une éthique situationnelle et contextuelle qui permet d'avoir une compréhension circonstanciée et détaillée d'une situation ou d'un problème », comme l'écrivent Carol Adams et Josephine Donovan dans leur livre, *The Feminist Care Tradition*

* Théorie apparue dans les années 1980, d'abord élaborée par les féministes américaines. Le terme « *care* » désigne le souci de l'autre, les soins qu'on lui apporte et l'entraide au sein d'une société.

in *Animal Ethics*². Une éthique du *care* féministe appliquée aux animaux évite également de privilégier la rationalité, l'autonomie et l'indépendance – des outils d'oppression, qui ont servi et servent encore à distinguer les êtres dignes d'être aidés de ceux qui ne le sont pas. Pour Adams et Donovan, si nous voulons créer des relations plus justes avec les animaux, il est certes important de *prêter attention* à ces derniers dans leur individualité, mais aussi aux systèmes à l'origine de la souffrance animale³.

Dans la lecture qu'en font les féministes, la dépendance ne justifie pas l'oppression ; ce serait même plutôt un argument contre elle. Comme l'expliquent Adams et Donovan, « la plupart des animaux domestiques, en particulier, ne peuvent survivre sans les humains – et cette situation nécessite une éthique qui prenne en compte cette inégalité⁴ ». À l'opposé de nombreux défenseurs de la cause animale qui ont coutume de considérer les bêtes comme de simples victimes vulnérables à protéger – et se voient comme la « voix des sans-voix » – l'éthique féministe du *care* offre une approche libératrice, grâce à laquelle la notion de dépendance gagne en complexité : l'attention est portée sur l'autonomie des animaux domestiqués, perçus comme des collaborateurs et des acteurs-clés du monde que nous partageons.

Adams et Donovan soulignent combien il est important d'être attentif à « ce que les animaux nous disent – plutôt qu'à ce que les humains ont à dire à leur sujet⁵ ». La tâche n'est pas aisée, mais comme nous l'avons vu avec Yvonne la vache laitière qui a échappé à l'abattoir, Janet l'éléphant de cirque maltraité qui s'est rebellé, et tant d'autres qui se sont brillamment soustraits au confinement et aux mauvais traitements, les bêtes nous parlent bel et bien – elles expriment leurs préférences et leurs désirs. L'éthique du *care* cherche à savoir comment nous pouvons apprendre à les écouter, les aider et prendre soin d'eux en évitant le paternalisme et l'infantilisation qui font d'eux des « sans-voix ». Dans la même veine, la réflexion de la philosophe Lori Gruen sur l'empathie entre les espèces nous met au défi de nous questionner sur la manière dont nos réactions empathiques vis-à-vis des animaux non-humains peuvent nous aider non seulement à

compatir à leur sort, mais aussi à prendre conscience de leur volonté, de leurs besoins et de leur faculté à communiquer.

« Construire une relation éthique, écrit Gruen, implique entre autres d'être capable de comprendre et de tenir compte des besoins des autres, de leurs intérêts, de leurs désirs, de leurs faiblesses, de leurs espoirs, de leurs points de vue, etc., et il ne s'agit pas d'affirmer a priori ce qu'ils peuvent ou doivent être selon nous, mais de faire l'effort de nous mettre à leur place⁶. » On retrouve des opinions similaires dans la théorie du handicap ainsi que dans le militantisme qui œuvre pour la justice envers les personnes non-verbales et porteuses d'un handicap mental. Des théoriciens comme la philosophe Eva Feder Kittay ont tenu des propos analogues, affirmant que pour comprendre les besoins et les désirs de ces populations, nous devons être attentifs aux individus indépendamment les uns des autres, afin d'être capables de reconnaître les sons, gestes et schémas qui leur sont propres, plutôt que de généraliser à partir d'un diagnostic⁷. Ce type d'attitude prévenante, qui prend le temps d'observer la différence d'autrui, est indispensable si nous voulons changer les termes du débat sur la libération de l'animalité et du handicap, et passer d'un discours étriqué centré sur des exemples de souffrance et de dépendance, à des discussions plus progressistes qui se préoccupent de créer un espace accessible et non-discriminant dans la société, où humains et animaux puissent s'épanouir.

Il est communément admis que les personnes handicapées sont dépendantes. Les auxiliaires de vie assurent notre bien-être physique, et c'est souvent l'État qui subvient à nos besoins d'ordre économique. De même, on considère généralement que les bêtes sont des êtres dépendants. Pour ce qui est des animaux domestiqués, c'est assez évident : sans nous, ils n'auraient ni nourriture, ni abri, ni soins médicaux, ni même, parfois, la possibilité de s'accoupler et de mettre au monde leurs petits. Mais le devenir des animaux sauvages est lui aussi lié aux humains, bien que différemment : ils sont tributaires de décisions que nous prenons et qui affectent leur

habitat et leurs ressources alimentaires, sans oublier le fait que nous pouvons désigner quel individu chasser ou éliminer et, de plus en plus, quelle espèce sera amenée à disparaître.

Ma grand-mère, cette femme libertaire, m'a dit un jour que je devais être reconnaissante pour tout ce que je recevais en raison mon handicap parce que si j'avais été livrée à moi-même, je « serais morte dans les bois ». « À l'état naturel », aucun doute, ma dépendance serait totale : je mourrais rapidement de faim, à moins que quelqu'un ne décide de partager ses baies avec moi ou (dans la logique de ma grand-mère) me donne un peu de viande.

Ce sont des mots durs, dans la bouche d'une grand-mère – c'était un personnage –, mais elle ne faisait que reprendre une opinion largement partagée, selon laquelle les individus handicapés n'ont pas leur place dans la nature et qu'ils survivent uniquement grâce à la bonté des autres. Ce que ma grand-mère ne mesurait pas, c'est que mon frère et mes sœurs valides périraient eux aussi, s'ils se retrouvaient seuls dans les bois, sans aucun humain ni outil pour les aider. Ils tiendraient peut-être plus longtemps que moi, mais il y a fort à parier qu'ils connaîtraient tout de même une fin prématurée. Les animaux domestiqués sont eux aussi perçus comme étant dépourvus de la moindre autonomie et inadaptés à la vie sauvage. Les écologistes, les défenseurs du bien-être et de la cause animale, tous ont décrit la dépendance tragique, voire grotesque, de ces bêtes. Personnes handicapées et animaux domestiqués font partie des populations victimes de préjugés sur l'absence de dignité due à la dépendance, ainsi que de stéréotypes que véhicule notre société sur ce qui est contre nature ou anormal. À bien des égards, on nous a fait passer pour des bêtes et des fardeaux.

Sous prétexte qu'un être est dépendant, il est souvent exploité, en partie parce que cette existence sans autonomie est connotée de façon extrêmement négative – qui en voudrait ? Mais la vérité, c'est que nous sommes tous dépendants. À notre naissance, à la fin de notre vie (pour la plupart d'entre nous), nous, les humains, avons besoin de l'aide des autres. Nous comptons sur cette aide pour traiter nos déchets, avoir accès à une eau saine, à l'électricité

et à d'autres services. Pour notre alimentation, nous nous reposons sur un système infiniment complexe. Celles et ceux qui cultivent leurs propres aliments ont malgré tout recours au service de distribution de l'eau, à de la main-d'œuvre et à une technologie humaines. Mêmes les plus autosuffisants d'entre nous, qui fabriquent leurs propres vêtements, leurs outils, font pousser leur nourriture et construisent leur habitation, font presque toujours appel à autrui pour quelque denrée ou service, ou tout simplement pour avoir de la compagnie.

En Amérique, on valorise fortement l'indépendance et l'autosuffisance. Les États-Unis incarnent le fantasme romantique d'un pays où tout le monde peut accéder à l'indépendance. C'est vraisemblablement la valeur reine, en particulier quand on la nomme « liberté ». Conséquence directe pour nous, handicapés : notre vie est perçue comme tragique. Mais est-ce vrai ? Michael Oliver, chercheur en études du handicap, affirme comme beaucoup de théoriciens du handicap que la dépendance est toute relative : « Les professionnels ont tendance à définir l'indépendance à l'aune des tâches que l'individu peut accomplir pour prendre soin de lui-même : se laver, s'habiller, aller aux toilettes, cuisiner et manger sans aide. Les personnes handicapées voient les choses autrement : pour elles, l'indépendance correspond à la capacité à tenir les rênes de sa propre vie et à prendre des décisions pour soi, et non à la possibilité de se débrouiller seul au quotidien⁸. »

Cette différence de points de vue sur la dépendance entre beaucoup d'individus handicapés et quasiment tout le reste de la société s'explique par le fait que l'accent ne soit pas mis de la même manière sur l'autonomie physique. L'indépendance renvoie avant tout à des personnes qui contrôlent leur accès aux services dont ils bénéficient (électricité, soins médicaux, éducation ou aide à la personne), plutôt qu'à des êtres – handicapés ou non – qui pourvoient à leurs propres besoins.

Les conséquences négatives de la dépendance sont en grande partie d'origine humaine : privation du droit de participer à l'économie, mise au ban de la société, emprisonnement, ou encore barrières

sociales, culturelles et architecturales. On peut dire, à plus d'un titre, que la façon dont la société traite ses membres handicapés n'est qu'une version exacerbée des conditions de vie que connaissent d'autres populations. Je ne suis pas en train de dire qu'avec ou sans handicap, nous vivons tous dans le même état de dépendance ; je veux plutôt montrer que la dichotomie entre indépendance et dépendance n'a pas lieu d'être. Une personne tétraplégique n'est pas physiquement autonome dans le sens où quelqu'un sans handicap peut l'être, mais cela ne signifie pas nécessairement qu'elle soit dépendante. Si elle n'a pas accès à des services d'assistance, à un logement ou des transports adaptés, au pire elle passera sa vie enfermée dans une maison d'accueil spécialisée, au mieux elle se retrouvera livrée au bon vouloir de sa famille ou de ses auxiliaires de vie, sans recours ou presque pour changer sa situation. Mais si elle a accès à des services sociaux lui offrant la possibilité de choisir les personnes qui l'aideront, et à un environnement lui permettant de vivre et de travailler, alors il ne faut plus parler de dépendance mais d'interdépendance. La différence peut paraître anodine, mais aux yeux des populations handicapées – à qui l'on colle sans cesse l'étiquette de fardeaux – tout ce qui peut rappeler que personne n'est aussi indépendant qu'il ne le croit, et que nous sommes en fait tous interdépendants, revêt une importance capitale.

Il est vrai, cependant, que tous les individus handicapés ne sont pas en mesure de s'autogérer. Comme l'écrit Michael Bérubé, « l'autonomie et la capacité à parler en son nom propre demeurent un idéal séduisant même, ou en particulier, pour les personnes en situation de handicap⁹ ». Il souligne que certaines d'entre elles doivent s'en remettre entièrement aux autres pour tous les aspects de leur survie : en plus d'être physiquement dépendantes, elles n'ont pas la faculté de faire des choix pour elles-mêmes.

Personne n'échappe à la dépendance, même si c'est à des degrés divers. Toute la difficulté consiste à la comprendre non pas comme quelque chose de négatif, encore moins contre nature, mais plutôt comme un composant incontournable de notre monde et de nos relations. Les individus handicapés étant assimilés à des fardeaux,

ce que nous apportons à nos familles, à nos communautés et à nos cultures s'en trouve souvent méprisé ou tout bonnement nié. Ce que l'on nous concède parfois, comme le fait Peter Singer, c'est d'avoir le mérite d'inspirer aux autres l'envie de surmonter les obstacles et de transmettre des valeurs altruistes. Nous l'avons vu dans le cas de Lou et Bill, les bœufs de Green Mountain College, les bêtes handicapées ont cette image de fardeau, elles aussi : elles ne sont pas épargnées par l'idée validiste que se font les humains de la dépendance. Le travail que Lou et Bill pouvaient fournir quand ils étaient valides justifiait leur droit de vivre, mais à partir du moment où ils ont montré des signes de faiblesse physique, le responsable de la ferme s'est empressé de rappeler qu'il ne dirigeait pas un refuge animalier. On ne s'est pas contenté de présenter les animaux d'élevage comme une charge, des êtres qui doivent travailler pour assurer leur subsistance, on a aussi dit que c'étaient des créatures « contre nature », produites par l'homme et dangereuses pour l'environnement. En 1948, Aldo Leopold, un écologiste engagé, a écrit qu'il était possible d'opérer un changement de valeurs en faveur d'une éthique écologique « en réévaluant toute chose contre nature, apprivoisée ou enfermée, au regard de celles qui sont naturelles, sauvages et libres¹⁰ ». Cette célébration de l'état sauvage et de l'autonomie a eu une influence importante sur l'écologie traditionnelle. Adopté par divers écologistes, philosophes et partisans du bien-être animal, ce point de vue va jusqu'à décrire les animaux d'élevage comme des versions approximatives, idiotes, créées par l'homme ou, comme nous l'avons vu avec le vulgarisateur scientifique Stephen Budiansky, « dégénérées », de leurs équivalents « naturels » et « sauvages ». Même l'écologiste John Muir a exprimé du mépris à l'encontre des animaux d'élevage, en faisant l'éloge de l'autonomie des chèvres sauvages, qu'il qualifie d'« audacieuses, élégantes et débordantes de vie », par opposition aux chèvres domestiquées, qui ne seraient « qu'à demi vivantes¹¹ ». Le parallèle est saisissant avec l'idée fort répandue que les individus en situation de handicap sont incomplets ou qu'ils ne sont que des « demi-personnes¹² », si l'on en croit Jerry Lewis.

Ces théories reposent sur la croyance selon laquelle, contrairement aux bêtes sauvages, les animaux domestiqués n'ont plus rien de naturel et ont perdu toute autonomie. Ils sont devenus des extensions de notre culture et de notre technologie : créés par l'homme, privés de toute niche écologique hors de portée des êtres humains et incapables de survivre dans la nature sans notre aide.

La dépendance et le caractère contre nature de ces animaux sont souvent associés à leur « stupidité » supposée, comme si le fait qu'ils ne puissent pas prendre soin d'eux-mêmes « en pleine nature » était la marque de leur absence d'intelligence. J. Baird Callicott, philosophe et écologiste, tresse des lauriers aux bêtes sauvages et, à l'inverse, affirme que les animaux domestiqués « ont été élevés ainsi : dociles, malléables, stupides et dépendants. Suggérer de les libérer n'a absolument aucun sens. C'est, pour employer une hyperbole, une impossibilité logique¹³ ». Sous prétexte que ces animaux sont dépendants et créés par l'homme, ils seraient trop bêtes pour être libres – à quoi bon prôner leur libération, dans ce cas ?

Ces arguments sont validistes et, comme nous l'avons vu, fallacieux. L'intelligence des animaux d'élevage est d'autant plus frappante que, pendant des générations, ils ont été maintenus par la force dans des environnements totalement exempts de stimulation intellectuelle. Quel sens cela peut-il avoir de juger de leurs facultés cognitives ? Et selon quels critères ? Quand bien même, l'idée qu'il serait « absurde » de soutenir la libération d'une population parce qu'elle est « dépendante » et « stupide » fait froid dans le dos. Callicott n'hésite pas à comparer les espèces domestiquées à des objets, suggérant qu'il y a « quelque chose de profondément incohérent [...] à déplorer, comme le font certains militants du mouvement de libération des animaux, le fait que le "comportement naturel" des poulets et des veaux non sevrés envoyés à l'abattoir est contrarié de la plus cruelle des manières dans les fermes-usines. C'est presque aussi absurde que de parler du comportement naturel d'une table ou d'une chaise¹⁴ ».

Face au caractère « contre nature » présumé des animaux d'élevage, certains ont cru voir un lien entre ces derniers et la destruction

The disabled are in many ways a close second. We are the world's largest minority. We come in all colors, genders, nationalities, economic and cultural backgrounds; and on top of this we are "freaks of nature," "monstrosities," "beasts," "abnormal," "broken."

I acknowledge that I am entering into slippery territory with the writing that follows, territory in which terrible oppressions have found footing. For although I have not directly mentioned them, there is no way to discuss animal metaphors without recognizing the atrocities that they have been used for: the rhetoric of Nazi Germany, of racism, of slavery. And the rhetoric of the sideshow was hardly better, clearly using animal comparisons to support racist ideologies and demeaning and patronizing stereotypes. So why, when so many people, myself included, have felt the negative and hurtful consequences of being compared and associated with non-human animals, would I enter this territory?

The simple answer is that I do it because more than 50 billion animals die every year for human interests.⁵ They die for food, science, fur, for products, entertainment, and sport. They die for these uses because they aren't human and because we can't seem to figure out what our ethical responsibilities toward them are. I argue that many of the experiences of disabled people and much of the work done in disability studies can help us to understand animal oppression differently. By showing how disability studies reevaluates the meanings of terms such as "independence," "nature," and "normalcy" and by exploring the ways in which disability studies demands new perspectives on embodiment, this essay will argue that disability studies could have a positive and powerful affect on the animal rights discussion.

I take a risk in exploring the parallels between disability oppression and animal oppression, because this risk seems necessary to challenge predominant themes and arguments that support the continued exploitation of animals and of disabled people.

Independence, Nature, and Normalcy

Disability studies argues for realizing new ways of valuing human life that aren't limited by specific physical or mental capabilities.

We argue that it is not specifically our intelligence, rationality, agility, physical independence, or bipedal nature that give us dignity and value. We argue that life is, and should be presumed to be, worth living, whether you are a person with Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, quadriplegia, autism, or like me, arthrogryposis. Many disability activists and scholars go further than this, arguing that even those that are deemed to be severely and irrevocably brain-damaged have a right to a life of respect and dignity.

This is not just some trite declaration of pride or a romantic statement on the sanctity of human life; rather, our reclaiming of value comes from the recognition that much of what disabled people can offer society has been undervalued or has been considered detrimental by a culture invested in certain bodies and certain ways of doing things. Paul Longmore, a disability studies writer and historian, writes: “Beyond proclamations of pride, deaf and disabled people have been uncovering or formulating sets of alternative values derived from within the deaf and disabled experience. . . . They declare that they prize not self-sufficiency but self-determination, not independence but interdependence, not functional separateness but personal connection, not physical autonomy but human community.”⁶ At their roots, all arguments used to justify human domination over animals rely on comparing human and animal abilities and traits. We humans are the species with rationality, with complex emotions, with two legs and opposable thumbs. Animals, lacking certain traits and abilities, exist outside our moral responsibility. We can dominate and use them, because they are lacking certain capabilities. But if disability advocates argue for the protection of the rights of those of us who are disabled, those of us who are lacking certain highly valued abilities like rationality and physical independence, then how can disability studies legitimately exclude animals for these reasons without contradiction? I argue that disability studies has accidentally created a framework of justice that can no longer exclude other species.

None of this is to say that abilities and variations in abilities do not matter. Clearly, there are important differences between the abilities of a conscious human being and someone who is brain-dead. Clearly, there are differences between the abilities of a squirrel and the abilities of a lettuce plant. To me, and to most animal

rights activists, the one ability that is a prerequisite for moral consideration is sentience. Sentience is what sets us apart from computers; it's what sets human and nonhuman animals apart from plants. Sentience is the ability to feel, to experience, to perceive.

Animals are physiologically very similar to us. Even fish, whose capacities to feel are far too often disregarded, have physiological reactions to pain that are similar to those of human beings and react to painkillers as a human would.⁷ It is impossible to ignore the immense amount of evidence that shows that the animals we exploit are sentient, which means that they are able to experience feelings—pleasurable ones and painful ones.⁸ The following questions thus must be asked: If an animal is living its own life, feeling pain and pleasure, perceiving and experiencing, do we have an obligation to avoid causing unnecessary harm to that animal? Furthermore, do we have an obligation to acknowledge that animal's right to her own life—a life that she alone is experiencing? Do we have an obligation to try to coexist rather than to exploit?

My work builds on Martha Nussbaum's *Frontiers of Justice*, which shows how the tradition of the social contract has failed to provide substantial groundwork for justice for not only disabled people and nonhuman animals, but for human beings of different nationalities around the world.⁹ The idea of the social contract, "in which rational people get together for mutual advantage, deciding to leave the state of nature and to govern themselves by law" (*FJ*, 3), fails to address these areas of justice, as it assumes that in a "state of nature" "the parties to this contract really are roughly equal in mental and physical power."¹⁰ Of course, as Nussbaum points out, this assumption does not take into consideration physical asymmetry between men and woman, let alone between the disabled and the able-bodied, or between humans and nonhumans. Although many animals are physically powerful, Nussbaum points out that we still dominate them, "and the whole point of the state of nature was to say that no one can really dominate . . . but with nonhuman animals, we dominate them. We have totally won that battle" ("JU," 122). Nussbaum's work also explores how the idea of mutual advantage falls short when addressing disability and "species membership" as disabled individuals and animals don't necessarily offer any mutual advantage (and in some cases may offer a disad-

vantage). Thus Nussbaum argues that a more complete theory of justice must include other, more complex reasons for human cooperation besides advantage, such as love, compassion, and respect.

Nussbaum shows how the physical vulnerability of disabled individuals and animals is immensely problematic under a social contract tradition of justice, because even in a “state of nature” an asymmetry in power exists between these groups and able-bodied human beings. Nussbaum thus argues that “the classical theory of the social contract cannot solve these problems” (*FJ*, 3), as the problems are built into the theory’s foundations, and thus new theories are needed.¹¹

An interesting parallel to Nussbaum’s critique of the social contract is available in another contract theory that has recently gained popularity among those who support eating sustainably and humanely produced animal products. This theory says that human beings and domesticated animals have entered into a contract with each other that, like the social contract theory, is largely based on the idea of mutual advantage.¹² The second half of this essay will explore and critique this theory and show how it fails as an argument for continued animal exploitation, as the contract itself is based in asymmetrical foundations and the rules of the contract are themselves unequal.

Nussbaum’s work on the idea of vulnerability is also relevant to the remainder of this essay, as I argue that vulnerability is closely related to an idea of dependence that is problematic for both disabled people and animals. Those who are vulnerable are also often dependent, and this dependence can easily become an excuse for exploitation. Viewing the concepts of dependence and independence through a disability studies lens can add significant strength to the arguments for animal rights and disability rights in these debates.

Disabled people are negatively affected by limited interpretations of the concept of independence, and disability studies has worked to redefine what independence can mean. Independence, I argue, is more about choice and civil rights than it is about pure self-sufficiency. Like Paul Longmore, I argue that it is interdependence, not independence, and community, not physical autonomy, that should be supported and recognized as essential for sustaining a just society.

In American rhetoric there is a strong emphasis on independence and self-sufficiency. America is the country where everyone has the opportunity to become “independent.” Independence is perhaps prized beyond all else in this country, and for disabled people this means that our lives are automatically seen as tragically dependent. Michael Oliver, like many disability theorists, argues that dependence is relative: “Professionals tend to define independence in terms of self-care activities such as washing, dressing, toileting, cooking and eating without assistance. Disabled people, however, define independence differently, seeing it as the ability to be in control of and make decisions about one’s life, rather than doing things alone or without help.”¹³ We as a society are all dependent on each other. The difference between the way the disabled community sees dependence and how the rest of society views it is that there is not so much emphasis on individual physical independence. Today, independence is more about individuals being in control of their own services (be it education, plumbing, electrical, medical, dietary, or personal care) than it is about individuals being completely physically self-sufficient; this is true not only for the disabled population but for the population in general.

A large part of the stigma attached to being disabled is that those who are physically dependent are seen as burdens. The more impaired someone is, the more of a burden he or she is. Disability scholars argue, however, that the only reason why many people are a (perceived) burden on their family and friends is that they have such limited options.¹⁴ Disability rights activists and scholars argue that, in our society, it is not the impairment that is the reason for dependence; it is our impaired system of social services. I have countless friends whom society would no doubt label as burdensome and dependent—not to mention myself (I use a wheelchair and have very limited use of my arms). And yet, these friends and colleagues are some of the most directed, productive, and creative people I know, despite the fact that many use and rely on attendants and other support services.

For animals, dependence is what allows and even excuses their exploitation by humans. This is seen in much of the philosophy behind the humane meat movement. Authors such as Michael Pol-

lan and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall argue that to be vegetarian or vegan would mean abandoning those animals who are most dependent on us.¹⁵ Leaving them to their own devices, they say, would be a fate far worse than the dinner table. The theory they follow says that we have entered into a co-evolutionary pact with these species that gives us the responsibility to care for them in exchange for their services and flesh. Some vegetarians and vegans respond by arguing that human beings should stop breeding these animals and let their species go extinct. They argue that the dependency of these species makes them so vulnerable to human exploitation that to keep these species surviving is irresponsible.

Is there another way? What would a reframing of dependency look like to animals oppressed by humans? Viewing the dependence of farm animals through a disability studies framework gives new answers to the questions surrounding animal exploitation and may also open up a third path. Instead of continuing to exploit animals because they are dependent on us, and instead of leading these animals to extinction as a potential vegan alternative, could we not realize our mutual dependence on each other, our mutual vulnerability, and our mutual drive for life? The big questions in disability studies seem equally relevant to the animal rights debate: How can we create new meanings for words like “dependent” and “independent”? How can those who are seemingly most vulnerable within a society be perceived as also being useful, strong, and necessary?

Along with dependency, the other two concepts that I argue are of great importance to both the fields of disability studies and critical animal studies are “nature” and “normalcy.” The phrase “the natural cycle of things” has been used to justify everything from infanticide of disabled babies to the continued slaughter of animals for food. The idea of nature and what is natural has led to discrimination toward disabled people and the medicalization of the concept of disability, while at the same time it has been used as proof of our right to eat and use animals.

Within certain social justice movements (especially those surrounding food), there is a certain romanticization of nature—currently very popular—that often leaves out certain bodies, including the disabled body. It is a romanticization of “how things used to

be” and “how things are in nature” that often ignores that things were not necessarily as good for some as they were for others and that an idea of nature is difficult, if not impossible, to separate from human culture and paradigms. Just as the social contract tradition has failed to recognize the inequality that exists in a so-called state of nature, so does this idea of nature fail to see the power inequalities that exist within it.

Nature is one of the most common and compelling rhetorical tools used by those who justify animal exploitation. Arguments range from nuanced discussions of sustainable farming to passionate declarations that animals eat other animals in nature, and that in any case, nature is simply “red in tooth and claw.” Nicolette Hahn Niman, author of *The Righteous Porkchop*, writes, “Clearly it’s normal and natural for animals to eat other animals, and since we humans are part of nature, it’s very normal for humans to be eating animals.”¹⁶ But violent, painful deaths are also “normal and natural” in nature. Would Niman use that fact to argue that we have no moral obligation to kill animals humanely? What about human-on-human violence? That’s certainly “natural.” But is it ethical?

Patriarchy and disability oppression are also interesting parallels to this way of thinking. Throughout history and in virtually all cultures, patriarchy in some form has been the norm, and disability oppression and marginalization has existed. Of course there have been a few scattered cultures here and there that treated woman and disabled people more fairly than others, but the same can be said of our treatment of animals. Patriarchy is not something we should accept as natural--and neither is a paradigm of able-bodied superiority or of human domination over animals.

I argue that appealing to nature as a justification for ethical belief is a fallacy, and it has been used historically to justify every conservative power structure. Other animals, with no alternative sustenance, often with specific dietary requirements, and with varying cognitive abilities regarding such things as empathy, do not seem to be appropriate role models for our ethical lives. We are animals that have evolved to recognize other beings’ subjectivity, to experience empathy, and to make ethical choices. If a desire for meat is in human nature, it must be remembered that it is also in

human nature to question the way we live, to think about ethics, and to change our habits as our moral lives change. We, unlike virtually all other animals, choose what we eat.¹⁷

As a disabled person I find ethical arguments based on what's "natural" to be highly problematic. If history reveals something of "the natural cycle of things," I would have been killed at birth at worst or culturally marginalized at best. Many of my disabled friends would not be alive if it weren't for their parents and society thinking differently about the "natural cycle of things." This is not to say that we shouldn't look toward nature or history for ways of behaving and living sustainably. Rather, it is simply to say that we shouldn't forget that these traditions often grew out of paradigms of domination and oppression. As Nussbaum explains, human dominance and power asymmetry still exist even in a so-called state of nature.

Disability studies has been critiquing what medical discourse views as natural and normal for years. For decades disabled children and adults were pressured by the medical establishment to receive surgical treatment that could potentially decrease abnormal functionality (such as the functional use of a "deformed" limb) but increase a more "normal" appearance. This is still a common practice in regards to intersex children and other individuals whose "deformities" are seen as especially taboo. But perhaps an even more vivid example of how the medical profession's ideas of nature and normalcy affect disabled people and medical policy is in the current debate surrounding infanticide. Many arguments in support of infanticide point out that "in nature" disabled babies are often killed or left to die and that we should let "nature run her course"—meaning we should let the disabled baby die in peace or even help him or her to die. This opinion is grounded in the idea that it is simply *natural* to think disability is a bad thing—it is common sense, everyone knows it.

The disability community argues that impairment is not naturally a negative experience. This is not at all to say that being impaired does not have negative aspects that are very real and often difficult, but instead to say that cultural and political oppressions deeply effect and are entangled with nearly all suffering that surrounds being disabled. An inaccessible society that stereotypes and

misjudges impairment is very often far more frustrating than our bodies are. Stairs are no more natural than ramps. Disability oppression is not natural, and the idea that disability is a personal tragedy as opposed to an issue of social justice needs rectifying.

Impairment can offer many valuable insights and experiences to human society and culture. It is pointed out by disability activists and scholars that most people, if they live long enough, will experience disability at some point in their lives, or at least in old age. If this vulnerability of the human body was more acknowledged, perhaps disability and aging would be much less feared, as society would adapt and come to expect and prepare for disability. Of course, when most people think of disability as abnormal and in need of a cure, they don't think of their elderly grandparents; they think of those of us with curved spines, or no limbs. They think of the "freak of nature."

Nature is currently an acceptable framework from which to critique and classify disabled and animal bodies, whereas it is no longer an acceptable endpoint for discussions of race and gender. This double standard needs to be addressed and questioned. Discourses of normalcy and the argument of "common sense" are also commonly used to justify animal exploitation.¹⁸ In reevaluating what is natural and "normal" regarding disabled people, does disability studies not then ultimately demand a reevaluation of what is often said to be the "natural cycle of things" regarding human domination over animals? I argue that because disabled people and non-human animals (especially domesticated animals) are viewed as dependent, their treatment and place in society is more commonly considered within (and more deeply affected by) conventional notions of nature and normalcy than that of other populations.

In the second half of this essay I turn toward the question of animal rights, in particular, the debate over humane meat, to show more specifically how disability studies offers new ways to consider our responsibility toward nonhuman animals. The ethics of eating animal products is arguably the most pervasive and hotly contested form of animal exploitation, and I focus on the debates surrounding humane meat as the strongest and most compelling direction of the conversation.

It bears repetition that the biopolitical commitments, which were previously mandated by old-style racial hierarchy, persist in the form of common sense even after the languages of absolute cultural difference and genetic determinism start to take hold. The residual traces of imperial racism combine easily with mechanistic notions of culture and a deterministic organicism to form a deadly cocktail. These operations are no longer being exclusively conducted by the neo-Fascists and the ultra-Right. They have also been attractive to the aspirations of the social-democratic Left. Indeed, the populist metaphysics of “race,” nation, and identity fudges those increasingly fluid categories.

Once the fears of the host community, rather than racism, are identified as a substantive object of government and statecraft, race will have acquired the power to reconfigure the political field by revealing unforeseen connections that operate across the formal divisions of ideology and party. These developments are clearly visible through the prisms provided in Britain by politically motivated counterhistories of race, racism, and culture. The critical study of those formations can help to generate a new, anti-racist cartography of Europe addressed to the quality and character of the continent’s postcolonial predicament.

The convenient argument that some cultural differences are so profound that they cannot be bridged has become commonplace. It can be explained by the way that nationality gets blurred once “race” has become a matter of culture. That absence of clarity is telling. It suggests that anyone who makes a fuss about racism, past or present, is getting things out of proportion, engaging in witch-hunts, practicing empty moralism, or indulging in the immature outlooks of “loony leftism” and, above all, “political correctness.” From this perspective, the conceptual and semantic interconnections that have been established between the forms of language that produce “race,” “nation,” and “culture” as interchangeable, rather than networked terms are ruled irrelevant.

Because “race” *ought* (according to the tenets of liberalism) to be nothing, it is prematurely pronounced to be of no consequence whatsoever. Racism either disappears at this point or lingers on as a marginal issue, an essentially prepolitical event that should not be addressed by any government worthy of the name. To even suggest that it might be worthwhile to approach racism politically threatens a debasement of government and a travesty of justice. There is, in fact, no substantive problem here because racism requires no specific intervention beyond the worn-out rubrics of generic liberalism. Any fool knows that real, grown-up, joined-up governments cannot legislate the emotions of their populations. We are warned that any attempt to do so inclines them toward totalitarianism.

Arrayed against that type of argument is another disabling script. It bears the deep imprint of conditions and struggles over race and racism in North America. This orientation answers the liberal culture of denial by saying that “race” is not nothing but everything: a permanent and apparently inescapable feature of society. This avowedly radical assertion is not a tactical response to the complacent voices that regularly deny the most obvious manifestations of racial division and hierarchy. This position does not aim to promote recognition of the unstable potency of racism in economic, social, and political relations. It is more concerned with arguing that any aspiration to live outside of racialized bonds, codes, and structures of feeling is naïve, misplaced, foolish, or devious. It insists rightly that there is a racial ordering of the world, that we must comprehend it historically and endeavor to represent it analytically with an epistemological valence and scholarly rigor comparable to those more usually found in critical projects centered on class and gender. But before taking a stand against the patience required by bringing race into politics, this approach turns instead toward fatalism and resignation. It is noteworthy that this U.S.-centric discourse is animated not by a confrontation with racism(s) or even racialized hierarchy but by its extreme attachments to a reified notion of race. Race becomes above all an experiential and therapeutic question that identifies a zone of feeling and being that is considered to be emphatically prior to all merely political considerations. In this setting, a totemic concept of race is present but abstract. Sometimes it specifies visible differences lodged in or discovered on and around the body, but this attention to what can be seen does not exhaust it. In other moments, race becomes a signifier for generic problems of cultural plurality and translation.

Neither of these depressing but popular options is satisfactory. The first is complacent and essentially indifferent to the sufferings of those whose lives are still conditioned by western imperial and colonial power. The second is equally unsatisfying because it refuses the prospect of race as politics and opts instead to stay comfortably inside the safer areas where critical analysis is unnecessary and narcissistic expressions of feeling will always be sufficient. As far as the articulation of race with culture is concerned, these warring positions or tendencies are equally comfortable with absolutist notions of cultural particularity and diversity. That shared focus is put to diametrically opposed political uses.

These positions can only be answered by exploring the detailed unfolding of cultural formations. The aim of this is not to construct a history of simple hybridity to offset against the achievements of the homogenizers and purity seekers. Instead, local and specific interventions can contribute to a counterhistory of cultural relations and influences from which a new

understanding of multicultural Europe will doubtless eventually emerge. This negative work can discover and explore some of the emancipatory possibilities that are implicitly at stake in convivial culture but do not announce themselves, preferring to remain hidden and unpredictable. This choice is aligned with the ordinary, spontaneous antiracism that has also emerged intermittently. Its small triumphs bring real pleasure, but they can evaporate and count for little once invasive immigration has been constructed as an intractable problem with national dimensions.

At that point, hybrid urban cultures and cosmopolitan, creolized history go out of the window. Instead we get transported into the frozen realm of mythic time that has been shaped around the master analogy of immigration as a form of warfare. That unhappy, archaic domain is populated by the timeless, iconic ciphers of postcolonial melancholia: criminals, spongers, and their numberless alien offspring. Their presence manifests a racial order, which presents the problematic diversity that black settlers and strangers have inserted into Europe's political bodies as an effect of their simple, unchanging alien ways. Complexity, on the other hand, like history and indeed like the evolutionary momentum of development itself, is the apparent monopoly of those who are in possession of the precious solidarity that derives from cultural unanimity.

Justifying their pessimistic responses to the nightmare of looming multiculture leads policy makers to opine that it is "easier to feel solidarity with those who broadly share your values and way of life,"⁸ as if the assimilation of interwar Germany's Jews provided an obstacle rather than an incentive to their murder. If that strand of European history offers any insights into the present moment, which can be characterized by resurgent ultranationalism and neo-Fascism, it might suggest that much of the time, the anger and hatred that racisms promote can be triggered even by modest success in attempts at sharing "values and way of life" across the leaky barriers of race and absolute ethnicity.

Anti-racists are now obliged to judge where acceptable national feeling ends and xenophobic racism commences. We must find new courage to reflect on the history of political nationalism that has been entangled with the ideas of race, culture, and civilization and to understand how Europe's imperial and colonial dominance brought racisms and nationalisms together in ways that still affect present conditions. The hard work of postcolonial culture building encompasses several additional confrontations: The first of these is aimed at the realization of a more worthwhile liberalism. This variant might, for example, prepare to be profaned by systematic reflections upon its own colonial habits and implications.⁹ It might also be able to confront the impulses which specify racial, ethnic,

and national divisions in subtle patterns that are as potent as they are inferential. The second conflict involves an assault upon the pragmatic formulae that place both racism and antiracism outside of the political field, leaving them to be essentially private issues, matters of taste, preference, and, ultimately, of consumer or lifestyle choice. A third confrontation would perhaps culminate in a revised account of European modernisms and their complex relationship with colonial and imperial experiences at home and abroad. A fourth would be directed toward understanding the impact of black literature, culture, art, and music on European life, and in particular seeing how during the latter half of the twentieth century an appetite for various African American cultures was part of how Europe recomposed itself in the aftermath of Fascism.

These interpretative puzzles have been rendered more difficult to solve because the ground on which the ramshackle edifice of political antiracism was erected—largely, we should remember, by incomers and their supporters—has dwindled. That notable contribution to Europe's civic well-being and political health passes unremarked upon by those who babble instead about the endless conflict between local solidarity and alien diversity. Hasn't antiracism demanded more solid and supple forms of democracy? Couldn't a dynamic and worthwhile solidarity be articulated around the noble desire for racism to have no place in Europe's democratic political cultures?

Anyway, with hybrid culture on our side and postcolonial counterhistory at our disposal, antiracism should move out of its defensive and apologetic postures. Its aims are now being annexed by corporate interests that are a good deal less squeamish than governments about feeding the popular hunger for a world purged of racial conflicts. However, the market-driven pastiche of multiculturalism that is manipulated from above by commerce only appears compelling and attractive in the absence of governmental action and political initiatives organized from below.¹⁰ Most corporate attempts at ventriloquizing the desire to live lives that are not amenable to race coding have been ham-fisted. The betrayal of that utopia is obvious where racial types are reinscribed in the service of commercial reach rather than abolished in the name of human freedom. Meanwhile, the nonracial ideal is more likely to be at risk of being rendered banal by the carnival of heteroculture now at large in the metropolis.

As the implications of these large changes begin to dawn, we should acknowledge that the routinization of that cultural plurality does not mean that the work of antiracism is over. That project must go on because the wholesome, democratic cadences of nonracial nationalism are not being heard either as loudly or as frequently as their advocates had anticipated

they would be. In many instances, it would appear that the mere presence of new “waves” of immigrants is enough to silence the cheerleaders of tolerance, negative or positive. Faced with this degree of inertia, another battle ensues that requires us to be alert to the workings of political racism and able to apprehend “race” as a process of relation, imaginary kinship, and real narration rather than some badge worn on or lodged deep inside the body. Without making any concessions to the reification of “race” and ethnic identity, we must try to find ways to take the divisive dehumanizing power of race thinking more seriously than in the past. In other words, we must be prepared to identify racism as a specific and significant object, to comprehend it as a part of a web of discourse, to see that it has a knowable history, and to appreciate its social implication in the exercise of the biopolitical powers that have damaged European democracy before and can still compromise it. Taking racist discourse and cultural intermixture that seriously involves scholarly as well as political tasks. It demonstrates that there can be no excuses for failure to become intimate with the history of Europe’s modern invention and projection of humanity in racially divided, antagonistic, and hierarchical encampments. A command of that contested domestic history is all the more important as the living memory of the Third Reich dies out and ceases to form the constellation under which critical, oppositional, reflexive work can take place. The automatic assumption that European history will be told best and most powerfully when it is made to coincide with the fixed borders of its national states will also have to be disposed of.

In drawing the new map of Britain in Europe that we will need to accomplish these tasks, we must be prepared to make detours into the imperial and colonial zones where the catastrophic power of race thinking was first institutionalized and its distinctive anthropologies first put to the test, above all, in the civilizing storms of colonial war. Making that long-forgotten history coextensive with the moral lives of European nations is essential, but a viable antiracism cannot end with the sense of shame that story ought to produce. That redemptive movement must be able to pass beyond a compensatory acknowledgment of Europe’s imperial crimes and the significance of its colonies as places of governmental innovation and experiment. The empires were not simply out there—distant terminal points for trading activity where race consciousness could grow—in the torrid zones of the world at the other end of the colonial chain. Imperial mentalities were brought back home long before the immigrants arrived and altered economic, social, and cultural relations in the core of Europe’s colonial systems. This shift in standpoint makes those imperial dynamics much more significant in the constitution of national

states than they have been allowed to be before. It sets a number of challenges before historians of the postcolonial present.

We have seen that the principled opposition to nationalism that was so important to Socialist and Feminist traditions has faded away with the ashes of the Cold War. Scholastic orthodoxy is now keen to reinterpret the xenophobia, nationalism, and ethnic absolutism of today's racists in benign ways. If their hateful responses are not immediately intelligible as a grumbling anticapitalism, then they must be heard as a new anxiety, something induced by the experience of deindustrialization or by the fear of downward mobility and the growing inequality that has been prompted by turbo-capitalism's merciless destruction of once-proud welfare states.

We have already heard some scholastic voices argue that racism is not a substantive issue for Europe's future. Others add that culturalist and nationalist racism is not proper racism after all but rather a veiled protest against the rupture of Europe's post-1945 settlement by unwanted mass immigration. The either-or-ism of these shallow explanations is deeply problematic. A more useful approach would seek to understand why it is through the political language of race that these destabilizing statements of dissent and fear become expressible.

Faced with strangers seeking entry to Europe's fortress, today's civic and ethnic nationalisms reply negatively in one hostile voice. If we are to situate, interpret, and then answer that uniform rejection, we must be careful about returning to what we can call a "migrancy problematic." The mistaken choice involved in centering work on migration introduces a risk of collusion with the cheap consensus that ties immigration and social policy to the nebulous discussions of diversity, multiculturalism and "political correctness" that I have already criticized. The figure of the immigrant is part of the very intellectual mechanism that holds us—as postcolonial Europeans, black and white, indeterminate and unclassifiable—hostage. Its prominence returns our discourse, against our will, to the idea that immigration and its discontents contain the key to understanding all the bids for recognition, belonging, and autonomy that have been made recently by the original incomers and their locally born descendants. This should not mean, of course, that the history of migration is to be abandoned before it has even been produced. It means instead that fascination with the figure of the migrant must be made part of Europe's history rather than its contemporary geography. The postcolonial migrant needs to be recognized as an anachronistic figure bound to the lost imperial past. We need to conjure up a future in which black and brown Europeans stop being seen as migrants. Migration becomes doubly unhelpful

when it alone supplies an explanation for the conflicts and opportunities of this transitional moment in the life of Europe's polities, economies, and cultural ensembles. I prefer to say that if there has to be one single concept, a solitary unifying idea around which the history of postcolonial settlement in twentieth-century Europe should revolve, that place of glory should be given not to migrancy but to racism. The racisms of Europe's colonial and imperial phase preceded the appearance of migrants inside the European citadel. It was racism and not diversity that made their arrival into a problem. This is more than just a question of perspective. There are significant political interests at stake. Where migrancy supplies the decisive element, the door gets opened to patterns of explanation that ultimately present immigrants as the authors of their own misfortune. The violence and hostility regularly directed against them by their reluctant hosts can then be excused. That depressed and depressing view must be answered with a different kind of analysis, to which mutable, itinerant culture is central. This approach is premised upon a commitment to make modern racism part of the moral landscape through which today's political processes must move.

The outrages, deaths, and dogged campaigns of resistance and recognition so evident during the recent years have created just enough hope to sustain a fragile belief that a restored and healthier Britain might one day teach the rest of Europe something about what will have to be done in order to live peacefully with difference, to manage the hatreds directed against postcolonial and sanctuary-seeking peoples, and to contain the murderous mischief of organized neo-Nazis, ultranationalists, and other racist groups. This hope suggests that there are other stories about "race" and racism to be told apart from the endless narrative of immigration as invasion and the melancholic blend of guilt, denial, laughter, and homogenizing violence that it has precipitated. Those emancipatory interruptions can perhaps be defined by a liberating sense of the banality of intermixture and the subversive ordinariness of this country's convivial cultures in which "race" is stripped of meaning and racism, as it fades, becomes only an aftereffect of long-gone imperial history rather than a sign of Europe's North American destiny.

Aside from its parochial obligations to the rebirth of English tolerance and generosity, I hope it has been clear that this line of argument is also intended to be a modest contribution to the making of the planetary humanism discussed earlier. The newness of that mentality resides precisely in the ways that it is systematically opened to the difficult work of understanding of how "race thinking" configured and distorted the exclusionary humanisms of the past. That detour through modern histories of

suffering must be made mandatory. It provides an invaluable means to locate ethical and political principles that can guide the work of building more just and equitable social relations. This is not antiracism of the type that says we must learn to love and value human differences rather than fear and misrecognize them. It is a new project because it is prepared to break with the notion that racial differences are a self-evident, immutable fact of political life. It refuses the idea that that this order of difference is somehow necessary to the very stability of our conflicted world. Instead, it suggests that the reification of race must be challenged if effective work against racism is to be accomplished. It seeks to turn the tables on all purity seekers, whoever they may be, to force them to account for their phobia about otherness and their violent hostility in the face of the clanging, self-evident sameness of suffering humankind. The version of multiculturalism that takes shape at this point is not then a lifestyle option. Its dissident value is confirmed everywhere in the chaotic pleasures of the convivial postcolonial urban world.

These arguments are marked by the desire to make it as easy for people to imagine a world without racial differences as it is for them currently to imagine the end of the world. The commitment to being recognized as a black European proclaimed here is hopefully part of a larger transition that may take us beyond racialized and racializable categories of all kinds. If it is currently impossible to acquire or even imagine that variety of “postethnic” European identity, that state of affairs is not only a result of the racism that still blocks the paths toward belonging but of the enduring power of racial identities as such. The abortive discussions that began at the 2001 Durban conference on racism and other forms of inequality and shut down prematurely in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington may yet prove to be the beginning of a truly global opportunity to grasp the damage that “race” and racism have done to democracy and to hope alike. We do not know where this planetary conversation will take us or even whether the concept of racism will ultimately be an adequate vehicle for the cosmopolitan histories of hierarchy and inequality we will need. Historical analyses of racial hierarchy that overflow the fading boundaries of national states are essential to the credibility of that adventurous project. The recent history of Britain shows that it does not lag behind the United States in racial politics but has embarked on an altogether different path toward the goal of multicultural democracy. The lessons that have been learned and the pleasures that have been found along that route have not been brought into politics or government. I hope it does not sound melodramatic to say that the future of Europe depends upon what can now be made of that legacy.

'Whities to the back' : Hoe het beste de plank mislaan

Privilege-analyses en delen van whiteness studies geven een beter inzicht in hoe racisme zich verschillend manifesteert, vooral bij witte middenklasse, (cis) hetero-mannen. Maar de nadruk op bewustwording en representatie verkleinen de ruimte voor het analyseren van macht en het incorporeren van gedeelde verledens. Bij protest via of op universiteiten (als we eerlijk zijn: voornamelijk elite-ruimtes, vandaar die eerdergenoemde 'proletarian check') is het disciplineren van witten bij sommige white privilege-aanhangers erg populair.

Het richt het focus op onthullen (*expose*) waarbij persoonlijke ervaring en *gedrag* centraal staan: 'check your privilege' is vaak losgekoppeld van gezamenlijke acties. Zo worden witten soms uitgesloten of juist naar voren geschoven: tijdens een mars 'whities to the back' maar als er politiegeweld is 'whities to the front'. Witten kunnen geen antiracistische kameraden zijn want... ze zijn wit. Daarom wordt de term 'ally' verkozen boven 'kameraad'. Zo mogen we constant teleurgesteld zijn. Dit is een kosmos waarin we onze bril omgekeerd dragen – wat groot (mogelijk) is lijkt klein en wat klein (onmogelijk) is lijkt groot. En het wordt competitief, het opent de deur naar het fenomeen *oppression-olympics*.

Ook sommige witten propageren dit idee enthousiast. Tijdens een antiracisme-conferentie in Rotterdam stond op het programma 'De Witte is het Probleem'.¹⁸ De witte spreker had het voornamelijk over de individuele verantwoordelijkheid van witte mensen. Omdat ze geen analyse bood over hoe racisme structureel relateert aan sociaal-economische onderdrukking, of hoe cultureel racisme zich verhoudt tot institutionele formaties, werden de beschrijvingen allegorisch voor schuld. Dit is een recept voor passiviteit. Het is jammer dat een nieuwe generatie activisten hiermee moet opgroeien, dit als norm ervaren. Ik merk dat er door de (vooral op social media) disciplinerende witten of zelfs andere migranten te bang zijn om zich uit te spreken en pro-actieve engagement of zelfs kritische discussie voorkomen wordt.

Maar een bril kun je afzetten. In ons activisme kunnen we zelf *keuzes maken: welke* radicale nalatenschap willen we voortzetten? Privilegetheorieën en de daaraan gelinkte terminologie en omgangsstijlen zijn eigenlijk slappe aftreksels van de radicale dekolonisatie politiek, zoals dat opkwam tijdens inspirerende bewegingen of als deel van de anti-imperialistische nalatenschap, te vinden bij Frantz Fanon (vooral zijn werk geschreven in Algerije); of de ongelooflijk inspirerende Amílcar Cabral tegen het Portugese kolonialisme in Guinee-Bissau; maar ook deels in het werk van de Libanese communist Mehdi Amel (ook wel de *Arab Gramsci genoemd*)¹⁹, en natuurlijk Walter Rodney, de Guyanese historicus die het baanbrekende *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* schreef.²⁰

De strategie van collectieve strijd en geloof in eenheid zijn kernwaarden van de zwarte militanten. Om Fred Hampton van de Black Panther Party te parafraseren: waarom de strategieën van de onderdrukker nadoen? Waarom onszelf in kleine compartimenten opsplitsen en nieuwe hiërarchieën bedenken? Echt verzet betekent de volledige logica, niet alleen de producten, van je onderdrukker te weigeren. *Niet* worden doodgeschoten door de racistische politie of *niet* worden geweigerd bij de deur van een club omdat je Marokkaan bent is allesbehalve een privilege. Ook voor de Panthers was dit een bevochten keuze, waarbij het in essentie niet alleen gaat

om kleur, maar juist om een linkse inhoud. Legitimiteit reduceren tot kleur is het ontkennen van onze eigen complexiteit. Dit zien we weleens in definities van intersectionaliteit waarbij ontkend wordt waar linkse zwarte feministen voor stonden.²¹

Dit zal vroeg of laat leiden tot een hiërarchie van onderdrukking en essentialiseren van 'schuld'. Want als de witten niets meer te zeggen hebben, moet de volgende rang worden aangepakt: de zogenaamde 'bruinen', Marokkanen, Turken, soms zelfs moslims als algemene referentie. Dit kan door een Turkse vrouw op mensenrechtenschendingen tegen zwarte migranten in Libië of een Marokkaan van historische collaboratie door moslims in slavernij aan te spreken. In abstracte zin kan de onderdrukte in de ene context een onderdrukker zijn in een andere context. Maar deze vergelijkingen sluipen onze activistische discussies in als generaliserende categorieën, met als bizar gevolg dat een van de meest uitgekotste minderheidsgroepen in Nederland tot onderdrukker wordt geabstraheerd. Dit doet ons ook beseffen dat categorieën 'zwart' en 'wit' uit de VS geïmporteerd en universeel gemaakt worden, ze worden in Nederland gestandaardiseerd in een context waar de historische en materiële intersectie een andere is. Zo worden gradaties in onderdrukking genegeerd en blijft de witte suprematie van het neoliberalisme buiten schot.

Alleen in een omgekeerd universum worden bruine dictators in de ene context gelijkgesteld aan de meest gehate minderheidsgroep in een andere. Het is net zo kortzichtig als een willekeurige Antilliaan voor islamofobie uitmaken, of Surinamers anti-Marokkaans noemen omdat sommigen op de PVV stemmen en rechts-populisten de ene minderheid weleens als 'goede' voorbeeld tegen de ander inzetten. Een vergelijkbare bekrompenheid zagen we tijdens een antiracismedemo toen een groep van de route afweek ter hoogte van De Dokwerker omdat Joden ook slavenhouders waren. Terwijl het protest Joodse slachtoffers van uitroeiing herdacht, werd dit 'white dominance over black history.'²²

Zo'n neerwaartse spiraal ontstond tijdens een seminar op de Universiteit van Amsterdam afgelopen november. Een paar critici beschuldigden een Turkse spreker (Bilge Sirma) van *white-washing* haar werk '*silencing black voices*'. Meelezers en bezoekers wezen erop dat de spreker een vrouw van kleur is, stelden voor dat we de strijd tegen onderdrukking *samen* moeten aangaan *terwijl* we verschillende 'privileges' hebben. Dat werd op de Facebookpagina van het evenement beantwoord met spot en stereotiepe GIFs.

Tijdens het seminar sprak een bezoeker, een van de weinige progressieve academici van kleur, zich kritisch uit over de wijze waarop de Turkse spreker werd behandeld. Ook op Facebook gaf ze aan dat de term 'poc' en 'black' inclusief zijn. Maar als antwoord werd ze beschuldigd van anti-zwart racisme. Het meest opvallend was dat mensen van kleur op de meest essentialistische wijze werden bejegend, precies zoals we dat van de dominante witte kant van het politieke spectrum opgediend krijgen. Er werd een semantische scheiding – op basis van een al even kunstmatige muur tussen vrouwen van kleur – opgetrokken. In dit model worden verschillende oorzaken, identiteiten en tradities gereduceerd tot huidskleur en een chauvinistische verdeling tussen mensen van kleur gereproduceerd.

Maar naast de teleurstellend politieke inhoud zien we ook het negatieve effect op hoe en tegen wie we activistische instrumenten inzetten. Het seminar werd geboycot. Deze actie moest volgens de critici de organisatoren van het seminar en de gast zelf tot reflectie aanzetten. Boycot, of 'no platforming' is een zeer specifieke tactiek en gereserveerd voor fascistten. Dit doen we onder strikte voorwaarden

juist uit zelfbescherming en door hier laks mee omgaan ondergraaf je jezelf. Onze instituten zullen iedere kans om ons monddood te maken aangrijpen (deze pogingen zien we bijvoorbeeld bij debatten *tegen* extreem rechtse haatzaaiers of *voor* Palestina).

Het netto resultaat was dat de spreekster, een vrouw van kleur, het woord werd ontnomen – ze was zichtbaar ontdaan en vertelde achteraf ook dat ze het een vreselijke ervaring vond, ze had zowel kritiek op de organisatie als hoe ze werd behandeld door de critici. Niet alleen werd boycot als instrument verkeerd ingezet, ook de kritiek daarop van andere mensen van kleur werd afgekaatst met het verweer: 'je legt zwarte stemmen het zwijgen op,' Dit heeft de subtekst dat de ene persoon van kleur meer legitimiteit heeft dan de ander. Maar de wedervraag: 'welke zwarte stemmen?' maakt al snel duidelijk dat het een gelegenheidsargument is, natuurlijk is er helemaal niet één soort zwarte stem. Zelfs op de betreffende UvA bijeenkomst waren zwarte vrouwen aanwezig die de spreekster wel wilden horen. De vraag is of deze vervelende confrontaties ook openingen kunnen worden. We hebben de keuze om voorbeelden uit reactionaire situaties te vergeten en juist die van revolutionaire ervaringen voort te zetten. Progressieve antiracisten bepleiten al vele decennia een radicale transformatie. DuBois en CLR James wilden juist te begrijpen op welke wijze zwart-witte eenheid ontstaat, zodat we lessen kunnen trekken, *juist* wanneer het uitzonderingen zijn, om die vervolgens te generaliseren.

Radicale Transformaties

...en als ik het over de massa's heb, heb ik het over de witte massa's, ik heb het over de zwarte massa's en de bruine massa's, en ook de gele massa's. We moeten het feit onder ogen zien dat sommige mensen zeggen dat je vuur het beste met vuur bestrijdt, maar wij zeggen dat je het vuur het beste blust met water. Wij zeggen dat je racisme niet met racisme bestrijdt. We gaan racisme met solidariteit bestrijden. Wij zeggen dat je het kapitalisme niet met zwart kapitalisme bestrijdt; je bestrijdt kapitalisme met socialisme. – Fred Hampton, 1969

Soms wordt de notie intersectionaliteit ingezet als substituut voor praktijk van solidariteit. Eén van de gevolgen is een verdeling van prioriteiten (onderdrukking) en soms zelfs cultureel essentialisme. Maar identiteit is geen absoluut gegeven. De tweedeling tussen zwart en wit leidt ertoe onze niet-witte complexiteiten te negeren en interne hiërarchieën te ontkennen. Ironisch genoeg draaide de heropleving van intersectionaliteit in de jaren tachtig om een rechtszaak aangespannen door een zwarte vrouw vanwege discriminatie als zwarte en als vrouw. De rechter wees het pleidooi af met het argument dat ze moest kiezen op welke basis ze de aanklacht van discriminatie wilde voortzetten; het kon niet allebei. Kimberlé Crenshaw bracht intersectionaliteit als *alternatief* aan, om de realiteit van meerdere en overlappende onderdrukkingen te begrijpen, niet andersom om te fragmenteren.²³

Het racisme *ervaren* is maar een deel van het verhaal. Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor schrijft in haar boek *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* over de overlap tussen armoede en racisme, de belangrijkste relatie in de VS.²⁴ Ondanks dat ook zij racisme nooit helemaal te boven komen, spelen de zwarte elites een duidelijk andere rol. Die tegenstrijdigheid was zichtbaar in de opkomst van Black Lives Matter, in reactie op politiegeweld onder een zwarte president. Nooit eerder was de paradox zo pijnlijk, en daarom werd een analyse gebaseerd op huidskleur zo limiterend.

Ook in de zogenoemde 'dekoloniale kritiek' leidde intersectionalisme tot kunstmatige scheidingen tussen kapitalisme en racisme. De suggestie dat antikapitalisme de focus is voor socialisten (voor wit) en antiracisme de hoofdprioriteit voor zwart activisme was bijvoorbeeld de kernstrategie dat het online-initiatief Decolonise the Mind poseerde.²⁵ Dat winkelt dus selectief in het werk van CLR James, WEB Du Bois, tot Angela Davis, Cedric Robinson en Manning Marable. Dat veroorzaakt een treurig geheugenverlies over deze zwarte stemmen in onze beweging. Daarom zijn de eerdere ontdekkingen en bijdragen van zwarte radicale denkers, en de herontdekking ervan zoals dankzij het belangrijke werk van de Black Archives in Amsterdam, zo belangrijk.

Dat witte antiracisten zich niet kunnen committeren omdat ze *schuld* dragen door hun 'privileges' in een racistisch systeem benadrukt *persoonlijke* verantwoordelijkheid. Witte BN'ers die zich uitspraken tegen Zwarte Piet werden afgedaan als 'witte progressieven die dankbaarheid zoeken', en 'net doen of je antiracistisch bent maar intussen je eigen carrière vooruithelpen.' Zo wordt solidariteit gereframed als instrument waarmee je 'ownership' (eigendom) van iemand anders haar strijd claimt, alsof het slechts een manier is om onderdrukten het zwijgen op te leggen. Zulk cynisme moedigt uiteindelijk vooral rivaliteit aan en, zoals Edward Saïd zo scherp zag: 'degraderen de verschillende ervaring(en) van anderen naar een mindere status.'²⁶

De overdreven focus op afscheiding en kleur was *precies* waarom wit privilege niet aansloeg in de jaren zestig. Assata Shakur schreef bijvoorbeeld: 'Een van de belangrijkste dingen die de Partij deed, was heel duidelijk maken wie de vijand was: niet de witte mensen, maar de kapitalistische, imperialistische onderdrukkers. Zij haalden de zwarte bevrijdingsstrijd uit een nationale context en plaatsten die in een internationale context.'²⁷

Ook *postcolonial studies* erfde de kunstmatige klasse-versus-race scheiding. Rahul Rao schreef over de kritieken die ongeïnteresseerd zijn in *repairing differences*.²⁸ Hij legt uit dat, zoals vaak met luidruchtig bravado – 'het kan mij niet schelen, we doen het op onze eigen voorwaarden' – de zwakte van onze beweging reflecteert. Hij vraagt: wat is dan eigenlijk 'het politieke nut van het focussen op zo'n onbetwistbaar en onoverbrugbaar verschil, ter relatieve verwaarlozing van moeilijker en herstellend werk van het vinden van manieren om samen over verschillende vormen van onrecht te denken?'

Misschien het meest vooruitstrevende voorbeeld van onderlinge solidariteit was de Rainbow Coalition die in 1969 door de Black Panthers onder leiding van Fred Hampton werd opgezet in Chicago. Deze coalitie bracht groepen en organisaties met verschillende etnische achtergronden samen om voor hun gedeelde belangen te vechten. De Rainbow Coalition markeerde een sprong vooruit, omdat de beweging steeds progressiever werd in haar betoog voor *cross-racial unity*. Dat was het allergevaarlijkste dat een kapitalistische staat zich kan voorstellen; zelfs niet-zwarten konden lid worden. Bob Lee herinnerde zich: '*We wisten dat onze organisatie het niet lang zou uithouden en we wisten dat we snel moesten zijn. We hielden onszelf niet voor de gek.*'²⁹ Inderdaad werd Hampton vermoord en stortte de coalitie in elkaar.

Zijn dood was deel van een patroon: raciale onderdrukking gekoppeld aan imperialisme en kapitalisme, en daarmee een enorm publiek bereiken. Ook Malcolm X werd vermoord kort nadat hij zei: 'Je kunt geen kapitalisme hebben zonder racisme.' Maar denk ook aan Martin Luther King in 1967 'Het kwaad van het kapitalisme is even reëel als het kwaad van militarisme en het kwaad van racisme' (Southern Christian Leader-

ship Conference); 'Het feit is dat het kapitalisme is gebouwd op de uitbuiting en het lijden van zwarte slaven en blijft gedijen op de uitbuiting van de armen – zowel zwart als wit, zowel hier als in het buitenland' (The Three Evils of Society). Dit soort sociaal-economische verbanden tussen racisme en kapitalisme maakte hen vijanden van zowel zwarte separatisten als racisten. Dit is het soort kritiek vanuit linkse zwarte hoek op witte/privilege theorie. Het is dan ook frappant dat al deze strijders worden geclaimd en willekeurig geciteerd over de huidige meningsverschillen heen.

Sivanandan schreef terecht dat witte navelstaarderij '*witten opsloot in een modus van zelfkastijding*'. Toen witte activisten hem vroegen of en hoe ze met de antiracisme strijd konden meedoen antwoordde hij: 'Wie je bent is wat je *doet*.'

Conclusie

*We moesten ontdekken dat moed en toewijding niet genoeg zijn. Om een bevrijdingsstrijd te winnen moet je zowel de weg kennen als de wil hebben – Assata Shakur, 1987*³⁰

Wit privilege geeft ons een strategie die onze potentiële kracht verzwakt, en onze potentiële zwakheden versterkt. Morele kritiek heeft zin, bijvoorbeeld als we steun mobiliseren, en emoties zijn nodig. Maar als materiële verandering niet het doel blijft, verandert het moralisme in een pacificerend pessimisme. Het idee 'ally' (*passieve* witte steun) wordt dan een *self-fulfilling prophecy*: als witte mensen zich vooral moeten bezighouden met het checken van hun privilege, kunnen ze niets doen. Dat wordt weer 'bewijs' dat ze zo weinig praktische verandering brengen. De aantrekkingskracht van simplisme daargelaten, leidt het tot een armoedige theorie vol voldongen feiten.

Politiek en activisme zijn ook *persoonlijke* aangelegenheden. Als je vandaag iemand kleineert of uitsluit, dan verlies je een medestander. Dit is eigen aan politiek bedrijven in de publieke arena. Assata Shakur ageerde in haar tijd over de 'machocultus' in delen van de beweging: '*Ik vertelde hen dat ik de voorkeur gaf aan de beleefde en respectvolle manier waarop burgerrechtenwerkers en zwarte moslims met de mensen spraken, in plaats van de arrogante 'fuck you'-stijl van het BPP-kantoor van Harlem ... Ik haat arrogantie, of het nu wit is of paars of zwart.*'³¹

De plicht van waardigheid en de oproep tot eenheid liggen in elkaars verlengde. De afwezigheid van onderling respect en de hype van sociale media (waarin we worden opgejaagd om mee te doen in het verzamelen van zoveel mogelijk likes, in een politieke cultuur van competitie, gericht op individuele prestaties en publiciteit), gaan hand in hand. Dat verraadt ons zwakke historische kader, waarbij we onterecht denken we dat we – naast super stoer – geweldig origineel zijn. Onlangs gaf Essed antwoord op de vraag wat ze graag wilde meegeven aan activisten. 'Ik denk vooral *waardigheid*'. Dat leek me een bewuste positieve interventie. Shakur en Essed lijken ieder op hun eigen manier proberen te zeggen: *we willen erkenning, maar niet ten koste van anderen*.

Dit is geen morele kritiek, want waardigheid en respect hebben juist ook te maken met mijn eerdere punt over onze keus om onze tradities te herontdekken en deze voort te zetten. Het is belangrijk om te beseffen dat anderen voor ons de weg hebben geopend, en dat deze voorgangers daar een zware prijs voor hebben betaald. Voor veel van de activisten in Nederland van in de afgelopen 15 tot 20

jaar betekende hun stellingname tegen Pim Fortuyn of Van Gogh en tegen de backlash van 9/11, dat zij hun carrières niet kon ontplooiën en vaak dat hun persoonlijke reputatie kapotgemaakt werd. Sommigen zijn het land uitgegaan, anderen raakten uitgeput.

Zonder de ervaringen van de jaren 2000 kunnen we onze strijd van vandaag niet begrijpen. Net zoals we zonder de inzet van zwarte activisten in de jaren zeventig en tachtig de opkomst van strijd tegen Zwarte Piet sinds 2015 nooit volledig zullen begrijpen. Deze verhalen en ervaringen zijn onze historische wortels, ze geven ons het uithoudingsvermogen om door te zetten. Ze hadden een ander vocabulaire en soms andere prioriteiten, maar datzelfde zullen volgende generaties over de huidige generatie zeggen.

Terwijl Esseds en Wekkers boeken als populaire werken worden omarmd, wordt er selectief uit geplukt. Terwijl de witte zelfgenoegzaamheid (of *onschuld*) wordt bekritiseerd, wordt het idee van solidariteit en zmv (zwart-migrant-vluchteling, de Nederlandse variant van *women of color*) afgewezen: het spreekwoordelijke '*having the cake and eating it.*' Zoals ik aangaf zijn er verschillende politieke en ideologische opvattingen hierover en zij vormen deel van onze trotse nalatenschap. De afgelopen jaren worden discussies op het scherpst van de snede gevoerd door linkse mensen van kleur; er zijn meerdere interessante publieke interventies geïnitieerd³² in innovatieve outlets voor en door mensen van kleur zoals Nikhil Singh, Michael Dawson en Rahul Rao.³³ Dat kan in Nederland ook.

En dat moet ook. Maar we hebben veel tegenwind. Steun voor antiracismecampagnes is zwak. Soms gaan witte progressieven en liberalen ons 'whitesplainen' wat racisme wel of niet is. En soms komt antiracisme uit de ene mondhoek en racisme uit de andere. Recent zagen we bijvoorbeeld hoe Anne Fleur Dekker aanhaakte bij racistische stigma's om enkele activisten van kleur vals te beschuldigen van antisemitisme en vervolgens loog dat zij uit Comité 21 Maart gezet zou zijn.³⁴

Dit is per slot van rekening de cognitieve dissonantie van de Europese intelligentsia die zichzelf als immuun voor kritiek beschouwt. We moeten dat als antiracisten niet nadoen. We zijn beter. We zijn kritischer. We zijn sterker.

We moeten daarom onze meningsverschillen publiekelijk en in de geest van kameraadschap delen: dan lopen we niet het risico om tegen elkaar uitgespeeld te worden. Intellectuele eerlijkheid versterkt onze politiek. Daarbij kunnen we actief samenwerken in een gezamenlijk front tegen alle onderdelen van dit systeem dat privileges creëert voor een kleine minderheid die door dat systeem profiteren van de meerderheid. Shakur had het over 'verantwoording voor elkaar en naar elkaar' in dat proces. Constructieve kritiek is belangrijk: 'zonder dat hebben mensen de neiging om te verdrinken in hun fouten, niet om ervan te leren.'³⁵

Het gaat bij socialisten ten slotte vooral om *hoe* de logica van kapitaal, macht, en de daaraan gekoppelde maatschappelijke waarden en normen, ongelijkheid (re)produceren. Het gaat er hier dus om waar we (samen) de zwakste schakel moeten vinden in onze strijd. Hierdoor is het doelgericht, en ligt de focus bijvoorbeeld vaak op eenheidsstrijd; zonder enige naïviteit over de koppigheid van racisme en de diepgewortelde klassenverschillen.

Onze interpretaties beïnvloeden onze strategie, en zoals we zagen, op termijn ook ons gedrag. Ook daarom hebben we elkaar nodig. Radicaal zijn zou synoniem moeten zijn voor *inclusief*, en voorbij onze eigen, persoonlijke, strijd gaan. Gelukkig gebeurt

dit ook, dit zien we toen activisten uit Palestina, Ferguson, Johannesburg en de Standing Rock elkaar virtueel omarmden. Dat zou ook veel meer onze focus moeten zijn, want waarom doen we dit anders allemaal? Ik begon over Sivanandan, en het lijkt me goed om met hem te eindigen: 'The people we write for are the people we fight for.'

Noten

18. Combahee River Collective, op. Cit.
19. Marjan Boelsma (2014), 'De witte is het probleem', *Joop.nl*, 27 oktober.
20. Vijay Pashad (2014), 'The Arab Gramsci', *Frontline*, 21 maart.
21. Zie bijvoorbeeld ook youtu.be/oMztN0Zdwno
22. Sharon Smith (2013), 'Black feminism and intersectionality', *International Socialist Review* 91.
23. Ewout van den Berg (2014), 'Socialisten en de strijd tegen racisme', *Socialisme.nu*, 10 december.
24. Bruce A. Dixon (2018), 'Intersectionality is a Hole. Afro-Pessimism is a Shovel. We Need to Stop Digging' Black Agenda Report, 25 januari.
25. Daniel Denvir (2016) 'Scholar Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor on the "exciting" Movement for Black Lives platform' *Salon*, 24 augustus.
26. Sandew Hira (2016), 'Gekleurde empowerment is noodzaak voor bevrijding' *Socialisme.nu*. 7 juni.
en Peyman Jafari (2106), 'Racisme is verbonden met kapitalisme', idem.
27. Edward Saïd (1986), 'Intellectuals in the Post-Colonial World' *Salmagundi* 70:7. 44-64
28. Assata Shakur (1987), *An Autobiography*. Zed Books. 203
29. Rahul Rao (2017), 'Recovering Reparative Readings of Postcolonialism and Marxism', *Critical Sociology* 43:4-5. 587-98
30. Jacobi E. Williams (2017) 'An Arc of Solidarity: Remembering Bob Lee (1942-2017)' *Viewpoint Magazine*. 29 maart.
31. Assata Shakur, op. Cit. 242
32. Idem. 204, 218
33. Bill Mullen (2013), 'Is there a white skin privilege?' *Socialistworker.org* 30 oktober.
34. Nikhil Pal Singh (2005), *Black is a Country. Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy*. Harvard UP.
Michael C. Dawson (1995), *Behind the Mule. Race and Class in African-American Politics*. Princeton UP
35. Ewoud Butter (2018), 'Abdou Menehbi: "Iedereen is op 18 maart welkom om te demonstreren tegen racisme"', *Republiek Allochtonië*. 15 februari.
35. Assata Shakur, op. Cit. 267



**ACCOMPLICES
NOT ALLIES**

**ABOLISHING THE ALLY
INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX**

**AN INDIGENOUS
PERSPECTIVE**

ACCOMPLICES NOT ALLIES

AN INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE & PROVOCATION

Version 2 - 5/02/2014

This provocation is intended to intervene in some of the current tensions around solidarity/support work as the current trajectories are counter-liberatory from my perspective. Special thanks to DS in Phoenix for convos that lead to this 'zine and all those who provided comments/questions/disagreements. Don't construe this as being for "white young middle class allies", just for paid activists, non-profits, or as a friend said, "downwardly-mobile anarchists or students." There are many so-called "allies" in the migrant rights struggle who support "comprehensive immigration reform" which furthers militarization of Indigenous lands.

The ally industrial complex has been established by activists who's careers depend on the "issues" they work to address. These nonprofit capitalists advance their careers off the struggles they ostensibly support. They often work in the guise of "grassroots" or "community-based" and are not necessarily tied to any organization. They build organizational or individual capacity and power, establishing themselves comfortably among the top ranks in their hierarchy of oppression as they strive to become the ally "champions" of the most oppressed. While the exploitation of solidarity and support is nothing new, the commodification and exploitation of allyship is a growing trend in the activism industry.

Anyone who concerns themselves with anti-oppression struggles and collective liberation has at some point either participated in workshops, read 'zines, or been parts of a deep discussions on how to be a "good" ally. You can now pay hundreds of dollars to go to esoteric institutes for an allyship certificate in anti-oppression. You can go through workshops and receive an allyship badge. In order to commodify struggle it must first be objectified. This is exhibited in how "issues" are "framed" & "branded." Where struggle is commodity, allyship is currency.





Direct action is really the best and may be the only way to learn what it is to be an accomplice.

We're in a fight, so be ready for confrontation and consequence.

Ally has also become an identity, disembodied from any real mutual understanding of support.

The term ally has been rendered ineffective and meaningless.

Accomplices not allies.

ac·com·plice

noun: accomplice; plural noun: accomplices

1. a person who helps another commit a crime.

There exists a fiercely unrelenting desire to achieve total liberation, with the land and, together.

At some point there is a “we”, and we most likely will have to work together. This means, at the least, formulating mutual understandings that are not entirely antagonistic, otherwise we may find ourselves, our desires, and our struggles, to be incompatible.

There are certain understandings that may not be negotiable. There are contradictions that we must come to terms with and certainly we will do this on our own terms.

But we need to know who has our backs, or more appropriately: who is with us, at our sides?

The risks of an ally who provides support or solidarity (usually on a temporary basis) in a fight are much different than that of an accomplice. When we fight back or forward, together, becoming complicit in a struggle towards liberation, we are accomplices. Abolishing allyship can occur through the criminalization of support and solidarity.

While the strategies and tactics of asserting (or abolishing depending on your view) social power and political power may be diverse, there are some hard lessons that could bear not replicating.

Consider the following to be a guide for identifying points of intervention against the ally industrial complex.

“Salvation aka Missionary Work & Self Therapy”

Allies all too often carry romantic notions of oppressed folks they wish to “help.” These are the ally “saviors” who see victims and tokens instead of people.

This victimization becomes a fetish for the worst of the allies in forms of exotification, manarchism, 'splainning, POC sexploitation, etc. This kind of relationship generally fosters exploitation between both the oppressed and oppressor.

The ally and the allied-with become entangled in an abusive relationship. Generally neither can see it until it's too late. This relationship can also digress into co-dependency which means they have robbed each other of their own power. Ally "saviors" have a tendency to create dependency on them and their function as support. No one is here to be saved, we don't need "missionary allies" or pity.

Guilt is also a primary ally motivating factor. Even if never admitted, guilt & shame generally function as motivators in the consciousness of an oppressor who realizes that they are operating on the wrong side. While guilt and shame are very powerful emotions, think about what your doing before you make another community's struggle into your therapy session. Of course, acts of resistance and liberation can be healing, but tackling guilt, shame, and other trauma require a much different focus, or at least an explicit and consensual focus. What kind of relationships are built on guilt and shame?

"Exploitation & Co-optation"

Those who co-opt are only there to advance self interests (usually it's either notoriety or financial). As these "allies" seek to impose their agenda, they out themselves. The 'radical' more militant-than-thou "grassroots" organizers are keen on seeking out "sexy" issues to co-opt (for notoriety/ego/super ally/most radical ally) and they set the terms of engagement or dictate what struggles get amplified or marginalized regardless of whose homelands they're operating on. The nonprofit establishment or non-profit industrial complex (NPIC) also seeks out "sexy" or "fundable" issues to co-opt and exploit as these are ripe for the grant funding that they covet. Too often, Indigenous liberation struggles for life and land, by nature, directly confront the entire framework to which this colonial & capitalist society is based on. This is threatening to potential capitalist funders so some groups are forced to compromise radical or liberatory work for funding, others become alienated and further invisibilized or subordinated to tokenism. Co-opters most often show up to the fight when the battle has already escalated and it's a little too late.

These entities almost always propose trainings, workshops, action camps, and offer other specialized expertise in acts of patronization. These folks are generally paid huge salaries for their "professional" activism, get over-inflated grants for logistics and "organizational capacity building", and struggles may become further exploited as "poster struggles" for their funders.

While there may be times folks have the capacity and patience to do so, be aware of the dynamics perpetuated by hand-holding.

Understand that it is not our responsibility to hold your hand through a process to be an accomplice.

Accomplices listen with respect for the range of cultural practices and dynamics that exists within various Indigenous communities.

Accomplices aren't motivated by personal guilt or shame, they may have their own agenda but they are explicit.

Accomplices are realized through mutual consent and build trust. They don't just have our backs, they are at our side, or in their own spaces confronting and unsettling colonialism. As accomplices we are compelled to become accountable and responsible to each other, that is the nature of trust.

Don't wait around for anyone to proclaim you to be an accomplice, you certainly cannot proclaim it yourself. You just are or you are not. The lines of oppression are already drawn.

Suggestions for some ways forward for anti-colonial accomplices:

Allyship is the corruption of radical spirit and imagination, it's the dead end of decolonization.

The ally establishment co-opts decolonization as a banner to fly at it's unending anti-oppression gala. What is not understood is that decolonization is a threat to the very existence of settler "allies."

No matter how liberated you are, if you are still occupying Indigenous lands you are still a colonizer.

Decolonization (the process of restoring Indigenous identity) can be very personal and should be differentiated, though not disconnected, from anti-colonial struggle.

The work of an accomplice in anti-colonial struggle is to attack colonial structures & ideas.

The starting point is to articulate your relationship to Indigenous Peoples who's lands you are occupying. This is beyond acknowledgment or recognition. This can be particularly challenging for "non-federally recognized" Indigenous Peoples as they are invisibilized by the state and by the invaders occupying their homelands.

It may take time to establish lines of communication especially as some folks may have already been burnt by outsiders. If you do not know where or how to contact folks, do some ground work, research (but don't rely on anthropological sources, they are euro-centric), and pay attention. Try to more listening than speaking and planning.

In long-term struggles communication may be ruptured between various factions, there are no easy ways to address this. Don't try to work the situation out, but communicate openly with consideration of the points below.

Sometimes other Indigenous Peoples are "guests" on other's homelands yet are tokenized as the Indigenous representatives for the "local struggles". This dynamic also perpetuates settler colonialism. A lot of people also assume Indigenous folks are all on the same page "politically," we're definitely not.

Additionally, these skills most likely already exist within the communities or they are tendencies that need only be provoked into action. These aren't just dynamics practiced by large so-called non-governmental organizations (NGOs), individuals are adept at this self-serving tactic as well.

Co-optation also functions as a form of liberalism. Allyship can perpetuate a neutralizing dynamic by co-opting original liberatory intent into a reformist agenda. Certain folks in the struggles (usually movement "personalities") who don't upset the ally establishment status quo can be rewarded with inclusion in the ally industry.

"Self proclaiming/confessional Allies"

All too often folks show up with an, "I am here to support you!" attitude that they wear like a badge. Ultimately making struggles out to feel like an extracurricular activity that they are getting "ally points" for. Self-asserted allies may even have anti-oppression principles and values as window dressing. Perhaps you've seen this quote by Lilla Watson on their materials: "If you come here to help me, you're wasting your time. If you come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together." They are keen to posture, but their actions are inconsistent with their assertions.

Meaningful alliances aren't imposed, they are consented upon. The self-proclaimed allies have no intention to abolish the entitlement that compelled them to impose their relationship upon those they claim to ally with.

"Parachuters"

Parachuters rush to the front lines seemingly from out-of-nowhere. They literally move from one hot or sexy spot to the next. They also fall under the "savior" & "self-proclaimed" categories as they mostly come from specialized institutes, organizations, & think-tanks. They've been through the trainings, workshops, lectures, etc., they are the "experts" so they know "what is best." This paternalistic attitude is implicit in the structures (non-profits, institutes, etc) these "allies" derive their awareness of the "issues" from. Even if they reject their own non-profit programming, they are ultimately reactionary, entitled, and patronizing, or positioning with power-over, those they proclaim allyship with. It's structural patronization that is rooted in the same dominion of hetero-patriarchal white supremacy.

Parachuters are usually missionaries with more funding.

"Academics, & Intellectuals"

Although sometimes directly from communities in struggle, intellectuals and academics also fit neatly in all of these categories. Their role in struggle can be extremely patronizing. In many cases the academic maintains institutional power above the knowledge and skill base of the community/ies in struggle. Intellectuals are most often fixated on un-learning oppression. These lot generally don't have their feet on the ground, but are quick to be critical of those who do.

Should we desire to merely "unlearn" oppression, or to smash it to fucking pieces, and have it's very existence gone?

An accomplice as academic would seek ways to leverage resources and material support and/or betray their institution to further liberation struggles. An intellectual accomplice would strategize with, not for and not be afraid to pick up a hammer.

"Gatekeepers"

Gatekeepers seek power over, not with, others. They are known for the tactics of controlling and/or withholding information, resources, connections, support, etc. Gatekeepers come from the outside and from within. When exposed they are usually rendered ineffective (so long as there are effective accountability/responsibility mechanisms).

Gatekeeping individuals and organizations, like "savior allies," also have tendency to create dependency on them and their function as support. They have a tendency to dominate or control.

"Navigators & Floaters"

The "navigating" ally is someone who is familiar or skilled in jargon and maneuvers through spaces or struggles yet doesn't have meaningful dialogue (by avoiding debates or remaining silent) or take meaningful action beyond their personal comfort zones (this exists with entire organizations too). They uphold their power and, by extension, the dominant power structures by not directly attacking them.

"Ally" here is more clearly defined as the act of making personal projects out of other folk's oppression. These are lifestyle allies who act like passively participating or simply using the right terminology is support. When shit goes down they are the first to bail. They don't stick around to take responsibility for their behavior. When confronted they often blame others and attempt to dismiss or delegitimize concerns.

Accomplices aren't afraid to engage in uncomfortable/unsettling/challenging debates or discussions.

Floater are "allies" that hop from group to group and issue to issue, never being committed enough but always wanting their presence felt and their voices heard. They tend to disappear when it comes down to being held accountable or taking responsibility for fucked up behavior.

Floater are folks you can trust to tell the cops to "fuck off" but never engage in mutual risk, constantly put others at risk, are quick to be authoritarian about other peoples over stepping privileges, but never check their own. They basically are action junkie tourists who never want to be part of paying the price, the planning, or the responsibility but always want to be held up as worthy of being respected for "having been there" when a rock needed throwing, bloc needs forming, etc.

This dynamic is also important to be aware of for threats of infiltration. Provocateurs are notorious floaters going from place to place never being accountable to their words or actions. Infiltration doesn't necessarily have to come from the state, the same impacts can occur by "well meaning" allies. It's important to note that calling out infiltrators bears serious implications and shouldn't be attempted without concrete evidence.

"Acts of Resignation"

Resignation of agency is a by-product of the allyship establishment. At first the dynamic may not seem problematic, after all, why would it be an issue with those who benefit from systems of oppression to reject or distance themselves from those benefits and behaviors (like entitlement, etc) that accompany them? In the worst cases, "allies" themselves act paralyzed believing it's their duty as a "good ally." There is a difference between acting for others, with others, and for one's own interests, be explicit. You wouldn't find an accomplice resigning their agency, or capabilities as an act of "support." They would find creative ways to weaponize their privilege (or more clearly, their rewards of being part of an oppressor class) as an expression of social war. Otherwise we end up with a bunch of anti-civ/primitivist appropriators or anarcho-hipsters, when saboteurs would be preferred.

Invisibility is Our Responsibility

I wear my pink triangle everywhere. I do not lower my voice in public when talking about lesbian love or sex. I always tell people I'm a lesbian. I don't wait to be asked about my "boyfriend." I don't say it's "no one's business."

I don't do this for straight people. Most of them don't know what the pink triangle even means. Most of them couldn't care less that my girlfriend and I are totally in love or having a fight on the street. Most of them don't notice us no matter what we do. I do what I do to reach other lesbians. I do what I do because I don't want lesbians to assume I'm a straight girl. I am out all the time, everywhere, because **I want to reach you**. Maybe you'll notice me, maybe start talking, maybe we'll become friends. Maybe we won't say a word but our eyes will meet and I will imagine you naked, sweating, openmouthed, your back arched as I am f---ing you. And we'll be happy to know we aren't the only ones in the world. We'll be happy because we found each other, without saying a word, maybe just for a moment.

But no.

You won't wear a pink triangle on that linen lapel. You won't meet my eyes if I flirt with you on the street. You avoid me on the job because I'm "too" out. You chastise me in bars because I'm "too political." You ignore me in public because I bring "too much" attention to "my" lesbianism. But then you want me to be your lover, you want me to be your friend, you want me to love you, support you, fight for "**our**" right to exist.

Where Are You?

You talk, talk, talk about invisibility and then retreat to your homes to nest with your lovers or carouse in a bar with pals and stumble home in a cab or sit silently and politely by while your family, your boss, your neighbors, your public servants distort and disfigure us, deride us and punish us. Then home again and you feel like screaming. Then you pad your anger with a relationship or a career or a party with other dykes like you and still you wonder why we can't find each other, why you feel lonely, angry, alienated.

Get Up, Wake Up Sisters!!

Your life is in your hands.

When I risk it all to be out, I risk it for both of us. When I risk it all and it works (which it often does if you would try), I benefit and so do you. When it doesn't work, I suffer and you do not.

But girl you can't wait for other dykes to make the world safe for you. **stop** waiting for a better more lesbian future! The revolution could be here if we started it.

Where are you sisters? I'm trying to find you, I'm trying to find you. How come I only see you on Gay Pride Day?

We're out. Where the f--- are you?

[Untitled]

When anyone assaults you for being queer, it is queer bashing. Right?

A crowd of 50 people exit a gay bar as it closes. Across the street, some straight boys are shouting "Faggots" and throwing beer bottles at the gathering, which outnumbers them by 10 to 1. Three queers make a move to respond, getting no support from the group. Why did a group this size allow themselves to be sitting ducks?

Tompkins Square Park, Labor Day. At an annual outdoor concert/drag show, a group of gay men were harassed by teens carrying sticks. In the midst of thousands of gay men and lesbians, these straight boys beat two gay men to the ground, then stood around triumphantly laughing amongst themselves. The emcee was alerted and warned the crowd from the stage, "You girls be careful. When you dress up it drives the boys crazy," as if it were a practical joke inspired by what the victims were wearing rather than a pointed attack on anyone and everyone at that event.

What would it have taken for that crowd to stand up to its attackers?

After James Zappalorti, an openly gay man, was murdered in cold blood on Staten Island this winter, a single demonstration was held in protest. Only one hundred people came. When Yusef Hawkins, a black youth, was shot to death for being on "White turf" in Bensonhurst, African Americans marched through that neighborhood in large numbers again and again. A black person was killed **because he was black**, and people of color throughout the city recognized it and acted on it. The bullet that hit Hawkins was meant for a black man, **any** black man. Do most gays and lesbians think that the knife that punctured Zappalorti's heart was meant only for him?

The straight world has us so convinced that we are helpless and deserving victims of the violence against us, that queers are immobilized when faced with a threat. **Be outraged!** These attacks must not be tolerated. **Do something.** Recognize that any act of aggression against any member of our community is an attack on every member of the community. The more we allow homophobes to inflict violence, terror and fear on our lives, the more frequently and ferociously we will be the object of their hatred. Your body cannot be an open target for violence. Your body is worth protecting. You have a right to defend it. No matter what they tell you, your queerness must be defended and respected. You'd better learn that your life is immeasurably valuable, because unless you start believing that, it can easily be taken from you. If you know how to gently and efficiently immobilize your attacker, then by all means, do it. If you lack those skills, then think about gouging out his f---ing eyes, slamming his nose back into his brain, slashing his throat with a broken bottle - do whatever you can, whatever you have to, to save your life!

Why Queer?

Queer!

Ah, do we really have to use that word? It's trouble. Every gay person has his or her own take on it. For some it means strange and eccentric and kind of mysterious. That's okay; we like that. But some gay girls and boys don't. They think they're more

normal than strange. And for others "queer" conjures up those awful memories of adolescent suffering. Queer. It's forcibly bittersweet and quaint at best - weakening and painful at worst. Couldn't we just use "gay" instead? It's a much brighter word. And isn't it synonymous with "happy"? When will you militants grow up and get over the novelty of being different?

Why Queer ...

Well, yes, "gay" is great. It has its place. But when a lot of lesbians and gay men wake up in the morning we feel angry and disgusted, not gay. So we've chosen to call ourselves queer. Using "queer" is a way of reminding us how we are perceived by the rest of the world. It's a way of telling ourselves we don't have to be witty and charming people who keep our lives discreet and marginalized in the straight world. We use queer as gay men loving lesbians and lesbians loving being queer. Queer, unlike **gay**, doesn't mean **male**.

And when spoken to other gays and lesbians it's a way of suggesting we close ranks, and forget (temporarily) our individual differences because we face a more insidious common enemy. Yeah, **queer** can be a rough word but it is also a sly and ironic weapon we can steal from the homophobe's hands and use against him.

No Sex Police

For anyone to say that coming out is not part of the revolution is missing the point. Positive sexual images and what they manifest saves lives because they affirm those lives and make it possible for people to attempt to live as self-loving instead of self-loathing. As the famous "Black is beautiful" changed many lives so does "Read my lips" affirm queerness in the face of hatred and invisibility as displayed in a recent governmental study of suicides that states at least 1/3 of all teen suicides are Queer kids. This is further exemplified by the rise in HIV transmission among those under 21.

We are most hated as queers for our sexualness, that is, our physical contact with the same sex. Our sexuality and sexual expression are what makes us most susceptible to physical violence. Our difference, our otherness, our uniqueness can either paralyze us or politicize us. Hopefully, the majority of us will not let it kill us.

[Untitled]

Why in the world do we let heteros into queer clubs? Who gives a f--- if they like us because we "really know how to party? **"We have to in order to blow off the steam they make us feel all the time!** They make out wherever they please, and take up too much room on the dance floor doing ostentatious couples dances. They wear their heterosexuality like a "Keep Out" sign, or like a deed of ownership.

Why the f--- do we tolerate them when they invade our space like it's their right? Why do we let them shove heterosexuality - a weapon their world wields against us - right in our faces in the few public spots where we can be sexy with each other and not fear attack?

It's time to stop letting the straight people make all the rules. Let's start by posting this sign outside every queer club and bar:

- Rules of Conduct for Straight People

1. Keep your displays of affection (kissing, handholding, embracing) to a minimum. Your sexuality is unwanted and offensive to many here.
2. If you must slow dance, be as inconspicuous as possible.
3. Do not gawk or stare at lesbians or gay men, especially bull dykes or drag queens. We are not your entertainment.
4. If you cannot comfortably deal with someone of the same sex making a pass at you, get out.
5. Do not flaunt your heterosexuality. Be discreet. Risk being mistaken for a lezzie or a homo.
6. If you feel these rules are unfair, go fight homophobia in straight clubs, or
7. Go f--- Yourself

I Hate Straights

I have friends. Some of them are straight.

Year after year, I see my straight friends. I want to see them, to see how they are doing, to add newness to our long and complicated histories, to experience some continuity.

Year after year I continue to realize that the facts of my life are irrelevant to them and that I am only half listened to, that I am an appendage to the doings of a greater world, a world of power and privilege, of the laws of installation, a world of exclusion.

"That's not true," argue my straight friends. There is the one certainty in the politics of power: those left out of it beg for inclusion, while the insiders claim that they already are. Men do it to women, whites do it to blacks, and everyone does it to queers.

The main dividing line, both conscious and unconscious, is procreation ... and that magic word - Family. Frequently, the ones we are born into disown us when they find out who we really are, and to make matters worse, we are prevented from having our own. We are punished, insulted, cut off, and treated like seditionaries in terms of child rearing, both damned if we try and damned if we abstain. It's as if the propagation of the species is such a fragile directive that without enforcing it as if it were an agenda, humankind would melt back into the primeval ooze.

I hate having to convince straight people that lesbians and gays live in a war zone, that we're surrounded by bomb blasts only we seem to hear, that our bodies and souls are heaped high, dead from fright or bashed or raped, dying of grief or disease, stripped of our personhood.

I hate straight people who can't listen to queer anger without saying "hey, all straight people aren't like that. I'm straight too, you know," as if their egos don't get enough stroking or protection in this arrogant, heterosexist world. Why must we take care of them, in the midst of our just anger brought on by their f---ed up society?! Why add the reassurance of "Of course, I don't mean you. You don't act that way." Let them figure out for themselves whether they deserve to be included in our anger.

But of course that would mean listening to our anger, which they almost never do. They deflect it, by saying "I'm not like that" or "now look who's generalizing" or "You'll catch more flies with honey ... " or "If you focus on the negative you just give out more power" or "you're not the only one in the world who's suffering." They say "Don't yell at me, I'm on your side" or "I think you're overreacting" or "**Boy, you're bitter.**"

- Let Yourself Be Angry

They've taught us that good queers don't get mad. They've taught us so well that we not only hide our anger from them, we hide it from each other. **We even hide it from ourselves.** We hide it with substance abuse and suicide and overachieving in the hope of proving our worth. They bash us and stab us and shoot us and bomb us in ever increasing numbers and still we freak out when angry queers carry banners or signs that say **Bash Back.** For the last decade they let us die in droves and still we thank President Bush for planting a f---ing tree, applaud him for likening PWAs to car accident victims who refuse to wear seatbelts. Let yourself be angry. Let yourself be angry that the price for visibility is the constant threat of violence, anti-queer violence to which practically every segment of this society contributes. Let yourself feel angry that **there is no place in this country where we are safe,** no place where we are not targeted for hatred and attack, the self-hatred, the suicide - of the closet.

The next time some straight person comes down on you for being angry, tell them that until things change, you don't need any more evidence that the world turns at your expense. You don't need to see only hetero couple grocery shopping on your TV ... You don't want any more baby pictures shoved in your face until you can have or keep your own. No more weddings, showers, anniversaries, please, unless they are our own brothers and sisters celebrating. And tell them not to dismiss you by saying "You have rights," "You have privileges," "You are overreacting," or "You have a victim's mentality." Tell them "**Go away from me, until you change.**" Go away and try on a world without the brave, strong queers that are its backbone, that are its guts and brains and souls. Go tell them go away until they have spent a month walking hand in hand in public with someone of the same sex. After they survive that, then you'll hear what they have to say about queer anger. Otherwise, tell them to shut up and listen.

ASSEMBLAGES / INTERSECTIONS /

Jennifer C. Nash (2019), *Intersectionality: An Intellectual History*. In: *Black Feminism Reimagined after intersectionality* [section] (EN)

Aimi Hamraie, Kelly Fritsch (2011), *Crip Technoscience Manifesto* (EN) [section]

Jasbir Puar (2011), "I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess" *Intersectionality, Assemblage, and Affective Politics* (EN) [section]

Eléonore Lépinard (2014), *Impossible Intersectionality? French Feminists and the Struggle for Inclusion* (EN)

with a focus on the term's relationship to women's studies. In this section, I make explicit the book's decision to root itself in US women's studies even as intersectionality specifically and black feminism more broadly have intimate connections to other interdisciplinary projects, particularly black studies. Finally, I turn to explicating black feminist defensiveness and to situating this crucial and relatively new affect in the context of what I term the "intersectionality wars."

Intersectionality: An Intellectual History

In 2007, Ange-Marie Hancock noted, "A comprehensive intellectual history of intersectionality has yet to be published, with . . . significant ramifications that affect scholars seeking to conduct intersectional research and those seeking to understand the intellectual contributions of intersectionality."¹⁵ In the decade since Hancock's assertion, a number of scholars, including Brittney Cooper, Vivian May, Patricia Hill Collins, Sirma Bilge, and Anna Carastathis, have invested in historicizing intersectionality as a key strategy for understanding the term's varied disciplinary genealogies and interdisciplinary migrations. In my earlier work, I criticized the historical turn in intersectionality studies, suggesting that it is often undergirded by a search for a "true" intersectionality or by an attachment to a fictive past when intersectionality was practiced in ways that more "correctly" align with its foundational texts. As I argued, "The impulse toward historicization all too often becomes a battle over origin stories, a struggle to determine who 'made' intersectionality, and thus who deserves the 'credit' for coining the term, rather than a rich engagement with intersectionality's multiple genealogies in both black feminist and women of color feminist traditions."¹⁶ Thus, I enter the terrain of historicizing intersectionality with a sense of caution and an awareness of the potential risks of fetishizing history as the preferable orientation toward understanding intersectionality's varied work. Here, I offer an intellectual history of intersectionality that emphasizes that intersectionality is part of a cohort of terms that black feminists created in order to analyze the interconnectedness of structures of domination. In other words, as Deborah King notes, "The necessity of addressing all oppressions is one of the hallmarks of black feminist thought," even as intersectional thinking has unfolded around different keywords, analytics, and theories.¹⁷

While intersectional histories have long included Combahee River Collective, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins, Deborah King, and Frances

Beal, recent black feminist scholarship has centered Anna Julia Cooper's work as foundational to modern intersectionality theory. In many ways, Vivian May's scholarship ushered in a deep feminist investment in Cooper's work as a kind of intersectional praxis, one that has been taken up by other scholars like Brittney Cooper, who has advocated for Anna Julia Cooper's place in a genealogy of "race women," of black female intellectuals.¹⁸ For May, centering Anna Julia Cooper is not only a crucial corrective to feminist historiographies that treat intersectionality as a "recent form" of feminist engagement but also a project of feminist education that makes visible the long intellectual and political labor of black women.¹⁹ Indeed, May reads Cooper's *A Voice from the South* (1892) as "the first book-length example of black feminist theory in the US" that "tackles the racialized, gendered, and classed meanings of personhood and citizenship," and thus as an early articulation of intersectionality theory.²⁰ As May indicates, "Repeatedly, I have found that an inadequate understanding of intersectionality, even in its contemporary iterations, means that Cooper's innovative ideas and complex analyses are widely misunderstood. While Cooper articulates how race, gender, class, and region (and later, nation) interdepend and cannot be examined as isolated, many of her contemporaries and later scholars examining her work could not seem to fully grasp her arguments—in large part because Cooper's words and ideas were examined via single-axis frameworks, either/or models of thought, or measures of rationality that could not account for multiplicity."²¹ May's work, then, is an important corrective that underscores the long roots of intersectional thinking in black feminist thought.

The Combahee River Collective's 1977 statement has also become a touchstone for black feminist engagement with intersectionality's histories. (Indeed, the celebrated fortieth anniversary of the collective brought a renewed scholarly and popular interest in centering Combahee as an—or perhaps *the*—inaugural intersectional text.) Combahee began its manifesto by noting, "The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking."²² While Combahee practiced a black feminist politics rooted in a "healthy love" of black women, its manifesto offered a theory of power that was committed to understanding how sexism, homophobia, racism, and capitalism "are interlocking." As Combahee argued, eradicating sexism would require the deconstruction of other

structures of domination. Writing a decade later, from a perspective rooted in critical historiography, Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham also underscored the “interlocking” nature of structures of domination. Higginbotham’s work on the “metalanguage of race” sought to consider how gender, class, and sexuality are raced categories. She writes, “Race not only tends to subsume other sets of social relations, namely, gender and class, but it blurs and disguises, suppresses and negates its own complex interplay with the very social relations it envelops.”²³ Thus, gender and class become racial categories that are given meaning through processes of racial domination. While Higginbotham’s intervention is animated by a plea for historians to think differently about structures of domination and their constitution, it is also a call to fundamentally reimagine the very categories that form the basis of scholarly inquiry and political activism.

Other black feminist scholars of the same period were also developing theoretical frameworks that highlighted the mutually constitutive nature of gender, race, class, and sexuality. In 1969, Frances Beal developed the concept of “double jeopardy” to capture how race and gender collude to constrain the lives of black women. For Beal, double jeopardy describes how race and gender compound each other, making black women’s particular experiences qualitatively different from those of both white women and black men, an experience marked by “double discrimination.” Beal writes, “As blacks they suffer all the burdens of prejudice and mistreatment that fall on anyone with dark skin. As women they bear the additional burden of having to cope with white and black men.”²⁴ Beal’s crucial work produced the concept of “jeopardy” to treat gender and race as structures of domination that inflict violence on black women, and that collaborate to inflict that violence in particularly severe ways. In 1988, Deborah King built on Beal’s work by developing the idea of multiple jeopardy to capture how “the dual and systematic discrimination of racism and sexism remain pervasive, and, for many, class inequality compounds these oppressions.”²⁵ King sought to trouble the (potential) reading of “double jeopardy” as an additive model, one which suggested that race and gender simply compounded each other to produce a kind of double discrimination. For King, jeopardy is interactive and thus describes the dynamic interplay among structures of domination. King writes, “The modifier ‘multiple’ refers not only to several, simultaneous oppressions but to the multiplicative relationships among them as well. In other words, the equivalent formulation is racism multiplied by sexism multiplied by classism.”²⁶ Beal’s and King’s respective engagements with

“jeopardy” as a keyword in theorizing black women’s subjectivities reveal a long-standing black feminist debate over how exactly race and gender interact, how to adequately capture the places where these structures of domination touch.

Though scholars debate intersectionality’s origins, the term is often citationally and genealogically tethered to Kimberlé Crenshaw’s two articles “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics” (1989) and “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color” (1991). As Brittney Cooper notes, “Taken together, Crenshaw’s essays catalyzed a tectonic shift in the nature of feminist theorizing by suggesting that black women’s experiences demanded new paradigms in feminist theorizing, creating an analytic framework that exposed through use of a powerful metaphor exactly what it meant for systems of power to be interactive, and explicitly typing the political aims of an inclusive democracy to a theory and account of power.”²⁷ For Crenshaw, intersectionality is an analytic fundamentally rooted in black women’s experiences, and it constitutes a theoretical, political, and doctrinal effort to do justice to the forms of violence that operate in raced and gendered ways in black women’s lives. She writes, “I will center Black women in this analysis in order to contrast the multidimensionality of Black women’s experience with the single-axis analysis that distorts these experiences. Not only will this juxtaposition reveal how Black women are theoretically erased, it will also illustrate how this framework imports its own theoretical limitations that undermine efforts to broaden feminist and antiracist analyses.”²⁸ In “Demarginalizing,” Crenshaw deployed the metaphor of intersectionality to describe the juridical invisibility of black women’s experiences of discrimination, experiences that can be—though are not always—constituted by the interplay of race and gender.²⁹ In response to a set of legal decisions that obscured or wholly neglected black women’s experiences of discrimination, Crenshaw offered the metaphor of the intersection: “Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination.”³⁰ Law’s race-or-gender structure necessarily renders

experiences “in the intersection” invisible, essentially telling those harmed by an accident—black women—either that no harm was done or that the harm that was inflicted cannot be remedied. In Crenshaw’s hands, intersectionality is a way of responding to doctrinal invisibility with an insistence that law both recognize and redress black women’s particular experiences.

While Crenshaw’s intersection metaphor has circulated as a way of explicating the analytic’s critical aspirations, Anna Carastathis’s recent work calls attention to the second metaphor of “Demarginalizing,” one where Crenshaw also elaborated intersectionality’s theoretical and political urgency. Crenshaw writes:

Imagine a basement which contains all people who are disadvantaged on the basis of race, sex, class, sexual preference, age and/or physical ability. These people are stacked—feet standing on shoulders—with those on the bottom being disadvantaged by the full array of factors, up to the very top, where the heads of all those disadvantaged by a singular factor brush up against the ceiling. Their ceiling is actually the floor above which only those who are not disadvantaged in any way reside. In efforts to correct some aspects of domination, those above the ceiling admit from the basement only those who can say that “but for” the ceiling, they too would be in the upper room. A hatch is developed through which those placed immediately below can crawl. Yet this hatch is generally available only to those who—due to the singularity of their burden and their otherwise privileged position relative to those below—are in the position to crawl through. Those who are multiply-burdened are generally left below unless they can somehow pull themselves into the groups that are permitted to squeeze through the hatch.³¹

This second spatial metaphor calls attention to the limits of the juridical. Here, Crenshaw reveals that conventional conceptions of discrimination that rely on a “but for” logic always leave black women in the proverbial basement, with their experiences of harm unaddressed. In this account, intersectionality shows that antidiscrimination law is itself a technology of discrimination, rather than an actual form of redress, a location that reproduces the violence it is supposed to upend.

While Crenshaw is citationally linked to intersectionality, Patricia Hill Collins is also tethered to the intellectual and political labor of intersectionality theory, especially in the social sciences, where her conception of the

“matrix of domination” has become canonized.³² Published at the same time as Crenshaw’s twin articles, Collins’s *Black Feminist Thought* introduced the concept of the matrix of domination, which attends to “how . . . intersecting oppressions are actually organized.”³³ The “matrix” approach emphasizes how racism, sexism, capitalism, and heteronormativity are structurally organized and thus is allied with terms like “metalanguage of race” that sought to attend to structures of power rather than identity and subjectivity. While Collins roots the matrix of domination in a larger project of centering black women as knowledge producers, her conception underscores that there are “few pure victims or oppressors. Each individual derives varying amounts of penalty and privilege from the multiple systems of oppression which frame everyone’s lives.”³⁴ In this account, the labor of the matrix of domination is to describe the specificities of social location and the violence that structures of domination inflict, in various ways and in differing severity, on everyone.

My intellectual history of intersectionality foregrounds the variety of terms black feminists have deployed to capture the complexity of structures of domination. Given black feminists’ long-standing investment in theorizing the “interlocking” nature of power, it is worth considering how and why intersectionality came to be *the* preeminent term for theorizing these structures. Perhaps it is the term’s irresistible visuality, its ability to be represented—even if reductively—through the crossroads metaphor that has given it a life in and beyond women’s studies, and well beyond its own investment in remedying forms of juridical violence and exclusion. Unlike Kathy Davis, who treats intersectionality’s “success” as fundamentally rooted in its “vagueness,” I speculate that it is the term’s capacity to allow its reader to imagine its analytic import, to neatly and coherently represent a term that aspires to describe complexity, that has given intersectionality its ability to migrate across entrenched disciplinary divides and to become “the most important contribution women’s studies . . . has made so far.”³⁵

Intersectionality’s Institutional Histories

In this section, I engage in another kind of historicization of intersectionality, with a particular focus on what I term the “institutional life” of intersectionality. By institutional life, I am referring both to how intersectionality has become women’s studies’ primary program-building tool and institutional goal and to how intersectionality has been rhetorically and

Four Commitments of Crip Technoscience

Crip technoscience centers the work of disabled people as knowers and makers. Crip technoscience privileges disabled people as designers and world-builders, as knowing what will work best and developing the skills, capacities, and relationships to make something from our knowledge. Unlike typical approaches to disability that objectify disabled people and situate expertise in medical professionals and non-disabled designers or engineers, crip technoscience posits that disabled people are active participants in the design of everyday life. Not only do disabled people make access in our everyday lives in ways that do not get recognized as design, but the lived experience of disability, and the shared experience of disability community creates specific expertise and knowledge that informs technoscientific practices.

We call for greater acknowledgement of the lived experiences and material design practices of disabled people in the work of technoscientific intervention. There is a widespread perception that access technologies are made for us by non-disabled experts, but there is little recognition of our own practices of remaking the material world. Yet the field of disability scholarship grew out of activism against rehabilitative models of medical expertise and intervention (UPIAS, 1976), crafting a materialist politics with anti-capitalism at its center (Oliver, 1990; Russell, 1998), and continues to struggle against “compulsory ablebodiedness” (McRuer, 2006). Crip knowing-making forms the basis of political slogans such as Nothing About Us Without Us (Charlton, 2000), framing disabled people not just as design experts but also as epistemic activists whose politicized ways of knowing the material world also situate us to produce the material conditions that allow disability to thrive, in addition to remaking how disability is known and experienced. Without glorifying do-it-yourself design practices, crip technoscience recognizes that disabled peoples’ world-dismantling and world-building labors stem from situated experiences of “misfitting” in the world (Garland-Thomson, 2011). Crips are not merely formed or acted on by the world—we are engaged agents of remaking.

In centering the expertise of disabled knowers and makers, crip

technoscience involves the use of materials and technologies to produce forms of access otherwise unavailable (or economically inaccessible) via mainstream assistive technology channels. There are many examples of disability experience as knowing-making, so many creative and ingenious ways of living in the world. For example, historian Bess Williamson (2012a) has traced the ways that disabled people in the American postwar period documented their work as “tinkerers” in community periodicals, retrospective memoirs, and oral histories. They adapted specialized medical and assistive equipment, altered their houses, and repurposed everyday household tools. Disabled people turned away from medical supply companies to hardware stores to alter objects to their own advantage, asserting their “presence in a world that largely ignored them” (Williamson, 2012a, p. 12). Disabled designers such as Alice Loomer (1982), a wheelchair user, described her crip maker practices of repurposing household items for wheelchair maintenance or for ad hoc assistive technologies as “hanging onto the coattails of science.” Loomer argued that her own tinkering and maintenance practices “kept [her] away from nursing homes and attendants”: “I made it. So I know how to fix it...I may have failed as often as I succeeded, but I have equipment that fits me” (p. 30-31). Loomer’s work complicates the typical association of the disabled cyborg with a desire for innovation, instead turning to maintenance practices as sites for examining the “frictions, limitations, and failures inherent to technoscientific design processes” (Hamraie, 2017, p. 107).

Similarly, in the 1960s, disabled engineer Ralf Hotchkiss hacked his wheelchair to plow snow off sidewalks while attending Oberlin College, and in the 1980s began the Whirlwind Wheelchair International, when his global travels to find better designs for wheelchairs took him to Nicaragua:

I met these four young fellows sharing one wheelchair, and they had already redesigned that wheelchair. They had ridden it so hard that it had broken in 20 different places. They had reinforced it, welded it all back together, and made it much stronger than it had been. And they knew so much about good wheelchair design. It was clear they were the people I was looking for to help me, and I could help them

as well, so we've been working together ever since. (Hotchkiss, 2011)

While wheelchair users are not often treated as engineers, the four disabled designers had become experts in wheelchair engineering through trial and error and ingenuity, an ethos that continues in Whirlwind Wheelchair International's low-cost, open-source wheelchairs, which are intended to be maintainable for a lifetime, enabling a broader range of people to access them.

More recently, designer Sara Hendren and anthropologist Caitrin Lynch's (2016) project *Engineering at Home* has called attention to the ad hoc design practices of "Cindy," a recently disabled woman with several amputations. While Cindy "received the best available 'rehabilitation engineering' technology that money can buy," she nevertheless "found she had little use for it," opting instead to use tools of her own design (Hendren & Lynch, 2016). Hendren and Lynch frame Cindy's work as "user-initiated design," which can "yield a powerful course correction to the top-down modes of manufacturing." Another disabled designer, Sarah Welner, began her career as an obstetric surgeon before focusing on gynecological health for disabled people. Recognizing that "conventional examining tables are too high and narrow" for disabled women, particularly wheelchair users, Welner designed a table with a button-operated "hydraulic lift" and more comfortable foot rests (Waldman, 1998). While the engineering and design professions have historically excluded women, Welner, Loomer, and Cindy's work are clear examples of the places where crip technoscience and feminist design practices meet. Gender and disability expertise diffract through one another to question dominant modes of knowing and making.

Disabled parents have also been agents of crip knowing-making. Disabled parents hack baby cribs and change tables, sew bells on children's clothing to enable blind parents to keep track of their children when moving through public spaces, and mount car seats on portable luggage carriers to enable blind parents who use white canes or have a guide dog to pull their child behind them with their free hand (Fritsch, 2017). Wheelchair users adapt slings, wraps, and nursing pillows to carry babies and toddlers on

their laps. Other parents invent various tools to help feed and bathe their children, get them dressed, do their laundry, put on shoes, zip up coats, and engage in play. Queer, gender non-conforming, and trans disabled people also hack and tinker with reproductive technologies and kin formation to become pregnant, gestate, chest feed, and share responsibilities. All these forms of knowing-making are shared on social media (such as with the Disabled Parenting Project's website, blog, Twitter feeds, and related video projects), through disability community publications and events, and during conversations at parks and playgrounds. While disabled people face a multitude of barriers to becoming parents, disabled parents hack, tinker, and alter our material-discursive world, creating crip communities of knowing and making that challenges normative assumptions about parenting as a non-expert consumer activity.

Crip technoscience is committed to access as friction. Emerging out of historical fights for disability rights, the terms *accessibility* and *access* are usually taken to mean disabled inclusion and assimilation into normative able-bodied relations and built environments. When viewed as synonymous with inclusion and assimilation, access and accessibility are treated as self-evident goods.⁶ As Kelly Fritsch explains, however, the etymology of the word *access* reveals two frictional meanings: access as “an opportunity enabling contact,” as well as “a kind of attack” (2016, p. 23). Taking access as a kind of attack reveals access-making as a site of political friction and contestation. While historically central to the fights for disability access, crip technoscience is nevertheless committed to pushing beyond liberal and assimilation-based approaches to accessibility, which emphasize inclusion in mainstream society, to pursue access as friction, particularly paying attention to access-making as disabled peoples' acts of non-compliance and protest. For example, before enforceable disability rights laws in the United States, disabled people took direct action to create ramps and curb cuts, making obvious the inaccessibility of the built environment. Disability activists have taken sledgehammers to sidewalks in acts of protest, using bags of cement to pour curb cuts, and have used the design of curb cuts and ramps (conceived as levers for facilitating participation) as sites of

productive friction through which interdependence-based disability politics could arise (Hamraie, 2017, p. 99-102).

The Independent Living movement has also used material experimentation to enact crip technoscience and access friction. While the movement was critical of rehabilitation as a field of expert knowledge, it did not refuse the language or tools of rehabilitation outright. In addition to appropriating the term *Independent Living* to promote a disability politics of interdependence, the movement understood technoscience as a site of politicized resistance and regularly used hacking and tinkering practices as the basis of disability organizing. Many of their methods are captured in designers Ray Lifchez and Barbara Winslow's book *Design for Independent Living*, produced in collaboration with the movement. The book reveals the everyday technological hacks that disabled people in Berkeley in the 1960s and 1970s developed to thrive in an inaccessible city. Emblematic of the movement's crip technoscience ethos, Lifchez and Winslow offer the concept of "non-compliant users," illustrating this with an image of a powerchair user wheeling against traffic on a street without curb cuts (1979, p. 153). This technology-enabled movement against the flow of traffic marks anti-assimilationist crip mobility: not an attempt to integrate (as in the liberal approach to disability rights), but rather to use technology as a friction against an inaccessible environment.

More recently, Toronto resident Luke Anderson was frustrated by the lack of wheelchair access he experienced on a daily basis. Trained as a structural engineer, Anderson designed a simple portable wooden ramp in 2011 stenciled with the URL "stopgap.ca" and gifted thirteen of these ramps to businesses in his neighborhood. Built as a temporary "stop gap" measure to improve accessibility, the ramps are a non-compliant technology; they are not intended to be a permanent solution or structure, do not have to follow building codes, and do not require a city building permit or variance, all of which can be expensive and difficult to obtain. Anderson's experiment took off, leading to the formation of the StopGap Foundation and the Community Ramp project, which has now distributed over 1,200 portable wooden ramps worldwide (Fritsch, in press).

In another contemporary example of access as friction, Collin Kennedy, a cancer patient in Winnipeg, Manitoba, protested hospital parking prices by filling the pay-slot on a parking meter with spray foam, telling the local news that he planned to continue doing so “until changes are made” (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation [CBC], 2016). When crip time came into friction with the hospital’s parking meter time, Kennedy challenged health capitalism: “You should be able to come here, park, get your treatment, however long that treatment takes... This is a medical facility where people are not going for entertainment. They’re not going for productivity and commerce. We’re here because of life and death” (CBC, 2016). Kennedy’s activism—the use of spray foam to obstruct the parking meter—creates frictional access through attacking a technology of capitalist time and contests the commercialization of health care.

Crip technoscience is committed to interdependence as political technology. We position the crip politics of interdependence as a technoscientific phenomenon, the weaving of relational circuits between bodies, environments, and tools to create non-innocent, frictional access. Mainstream disability technoscience presumes disability as an individual experience of impairment rather than a collective political experience of world-building and dismantling. This perception has two primary consequences. First, disabled people are perceived as dependent and the goal of technoscience becomes to encourage *independence*. Second, disability and technology are both perceived as *apolitical* and stable phenomena, rather than material-discursive entanglements that take shape through struggle, negotiation, and creativity.

The crip analytic of interdependence helps us understand how technoscience can simultaneously be entangled with global networks of domination and also provide opportunities for kinship and connection. Donna Haraway’s (1991) cyborg figure, for instance, has been taken as a material metaphor for the entanglement of nature and techno-cultures. This figure has shaped the critical concept of technoscience by showing the networks of knowledge and material production that comprise global capitalism as a force organizing relations between bodies, technologies,

and environments. Disability critics of the cyborg figure, however, argue that Haraway's approach to the cyborg takes for granted that disabled people easily meld into technological circuits, an assumption shaped by imperatives for rehabilitation, cure, independence, and productivity. As Alison Kafer (2013) demonstrates, the imagination of disability in feminist technoscience is often limited to either eugenicist ideals of a disability-free future or to "depoliticized" ideals of the cyborg hybrid body (p. 8-10); disability is either a "master trope of human disqualification" (Snyder & Mitchell, 2006, p. 125) or a "seamless" integration of body and machine (Kafer, 2013, p. 105). Frequently, feminist technoscience conflates "'cyborg' and 'physically disabled person'" (p. 105), treating disabled people as "post-human paragons" (Allan, 2013, p. 11). Even when taken up critically, the cyborg figure in feminist technoscience reinforces ideas about disability as lack and disqualification (Bailey, 2012).

If, as Kafer argues, disabled people have often uneasy or "ambivalent relationship[s] to technology" (2013, p. 119), our practices of interdependence, access intimacy, and collective access can be understood as alternative political technologies: "disabled people," she writes, "[are not] cyborgs...because of our bodies (e.g., our use of prosthetics, ventilators, or attendants), but because of our political practices" (p. 120). Crip technoscience offers interdependence as a central analytic for disability-technology relations, recognizing that in disability culture, community, and knower-maker practices, interdependence acts as a political technology for materializing better worlds. In alliance with Moya Bailey and Whitney Peoples's call for "black feminist health science studies," crip technoscience is "suspicious of the individualism and siloing practices rewarded in the academy and see[s] collaboration and interdisciplinary as core" values that ought to guide intellectual and material production (Bailey & Peoples, 2017, p. 18). These values extend beyond the academy, however. As disability justice activist Mia Mingus (2010a) writes, interdependence offers a politics of crip alliance and solidarity: "It is truly moving together in an oppressive world towards liberation....It is working in coalition and collaboration." We call for crip technoscience to

design for collective access and disability justice.

We find interdependence as a political technology throughout the history of disability activism. For example, in North American disability activist histories, the most frequently narrated of these is the story of the “504 protest,” which took place in 1977 when disability activists in Berkeley, California, occupied the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to protest for the enforcement of section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act, a law that mandated accessible federal programs, spaces, and services. Activists in the Independent Living movement had sought to foster a “cross-disability consciousness” across mobility-disabled, blind, and Deaf people (Zukas, 2000, p. 141). At the protest, they transformed this consciousness into a political technology, using ASL to communicate with the outside when phone lines were cut off, rigging an air conditioner from other mechanical parts in the building, and establishing networks of care (O’Toole, 2000, p. 47). Similar narratives have been told about the birth of Autistic community through organizing made possible by the internet and Autistic-accessible conference spaces (Sinclair, 2010) and are currently being written through new crip technoscience projects (such as those highlighted in the Critical Commentary section of this issue). These and other material practices describe a crip technoscientific sensibility wherein disabled interdependence also enables what Mingus (2017) calls “access intimacy,” a crip relational practice produced when interdependence informs the making of access.

Crip technoscience also plays with the boundaries of trust, interdependence, and crip relations. Blind artist Carmen Papalia, for instance, stages crip uses of technology in public space. In one practice, Papalia uses a twenty-foot white cane on busy streets to create a sense of antagonism with other pedestrians, which renders access as a frictioned practice; in another, called “Blind Field Shuttle,” Papalia leads groups of (sighted) people on walks with their eyes closed. Both practices make use of a technology—Papalia’s white cane—to stage social interactions in public space that put ideas of independence into question (Papalia, 2013).

Also drawing on crip political interdependence, Georgina Kleege and

Scott Wallin's (2015) practice of "participatory description" compels narrated visual content through group-based methods. Unlike the traditional role of audio description "as a detached, neutral act of translation that functions only as an enabling accommodation," participatory description uses technoscientific modes, including internet video databases, to "explore the aesthetic, ideological, political and ethical underpinnings of this work of representation and its described object or event."

Participatory audio description has also influenced the emergence of new technoscientific tools for accessibility mapping projects. Blind designer Josh Miele, for instance, worked with Touch Graphics, Inc. to design tactile and audio maps of the Bay Area Rapid Transit system. Other projects use mapping for collective access. Unlike mainstream disability technoscience "crowdsourcing" projects, which invoke a charity model of disability wherein non-disabled people collect data but do not engage in disability culture or politics, emerging projects such as Mapping Access are making participatory access-making the basis of a kind of technoscientific "access intimacy" (Mingus, 2017) through practices such as "critical crowdsourcing" of accessibility data (Hamraie, 2018). Rather than simply creating functional maps, Mapping Access focuses on mapping as a tool for producing critical relations between bodies, environments, and technologies. At collective map-a-thons, the project enrolls disabled and non-disabled data collectors in the process of interrogating the messiness of access-making in institutional conditions and describing these conditions collectively. Critical crowdsourcing practices include enrolling large numbers of both disabled and non-disabled people to collaborate on surveying and describing building accessibility while simultaneously identifying the aspects of the Americans with Disabilities Act compliance that fail to consider the lived experience of accessibility. Collaborative mapping visualizes the evidence of inaccessibility while creating opportunities for collective response. Crip cartographic technoscience thus enables more critical design, and interrogation of the everyday built environment.

Our call for crip technoscience theory and practice holds in tension Kafer's crip politics of interdependence with the crip ambivalence toward

technology. We follow Kafer by calling on the usefulness of the cyborg (and the technoscientific circuits it embodies) not as a disabled figure per se, but as a tool for “stag[ing] our own blasphemous interventions in feminist theory” (Kafer, 2013, p. 106). Crip technoscience borrows the tools of feminist hacking and coding to blaspheme against liberal theories of disability rights and rehabilitation imperatives, as well as against the technological essentialisms of disability scholarship. While disability technoscience is often deployed for unwanted cures or enhancements, we contend that it can also be crippled, reclaimed, hacked, and tinkered with to create a more accessible world.

Crip technoscience is committed to disability justice. Crip technoscience aligns with the disability justice movement, with its critique of mainstream disability rights concepts, and its focus on intersectionality, collective liberation, and wholeness. Crip technoscience emphasizes that disabled people are not mere consumers of, or objects for, assimilationist technologies, but instead have agential, politicized, and transformative relationships to technoscience. We note that (as a matter of disability justice) disabled people often reject devices that cause pain or lead to infections, refuse pharmaceutical drugs with undesirable effects, discard technologies produced solely to make non-disabled people more comfortable (rather than to make life easier for disabled people), problematize expensive tools crafted by the medical and military-industrial complex, and instead demand more public, widespread forms of access. These critiques and practices align crip technoscience with impurity (Shotwell, 2016), embracing the ugly (Mingus, 2011), and staying with the trouble (Haraway, 2016).

While we write from our position as English-speaking, North American, settler and immigrant scholars and makers, we commit to crip technoscience that centers the leadership of those most impacted, including the expertise of black, brown, and Indigenous disabled people. We call for a crip technoscience that disrupts the entitlements of whiteness and colonialism in designed spaces and highlights access as a frictioned project requiring decolonization and racial justice. We imagine disability justice-

informed crip technoscience as building upon projects such as “Open in Case of Emergency,” a 2017 issue of the *Asian American Literary Review* edited by Mimi Khuc, which uses print culture, images, and symbolic imaginaries to hack the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM)*. This interactive project draws upon familiar technoscientific objects (such as the *DSM*), as well as poetry, tarot, and hacked science, to work through Asian American intergenerational trauma and displacement. We also imagine crip technoscience allying with emerging work in feminist of color technoscience, such as a recent *Catalyst* “Lab Meeting” on Black Lives Matter and pedagogy that describes possibilities for extending critical ideas about race, intersectionality, and the environmental construction of health to rehabilitation, immunology, and mental disability (Pollock & Roy, 2017). Crip technoscience is not only in alliance with these projects, but takes the position that they ought to be central to how we imagine accessible futures.

In committing to disability justice, crip technoscience explicitly engages the tensions that arise out of taking disabled bodies to be whole, railing against the ways that we are assumed to be damaged, tragic, or in need of cure. To approach disabled bodies by way of wholeness marks the importance of collective, relational, and interdependent approaches to disability. Following Eli Clare, we crip wholeness to include “that which is collapsed, crushed, or shattered” (2017, p. 158), emphasizing that whole and broken are not opposites but rather can be held in productive tension. Following a disability justice framework, marking disabled people as whole is to “value our people as they are, for who they are, and understand that people have inherent worth outside of capitalist notions of productivity” (Berne & Sins Invalid, 2016, p. 17). Taking up wholeness in this way also addresses the complexity of wanting to both accept disabled bodies as they are while simultaneously desiring to hack, tweak, and otherwise engage and alter our relationships to our bodies and technology. As Clare asks, “How can I reconcile my lifelong struggle to love my disabled self exactly as it is with my use of medical technology to reshape my gendered and sexed body-mind?” (2017, p. 175). Crip technoscience embraces this contradiction, making space for critically engaging technological

intervention while maintaining that such interventions are not compulsory.

We find inspiration for crip technoscience and disability justice within what Alice Sheppard (2019) calls “cultural-aesthetic technoscience,” particularly the ways that disability artistry, performance, and media explore the complexities of wholeness, seeking neither to overcome disability nor lapsing into a celebration of individual difference in and of itself. For example, Sins Invalid, a performance collective led by queer and disabled people of color, uses live and video performances, along with publications, to convey alternatives to disability rights perspectives centered on assimilation. In their performances, which feature people who use assistive devices such as canes, power wheelchairs, and crutches, Deaf people, amputees, and people with non-apparent disabilities, “normative paradigms of ‘normal’ and ‘sexy’ are challenged, offering instead a vision of beauty and sexuality inclusive of all individuals and communities” (Sins Invalid, 2018). In their publication *Skin, Tooth, and Bone* (2016), the collective outlines a framework for disability justice organizing that draws on performance and activist work made possible through technology.

Similarly, the Canadian disability arts organization Collaborative Radically Integrated Performers Society in Edmonton (CRIPSiE, 2018) challenges “dominant stories of disability and other forms of oppression, through high-quality crip and mad performance art, video art, and public education and outreach programs” that “celebrate the generative possibilities of ‘disability’ and ‘mental illness,’ in terms of how these experiences can offer important alternative perspectives.” In the dance-based video-art project *Other-wise*, Danielle Peers and Lindsey Eales (2013) explore themes of interdependency, access, and wholeness, speaking the movements of their dance as Peers’s and Eales’s bodies move toward and away from each other, limbs entangling over and around Peers’s wheelchair: “Lifts. Supports. Draws me out and pulls me in. Connects... We are the chair... We will not overcome, but we are becoming.” Performative uses of technology transform the meaning of functional technology from rehabilitative or adaptive to cultural.

Another site of crip technoscience world-remaking is disability

fashion. For example, Chun-Shan Sandie Yi's Crip Couture project (2017) creates wearable art, tailor-made prosthetics, and orthotics to highlight difference and disability. Yi works with unconventional materials, including skin and hair, to engage the contradictions of disability wholeness. Designer James Shutt's Myostomy project likewise offers lingerie-inspired stoma plugs for colostomy bag users, as well as body art products that aestheticize the stoma (London, 2012). Like Yi's work, these interventions transform the typical understanding of assistive technology, rendering it as crip fashion, art, and culture.

Crip media production is also a tool for producing new representations of disability that challenge disability technoscience discourses. For example, disabled artist Sue Austin developed a wheelchair that allows her to dive underwater. Documenting these experiences in the ocean's depths, surrounded by blue water and oceanic creatures, Austin highlights the joy and freedom of "revisiting the familiar" (2012) by using a wheelchair to negotiate unexpected worlds. Appearing in the disability and technology documentary *Fixed* (2014) directed by Regan Brashear, Austin's work offers ways of "seeing, being, and knowing" *with* disability that affirms crip world-remaking (Austin, 2012).

In the digital age, YouTube and other online services have become tools for distributing disability justice content. Autistic activist Mel Baggs's manifesto, "In My Language" (2007) (viewed over 1.5 million times as of this writing), uses video and sound to make a strong case for the dignity and personhood of Autistic people. In a series of clips, Baggs makes sounds, touches objects, and uses their body to move through space. Later, Baggs shows the same clips with a computer-generated voiceover explaining that moving and feeling are a language. Because "the way [Baggs] naturally thinks and responds to things looks and feels so different from standard concepts," "some people do not consider it thought at all, but it is a way of thinking in its own right." Instead, Baggs advocates for the agency and power of Autistic people, particularly non-speaking people, who are often excluded from mainstream disability narratives.

While recognizing the inequitable ways in which many people come

to disability, crip technoscience claims disabled life as desirable life, as life worth living, and as a difference that matters. Disability rights often foreground a pride-centered framework without acknowledging the relationships between pride and “the violence of social/economic conditions of capitalism” (Erevelles, 2011, p. 17). Crip technoscience acknowledges that that pride-centric frameworks may make it “difficult to acknowledge the overwhelming suffering that results from colonisation, war, famine, and poverty” (Meekosha, 2011, p. 677), such that it becomes crucial to reject “the ways in which disability is presently employed as a mechanism for oppression in the global context” (Jaffee, 2016, p. 118). Within such contexts, “positive re-envisionings of disability” are not always politically salient (Puar, 2017, p. xix). Building on disability justice, however, crip technoscience centers the transformative role of disabled people in both technoscientific and activist conditions to both build and dismantle the world toward more just social relations, which includes engaging the “specific sensibilities and discourses” (Ben-Moshe, 2018) that disability culture offers to refute disability “as a vector of social control” or “a weapon of debilitation” (Fritsch & McGuire, in press). Following Clare, we ask, “how do we witness, name, and resist the injustices that reshape and damage all kinds of body-minds—plant and animal, organic and inorganic, nonhuman and human—while not equating disability with injustice?” (2017, p. 56). This question acknowledges the messiness of access-making in conditions shaped by colonialism, militarism, and injustice, but also asks us to go further and locate the conditions and transformative power of crip knowing-making under these systems.

Disabled people use technoscience to survive and alter the very systems that produce disability or attempt to render us as broken. Take the example of Safwan Harb, a disabled Syrian refugee with two disabled family members (British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], 2016). While living in a refugee camp, Harb designed an accessible scooter using found materials, which enabled him and other family members to navigate the camp’s unpaved streets. Harb’s invention signifies crip knowing-making in spaces produced through war and displacement. Mobility, in this context, is not a

tool for reinforcing ablenationalism, productivity, or even rights. But Harb's invention *is* an outcome of a design process enacted through crip experience. Crip technoscience recognizes the non-innocent contexts in which knowledge and access emerge. In some cases, crip technoscience may be an individual knowing and making that reorients the material world. In others, it may be collective, politicized work toward interdependence and justice. Building on Haraway, we offer crip technoscience as a critical project that holds in tension the unjust imperatives of technoscientific innovation with the transformative capacities to shape matter and meaning through praxis. The point is not to achieve ideological purity outside of mainstream disability technoscience, militarism, or capitalism, but to locate and center threads of resistance already occurring within and against these systems.

As technoscience expands beyond Cold War-era emphases on militarism to include conditions often deemed innocent or uncontroversial (such as sustainability), disabled people are often caught between imperatives to save resources and enable access (a conflict most recently highlighted by the #StrawBan debate discussed in Alice Wong's piece in this issue). But crip technoscience can offer us a sensibility and set of practices for responding to collective problems such as climate change and pollution. Not only do disabled people act as experts and designers in matters of how to reduce single-use plastics such as straws, but we can also draw on our community-generated accessibility and Universal Design practices to shape responses to the Anthropocene. For example, recent studies estimate that volatile organic chemicals (VOCs) in fragranced beauty products and aerosol sprays produce more CO₂ emissions than cars (McDonald et al., 2018). Disabled people with chemical sensitivities or injuries have long advocated for fragrance-free spaces to avoid migraines, brain fog, and illness, in addition to calling for reduced industrial pollution. Activists such as Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018) have not only offered education about fragrance accessibility, but also hacked the production of fragrance-free products. Following Piepzna-Samarasinha, who describes accessibility as an "act of love" (2018, p. 74), crip technoscience imagines the hacking of non-harmful resource use as an act of planetary love through

which accessibility for marginalized disabled and chemically injured people can also mitigate chemical harm toward the atmosphere and oceans. These opportunities for hacking and tinkering with pervasive practices such as VOC use also show us that crip expertise and ingenuity need not rely on disability pride narratives to challenge global conditions harming human and non-human life. In drawing on disability justice principles, crip technoscience agitates against compulsory ablebodiedness and ablenationalism, and mandates for independence and productivity. It works on multiple scales—from the most basic everyday hacks to organized efforts toward collective access—to materialize accessible futures as those in which bodies need not be perceived as productive, legible, articulate, or beautiful to be understood as important agents of world remaking.

Conclusion

Crip technoscience spans historical and contemporary design practices, political activism, scholarly alliances, global systems, and micro-scale resistances. We call for crip technoscience practices that challenge the political economy of technology, particularly as it is ensnared within injustices perpetrated by imperatives to fix, cure, or eliminate disability.

Crip technoscience struggles for futures in which disability is anticipated and welcomed, and in which all disabled people thrive, regardless of their productivity. By endorsing accessible futures, we refuse to treat access as an issue of technical compliance or rehabilitation, as a simple technological fix, or a checklist. Instead, we define access as collective, messy, experimental, frictional, and generative. Accessible futures require our interdependence.

We center technoscientific activism and critical design practices rooted in disability justice, collective access, and collective transformation toward more socially just disability relations. We call for activists, scholars, and makers to expand possible futures for disabled people. We find crip knowing-making in the design and implementation of architectures, technologies, and infrastructures. We seek broad recognition for, and

Cyborgs and Other Companionate Assemblages

The literature on intersectionality has also been enhanced by the focus on representational politics, driven by Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* and also Gayatri Spivak's *Can the Subaltern Speak*[12]. Rarely have scholars concerned with the impact and development of representational politics come into dialogue with those convinced of the non-representational referent of "matter itself"--Donna Haraway, Elizabeth Grosz, Elizabeth Wilson, Karan Barad, Patricia Clough, Dianne Currier, Vicky Kirby, Miriam Fraser, Luciana Parisi, to name a few. Divested from subject formation but for different reasons, these feminist scholars in science and technology studies inflected by Deleuzian thought have been concerned about bodily matter, claiming its liminality cannot be captured by intersectional subject positioning. They proffer instead the notion that bodies are unstable assemblages that cannot be seamlessly disaggregated into identity formations. Elizabeth Grosz, for example, foregrounding its spatial and temporal essentializations, calls intersectionality "a gridlock model that fails to account for the mutual constitution and indeterminacy of embodied configurations of gender, sexuality, race, class, and nation." [13]

Donna Haraway has been the most influential of this group. In a leading text from this literature she famously stated, as the very last line in her groundbreaking 1985 essay "A Manifesto for Cyborgs"[14] that she would rather be a cyborg than a goddess, favoring the postmodern technologized figure of techno-human hybridity--the body as an information construct--over the reclamation of a racialized, matriarchal past (thus implicitly invoking this binary between intersectionality and assemblage). While several theorists have critiqued Haraway's use of the trope of woman of color to signify a cyborg par excellence, including Chela Sandoval and Malini Joshar Schueller (who has argued that women of color function as a prosthetic to the cyborg myth[15], which as I point out earlier, is not unlike how [women of color] WOC function in relation to intersectionality), there has yet to be a serious interrogation of what these theories on matter and mattering might bring to conceptualizations of intersectionality. Indeed Schueller has argued that this focus on matter, driven by science and technology studies, produces and is produced by a desire to avoid theorizing race. This is most certainly a legitimate complaint, but it also bypasses the issues being raised here, namely a critique of linguistic performativity that presumes that everything resides within signification. For Haraway, even though cyborgs are meant to undermine binaries--of humans and animals, of humans and machines, and of physical and non-physical--a cyborg actually inhabits an intersection--of body and technology, as Vicky Kirby, Dianne Currier, and others have argued. Dianne Currier writes: "in the construction of a cyborg, technologies are added to impact upon, and at some point intersect with a discrete, non-technological 'body.'" "Thus, insofar as the hybrid cyborg is forged in the intermeshing of technology with a body, in a process of addition, it leaves largely intact those two categories--(human) body and technology--that preceded the conjunction." "effectively reinscribing the cyborg into the binary logic of identity which Haraway hopes to circumvent." [16]. Haraway does not actually approach a human/animal/machine nexus, though more recent theorizations of the nature/culture divide, by Luciana Parisi for example, demarcate the biophysical, the biocultural, and the biodigital.[17] Still, the question of how the body is materialized, rather than what the body signifies, is the dominant one in this literature.

Assemblage is actually an awkward translation--the original term in Deleuze and Guattari's work is not the French word *assemblage*, but actually *Agencement*, a term which means design, layout, organization, arrangement, and relations--the focus being not on content but on relations, relations of patterns. For *Agencement*, as John Phillips explains in a recent essay, specific *connections* with other concepts is precisely what gives concepts their meaning. As Phillips writes, the priority is neither to the state of affairs (essence) nor to statement (enunciation) but rather to connection. [18] The French and English definitions of *assemblage* lean more to collection, combination, assembling, and both are also used as a term signaling collage in avant garde art. (So one question which I cannot attend to but that haunts this traversal from French theoretical production to U.S. academic usage is, what are the productive effects of this "mis" translation?)

There are thus numerous ways to define what assemblages are, but I am here more interested in what assemblages do. For my purposes, assemblages are interesting because A. They de-privilege the human body as a discrete organic thing. As Haraway notes, the body does not end at the skin. We leave traces of our DNA everywhere we go, we live with other bodies within us, microbes and bacteria, we are enmeshed in forces, affects, energies, we are composites of information. B. Assemblages do not privilege bodies as human, nor as residing within a human/animal binary. Along with a de-exceptionalizing of human bodies, multiple forms of matter can be bodies--bodies of water, cities, institutions, and so on. Matter is an actor. Following Karen Barad on her theory of performative metaphysics, matter is not a 'thing' but a doing. In particular, Barad challenges dominant notions of performativity that operate through an implicit distinction between signification and that which is signified, stating that matter does not only materialize through signification alone. Writes Barad:

"A performative understanding of discursive practices challenges the representationalist belief in the power of words to represent preexisting things. Performativity, properly construed, is not an invitation to turn everything (including material bodies) into words; on the contrary, performativity is precisely a contestation of the excessive power granted to language to determine what is real. Hence, in ironic contrast to the monism that takes language to be the stuff of reality, performativity is actually a contestation of the unexamined habits of mind that grant language and other forms of representation more power in determining our ontologies than they deserve." [19]

Barad's is a posthumanist framing that questions the boundaries between human and non-human, matter and discourse, and interrogates the practices through which these boundaries are constituted, stabilized, and destabilized. C. Signification is only one element of many that give a substance both meaning and capacity. In his latest book *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*, Manuel DeLanda undertakes the radical move to "make language last." [20] In this post, post-structuralist framing, essentialism, which is usually posited as the opposite of social constructionism, is now placed squarely within the realms of signification and language, what DeLanda and others have called "linguistic essentialism." As Karen Barad claims, "language has been granted too much power." [21] (The danger of her notion of "ontological realism" is that it may well privilege an essentialized truth produced through matter.) D. Finally, categories--race, gender, sexuality--are considered events, actions, and encounters, between bodies, rather than simply entities and attributes of subjects. Situated along a "vertical and horizontal axis", assemblages

come into existence within processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari problematize a model that produces a constant in order to establish its variations. Instead, they argue, assemblages foreground no constant but rather "variation to variation" and hence the event-ness of identity.[22] DeLanda thus argues that race and gender are situated as attributes only within a study of "the pattern of recurring links, as well as the properties of those links." [23]

Re-reading Intersectionality as Assemblage

One of Kimberle Crenshaw's foundational examples--that of the traffic intersection--actually situates intersectionality as an event. As Crenshaw writes, "Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them." And later: "But it is not always easy to reconstruct an accident: Sometimes the skid marks and the injuries simply indicate that they occurred simultaneously, frustrating efforts to determine which driver caused the harm. In these cases the tendency seems to be that no driver is held responsible, no treatment is administered, and the involved parties simply get back in their cars and zoom away." [24].

As Crenshaw indicates in this description, identification is a process; identity is an encounter, an event, an accident, in fact. Identities are multi-causal, multi-directional, liminal; traces aren't always self-evident. In this "becoming of intersectionality," there is emphasis on motion rather than gridlock; on how the halting of motion produces the demand to locate. The accident itself indicates the entry of the standardizing needs to the juridical; is there a crime taking place? How does one determine who is at fault? Intersectionality is thus a much more porous paradigm than the standardization of method inherent to a discipline has allowed it to be; the institutionalization of women's studies in the U.S. has led to demands for a subject/s (subject X, in fact) and a method.

Another of Crenshaw's primary concerns is with the structural prejudices of domestic violence: unequal access to services, representational and re-presentational biases in the legal system. I want to turn now to a moment in Brian Massumi's *Parables for the Virtual* where he reads domestic violence through the "home event-space." [25] For him, the event is not defined as a discrete act or series of actions or activities, but rather the "folding of dimensions of time into each other" [26]. This folding of time into and out of each other is a result of the "conversion of surface distance into intensity [which] is also the conversion of the materiality of the body into an event." [27]. Interested in a purported increase in domestic violence during Superbowl Sunday, Massumi writes:

"The home entry of the game, at its crest of intensity, upsets the fragile equilibrium of the household. The patterns of relations between household bodies is reproblemated. The game event momentarily interrupts the pattern of extrinsic relations generally obtaining between domestic types, as typed by gender. A struggle ensues: a gender struggle over clashing codes of sociality, rights to access to portions of the home and its contents, and rituals of servitude. The sociohistorical home place converts into an

event space. The television suddenly stands out from the background of the furnishings, imposing itself as a catalytic part-subject, arraying domestic bodies around itself according to the differential potentials generally attaching to their gender type. For a moment, everything is up in the air--and around the TV set, and between the living room and the kitchen. In proximity to the TV, words and gestures take on unaccustomed intensity. Anything could happen. The male body, sensing the potential, transduces the heterogeneity of the elements of the situation into a reflex readiness to violence. The "game" is rigged by the male's already-constituted propensity to strike. The typical pattern of relations is re-imposed in the unity of movement of hand against face. The strike expresses the empirical reality of situation: recontainment by the male-dominated power formation of the domestic. The event short-circuits. The event is recapture. The home event-space is back to the place it was: a container of asymmetric relations between terms already constituted according to gender. Folding back onto domestication. Coded belong, no becoming." [28]

So what do we have here? First, an intensification of the body's relation to itself (one definition of affect), produced not only by the significance of the game, Superbowl Sunday, but by the bodily force and energy given over to this significance (notice difference between signification and significance). Second, a focus on the patterns of relations—not the entities themselves, but the patterns within which they are arranged with each other. Not Assemblage, but Agencement. Third, household bodies: the television as an actor, an actant (Bruno Latour), as matter with force as determining who moves where and how and when. The television is an affective conductor: "in proximity to the TV, words and gestures take on an unaccustomed intensity." Fourth, "Anything could happen." A becoming. A deterritorialization. Fifth, intersectional identity: the male is always already ideologically coded as more prone to violence—a closing off of becoming. Finally, the strike: the hand against face. Reterritorialization.

Massumi writes: "The point of bringing up this issue is not to enter the debate on whether there is an empirically provable causal link between professional sports and violence against women. The outpouring of verbal aggression provoked by the mere suggestion that there was a link is enough to establish the theoretical point in question here: that what the mass media transmit is not fundamentally image-content but event-potential." [29] Thus this reading of Massumi's is not a textual analysis of the possibility that watching violent television produces violence, or violent subjects. It is not a theory of spectatorship identification, but of affective intensification: the meeting of technology (good old TV, no need to always privilege the internet), bodies, matter, molecular movements, energetic transfers. Massumi insinuates that ultimately, the relationship of positionality to affect, feelings, and sensations is arbitrary. Thus, a politics of affect underscores subject positionings that are seemingly irreconcilable. Unlike Crenshaw, the focus here is not on whether there is a crime taking place, nor determining who is at fault, but rather asking what are the affective conditions necessary for the event-space to unfold. In the most basic of feminist terms, we can read Massumi's interest in unraveling the script as offering a different way of thinking about the questions what causes domestic violence and how can we prevent it?

[13] Grosz, Elisabeth: *Volatile Bodies*, Bloomington 1994.

[14] Haraway, Donna: "Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s", in: *Socialist Review* 80, 1985, pp. 65–108

- [15] Cf. Sandoval, Chela: *Methodology of the Oppressed*, Minneapolis 2000; and Schueller: "Analogy and (White) Feminist Theory", op. cit.
- [16] Currier, Dianne: "Feminist Technological Futures: Deleuze and Body/Technology Assemblages", in: *Feminist Theory*, 2003, No. 3, pp. 321–338, pg. 323.
- [17] Cf. Parisi, Luciana: *Abstract Sex: Philosophy, Technology, and Mutations of Desire*, London, New York 2004, pg. 12
- [18] Cf. Phillips, John: "Agencement/Assemblage", in: *Theory Culture & Society*, 2006, No. 2–3, pp. 108–109.
- [19] Barad, Karen: "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter", in: *Signs. Journal of Women and Society*, 2003, No. 3, pp. 801–832, here pg. 802.
- [20] De Landa, Manuel: *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*, London 2006, pg. 16.
- [21] Barad: "Posthumanist Performativity", op. cit., pg. 801.
- [22] Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Félix: *A Thousand Plateaus*, translated by Brian Massumi, Minneapolis/London 1987.
- [23] De Landa: *A New Philosophy of Society*, op. cit., pg. 56.
- [24] Crenshaw: "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex", in: *The University of Chicago Legal Forum*, op. cit., pg. 149.
- [25] Massumi, Brian: *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Durham 2002.
- [26] Ibid., pg. 15.
- [27] Ibid., pg. 14.
- [28] Ibid., pp. 80–81.
- [29] Ibid., pg. 269, footnote 5.

- Mokre, Monika, and Anette Borchorst. 2013. "EU's Gender and Diversity Policies and the European Public Sphere." In *Negotiating Gender and Diversity in an Emergent European Public Sphere*, eds. Birte Siim and Monika Mokre. London: Palgrave.
- Priested Nielsen, Helene. 2013. "Collaborating on Combating Discrimination? Anti-racist and Gender Equality Organizations in Europe." In *Negotiating Gender and Diversity in an Emergent European Public Sphere*, eds. Birte Siim and Monika Mokre. London: Palgrave.
- Rolandsen Agustin, Lise. 2013. *Gender Equality, Intersectionality and Diversity in Europe*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rolandsen Agustin, Lise, and Robert Sato. 2013. "Gendered Identity Constructions in Political Discourse. The Cases of Denmark and Hungary." In *Negotiating Gender and Diversity in an Emergent European Public Sphere*, eds. Birte Siim and Monika Mokre. London: Palgrave.
- Rolandsen Agustin, Lise, and Birte Siim. 2013. "Democracy, Diversity and Contestation: A Transnational European Perspective." In *Democracy and Cultural Diversity*, ed. Jyotirmaya Tripathy. New Delhi: Routledge.
- Siim Birte, and Monika Mokre, eds. 2013. *Negotiating Gender and Diversity in an Emergent European Public Sphere*. London: Palgrave.
- Strolovitch, Dara Z. 2007. *Affirmative Advocacy. Race, Class and Gender in Interest Group Politics*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Yuval-Davis, Nira. 2011. *The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional Contestations*. London: Sage.

Impossible Intersectionality? French Feminists and the Struggle for Inclusion

Éléonore Lépinard, Université de Lausanne

doi:10.1017/S1743923X13000585

The history of the origins of the concept of intersectionality is deeply embedded in the U.S. context. The intertwined histories of the American women's movements and American race relations as well as the conjunction of several theoretical strands, such as the philosophical critique of the modern subject, poststructuralism, the critique from feminists of color, and critical legal studies, have marked the genesis and the operationalization of the concept of intersectionality in American feminist studies (Ackerly and McDermott 2011, Dhamoon 2011). This legacy has given the concept of intersectionality particular analytical contents, preferred objects of inquiry, and methodologies as well as specific political aims (McCall 2005). Kimberlé Crenshaw's initial formulation of intersectionality exemplifies this U.S. genealogy since it represents a joint analytical and political effort, embedded in critical legal studies and black feminist theory, to identify and promote the

political identity of African-American women or, as she writes, to “demarginalize” their political interests and to critique single axis approaches to inequality and discrimination (Crenshaw 1991). By doing so, the concept of intersectionality not only makes visible the categories and groups that were marginalized in theory and political practice, but also articulates a new set of political interests and, to a certain extent, contributes to construct and to represent intersectional identities.

Other conceptualizations of intersectionality have developed in parallel and in dialogue with the American concept, stressing, for example, the role of nationalism (Yuval-Davis 1997) in shaping the “matrix of domination” (Collins 1990). However, there is still a pressing need to expand and contextualize intersectionality outside of the American context. The question is particularly burning in Europe. Indeed, in the past two decades a distinctive nexus articulating immigration, ethnicity, religion, and class has been forming in many European countries that can shed new light on the concept and the politics of intersectionality. The racialization of Muslim religious identities, which overlaps with the racialization of migrants and their children, has occurred in part through a series of public debates on Muslim and immigrant women: veiling, arranged and forced marriages, and female genital mutilations have been discussed in the public sphere (Rosenberger and Sauer 2011), often with policy outcomes detrimental to migrant/Muslim women’s rights and concrete lives.¹

Thus, in the European context there is a need to conceptualize intersectionality in relation to immigration, nationalism, and Islam (El-Tayeb 2011). What does this specific configuration bring to the conceptualization of intersectionality? I address this issue from the perspective of feminist movements, taking France as a case study. Indeed, born from conflicts inside American feminism, the concept of intersectionality continues to carry a critique of feminist theory and practice. I bring this insight to the analysis of the French women’s movement and to the bottom-up politics of intersectionality that is unfolding in France today. One of the key findings that the French example brings about is the need to think more thoroughly about the role of religion in theorizing intersectionality. As religion plays an increasing political role in Europe, we must try to understand the dynamics that it creates for intersectional groups and for feminist politics.

1. The other most visible occurrence of intersectionality is with sexual orientation with a proliferation of debates on what has been labeled “homonationalism.”

Debates about veiling or forced marriage put feminist movements in a double bind: they offer a unique opportunity to promote women's rights in a public sphere often reluctant to relay feminist claims, but they also might fuel nationalism, anti-immigrant sentiment, and Islamophobia and ignore the power dynamics shaped by class, citizenship status, and race existing between non-Muslim or nonmigrant women and Muslim or migrant women. Feminist organizations in France are all too aware of this dilemma. In fact, conflicts have been intense within the French women's movements on the issue of veiling (Scott 2007). However, in the end a majority of French women's rights organizations has sided with power elites in proposing two bans in order to "protect" Muslim women — one passed in 2004 prohibiting the wearing of conspicuous religious signs in public schools, and another passed in 2010 prohibiting the wearing of face-covering items (i.e., full veils) in the public space.

A majority of French women's rights organizations have supported prohibitive measures, while some of them, such as the National Coordination for Women's Rights, decided not to take position on this divisive issue, and finally a small minority vocally opposed the laws. Thus, how can we explain that French women's rights organizations have, for the most part, supported prohibitive measures, which have paradoxical results — as activists themselves recognize — since, in the name of improving Muslim girl's and women's lives, they may in fact lead to Muslim schoolgirls being home schooled or in religious schools rather than in public schools, and since the 2010 ban might encourage devout Muslim women to stay at home and has also fueled acts of violence against veiled women in the public space?²

The political positioning of many French women's rights organizations in favor of both bans is the result of a lack of intersectional theorization and politics within the French women's movements. In recent qualitative research I conducted and for which I interviewed 19 French women's rights organizations, I found that these organizations mainly use two discursive repertoires to talk about intersectional problems and issues such as bans on veiling. The most prevalent rationale is what I have

2. Unfortunately, there are no reliable data on the first two phenomena. Whereas official reports insist on the fact that the 2004 law was a success because for the next school term almost no girl came to a public school wearing a headscarf, these data do not measure "exit" strategies such as homeschooling or transfer to private religious schools. With respect to full veiling in public space, the number of women wearing the full veil before the 2010 ban was already an object of controversy. The actual practices of these women since the ban was enacted remain unstudied and unknown. With respect to increasing acts of Islamophobia targeting veiled women in the streets, see CCIF 2012.

called a “gender first” repertoire, which subsumes other identities or power relations under the struggle for gender equality. This universalist repertoire renders other axes of domination irrelevant for political action except when they can be understood as *adding* to gender oppression another layer of discrimination. Another commonly used repertoire, more familiar to organizations providing services to women than to advocacy-oriented ones, acknowledges differences between women due to other social structures than gender but approaches them only at the individual level. In other words, typically a veiled woman will be received and counseled on her own terms when she comes to the organization for help, but the organization itself will take an official position in favor of the legal ban on Muslim veiling in public space. This dichotomy between the acknowledgment of intersectionality in practice and the refusal to make it relevant to feminist politics reveals the conundrum in which French women’s organizations find themselves as they wish to be inclusive and claim to practice sisterhood across differences while at the same time refusing to adopt an intersectional approach that would recognize patterns of discrimination and inequality linked to religious identity and ethnicity in their official political platform.

Hence, French feminist organizations do not ignore that banning veiling might place *some* women in difficult situations, but they believe that the remedy is worth the price to pay because by doing so, they are in fact helping a *majority* of women to emancipate, and they are protecting hard-won *universal* women’s rights. Hence, the lack of intersectional reasoning enables them to discard the interests of a minority of Muslim women in the name of enhancing the interests of the majority of the women. Such a focus on the interests of the majoritarian group represented by an organization, at the expense of the interests of sub/minority groups, is common in activism and not specific to French women’s rights organizations (Strolovitch 2007). However, in the French context, the prevalence of this “gender-first” approach is striking. Indeed, even organizations that identify as representing women from migrant backgrounds tend to adopt a similar positioning, some of them being at the forefront of the mobilization in favor of the 2010 ban.

How can we account for such a profound misrecognition of intersectional issues in the French context? I want to propose two hypotheses that shed light on the politics of intersectionality in France and, more broadly, to illustrate how the politics of intersectionality must always be contextualized if we want this concept to bring about the full extent of its analytical power.

The first hypothesis looks at the politics of intersectionality from the bottom-up and is concerned with the feminist project of emancipation as it has been inherited from the Second Wave feminist struggles and its relationship with religion. In the American context, the intersectionality of gender and race often posed the difficult problem of which political priorities women's organizations should adopt if they wanted to enact solidarity across the race divide (for concrete examples, see Smith 1995 and Cole 2008). However, what is at play in the contemporary European context is different and goes beyond the hierarchy of political priorities. Indeed, one of the salient features of intersectional politics in this context is the religious dimension, which has been intertwined with ethnicity, race, and immigration. This religious dimension challenges deep aspects of the feminist project inherited from the Second Wave, especially in the French context in which the struggle for abortion, which marked the 1970s, was associated with a struggle against an oppressive Catholic Church. Hence, intersectional issues in the French context not only call into question the political priorities that women's organizations should adopt (for example, over immigration policies, antidiscrimination, employment policies, and so on), but more importantly, it also challenges crucial features of the mainstream feminist emancipatory project.

During the debates over the Islamic veil, French feminists have been struggling to impose what they believe should be the standard of an emancipated subject, and for the majority of them this subject cannot hold a strong religious faith, let alone cover herself for religious reasons (Lépinard 2011). Although many French feminists recognize that Muslim religious identity has been racialized and that Muslim women may face discrimination, this acknowledgement very rarely takes precedence over the idea that religion is oppressive to women and that, therefore, a central objective of the feminist struggle is to free women from religious oppression and belief. Hence, the religious dimension that characterizes intersectionality in the French and European context poses specific challenges for women's rights organizations that still have their roots in the Second Wave. Taking into account religion in intersectionality theory brings with it the question, What kind of emancipation should feminist organizations seek? Feminist notions of emancipation are deeply rooted in liberalism and secularism (Mahmood 2005); however, the unfolding of intersectional politics in Europe presses us to think about how these notions are also exclusionary.

The second hypothesis looks from the top down at the dominant categories promoted by state institutions regarding racial identity and religion. Here, the French case shows that dominant narratives about citizenship and secularism in France, which stress color blindness, forms of cultural assimilation, and, more recently, a neutrality of the public space that is equated with the absence of minority religious signs from the public sphere, contribute to shape how women's rights organizations understand intersectionality and, therefore, their political positioning. Indeed, as comparative work has also shown (Rosenberger and Sauer 2011), national narratives about citizenship and inclusion are important factors shaping how public debates and legislation on Muslim veiling unfold in Europe. French women's rights organizations are no exception to this finding. On the contrary, they relay dominant norms about secularism and race blindness in their discourses and practices. For example, whereas class is generally considered as a structure of domination that should be taken into account, therefore opening the door to a recognition of the intersection between gender and class, this is generally not the case with racial or religious identity. Only very few organizations propose alternative narratives or a more critical analysis of the political consequences that these hegemonic discourses have for already marginalized groups of women such as migrant or Muslim women.

As the French case shows, other dimensions than race contribute to the dynamics of intersectionality, especially in Europe. Hence, for many feminist organizations that traditionally identify as secular and have embraced the legacy from the Second Wave, the religious dimension of intersectional struggles in France and Europe poses specific challenges to acknowledging, and theorizing, intersectionality. This in turn means that intersectional groups' interests and identities are marginalized, not only on the mainstream political agenda, but also in feminist struggles. This last point is not new to American scholars of intersectionality; however, it encourages us to look more in depth at the role of religion, a dimension less explored by intersectionality scholars than race or sexuality, in the contemporary political dynamics in Europe and beyond, and to think critically about the relationship between feminism, liberalism, and secularism.

Éléonore Lépinard is Associate Professor of Gender Studies at the Université de Lausanne, Switzerland: eleonore.lepinard@unil.ch

REFERENCES

- Ackerly, Brooke, and Rose McDermott. 2011. "Recent Developments in Intersectionality Research: Expanding beyond Race and Gender." *Politics & Gender* 8 (3): 367–70.
- Collectif Contre l'Islamophobie en France (CCIF). 2012. *Rapport sur l'Islamophobie en France*. www.islamophobie.net/sites/default/files/file_attach/rapport_2012_CCIF.pdf (accessed December 6, 2013).
- Cole, Elizabeth R. 2008. "Coalitions as a Model for Intersectionality: From Practice to Theory." *Sex Roles*, 59 (5–6): 443–53.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 1990. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43 (6): 1241–99.
- Dhamoon, Rita Kaur. 2011. "Considerations on Mainstreaming Intersectionality." *Political Research Quarterly* 64 (1): 230–43.
- El-Tayeb, Fatima. 2011. *European Others. Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Lépinard, Éléonore. 2011. "Autonomy and the Crisis of the Feminist Subject: Revisiting Okin's Dilemma." *Constellations. An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory* 18 (2): 205–21.
- Mahmood, Saba. 2005. *The Politics of Piety*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- McCall, Leslie. 2005. "The Complexity of Intersectionality." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 3 (3): 1771–800.
- Rosenberger, Sieglinde, and Brigit Sauer. 2011. *Politics, Religion and Gender. Framing and Regulating the Veil*. London: Routledge.
- Scott, Joan. 2007. *Politics of the Veil*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Smith, Barbara E. 1995. "Crossing the Great Divides. Race, Class, and Gender in Southern Women's Organizing 1979–1991." *Gender & Society* 9 (6): 680–96.
- Strolovitch, Dara Z. 2007. *Affirmative Advocacy. Race, Class and Gender in Interest Group Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Yuval-Davis, Nira. 1997. *Gender and Nation*. London: Sage Publications.

Solidarity under Austerity: Intersectionality in France and the United Kingdom

Leah Bassel, University of Leicester

Akwugo Emejulu, University of Edinburgh

doi:10.1017/S1743923X13000597

In this article, we argue that in order to understand and counter the asymmetrical effects of the current economic crisis, intersectional analyses and coalition building are required. Our research aims to address a tendency in some intersectionality research to underplay or